

CORINTHIANS STUDY GUIDE

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James P. Steel

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I CORINTHIANS NOTE SET

James P. Steel

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Preliminaries

Dedication

These notes are dedicated with gratitude to my loving wife, Anne, whose role as a loving helpmate has enabled me in all my endeavors for Christ during the past forty years. Her constant encouragement, wise input, and helpful assistance have affirmed her full partnership in all of our endeavors.

Publication Notice

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These and similar materials represent a work of love added into an already full schedule. Suggestions for improvement and clerical adjustments are always welcomed. Contact: jpbrowser1@yahoo.com

The nature of this study:

Pastors looking for a deeply exegetical treatment of Corinthians will not find it here. While every effort has been made to respect the Greek and use it when appropriate and necessary, the notes in this text contain a mix of both information and exhortation. They are designed to be read and understandable by adults in general. They are in a format which lends easily for use in preaching and in teaching. . To copyright issues, I have avoided using Greek fonts in this document and have chosen to Romanize the text instead.

A Word About the Author

Jim Steel has served equally in church planting, missions, and Christian education endeavors. His doctrinal position is available [at www.BiblicalIntensives.com](http://www.BiblicalIntensives.com). His ministry has focused heavily on the centrality of Christ and he stands without apology for the full and complete inspiration of the Bible and the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through the sacrifice of our risen Christ. Dr. Steel, who is an instructor at Cornerstone Bible Institute in Hot Springs, South Dakota, is available for personal contact through the web site noted above.

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A Brief Introduction to 1 Corinthians

GOAL: To appreciate Paul's great love for the Corinthians and to set the stage for the issues that will be addressed

TEXT: ACTS 18:1-18

This text provides us with the historical

OVERVIEW: We will place a strong emphasis on Paul's personal involvement and emotional investment in the Corinthians and their position as saints before God.

A. The Document Vs. 1-3

The history of the formation of the Corinthian church and the Apostle Paul's involvement in it has not been a matter of dispute among serious thinkers. While allowing for room for differences of opinion, we will state with reasonable confidence that this letter was penned from Ephesus around AD 56 as a later result of the founding of the church by Paul and his team on his second missionary journey. Paul ministered for no less than 18 months.

According to Daniel B. Wallace:

What occasioned the writing of 1 Corinthians was apparently three things.

(1) Paul had written a previous letter (1 Cor. 5:9) which was misunderstood by the Corinthians. In that letter he told them not to associate with immoral persons and they took this to mean *all* immoral persons, while he only meant immoral professing believers (5:10-13). The matter needed to be cleared up. ⁹

(2) The apostle also got news from members of Chloe's house that there were divisions arising among the Corinthian believers (1:11). Presumably the report included other problems such as attitudes toward the apostles (4:1-21), incestuous behavior (5:1-5), and lawsuits between Christians (6:1-11).

(3) Chapter 7 begins "now concerning the matters about which you wrote . . .," indicating that Paul was also responding to issues raised by the entire congregation. Apparently a delegation of believers (including Stephanas, Fortunatas, and Achaicus [16:17]) came with these questions in the form of a letter. First Corinthians 7:1 begins *periV dev*, which is repeated in 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 15:1 (simply *dev* here), and 16:1. This sounds very much

as though Paul is merely responding, in a very business-like manner, to questions which may or may not be intrinsically related to the preceding section.

The occasion for the writing of this letter then gives us a great deal of help in deciphering the method of compilation: the first six chapters are written as a response to the report from Chloe (including both the correction of the Corinthians' misreading of Paul's first letter and specific problems raised by Chloe's people); chapters 7-16 are written as a response to the questions raised by the congregation itself in their letter to Paul brought by Stephanas and friends.

Wallace's complete introduction and outline for 1 Corinthians is available at www.Bible.org and is recommended by this pastor for a more thorough study. The nature of this study with its built in time constraints requires that we stay focused on the text. Students who desire to enrich and better prepare themselves for more fruitful ministry will benefit by studying the life and ministry of Paul.

A final technical point. We have chosen to limit introductory comments and include the information we need as we proceed throughout the book. Even so, we want to set the stage very early in our study by reminding the reader that a strong "Gnostic" influence can be seen throughout the book. As we see true, divine wisdom contrasted with both Jewish and Gentile thought we will see how pervasive Gnostic thought was. While it was not officially called Gnosticism in Paul's day, its presence was clear and identifiable. Because this system of thought is inclusive of so much modern thinking today we will make a special effort to identify it and understand how soundly it is defeated in this letter.

1. Divine Authorization Vs. 1

*1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God,
and Sosthenes our brother,
.KJV*

At least two additional truths are evidenced in this verse. The first relates to Paul's relationship with the will of God. The second relates to his relationship with fellow servants of Christ.

Paul's relationship to the will of God. It is generally held that Paul's reference to his own calling "through the will of God" is no accident. Paul suffered greatly at the hands of his antagonists, both from Judaism and pagans on the outside and from erring brethren from within. He was attacked both personally and theologically, and there is strong reason to believe that his apostleship was under constant attack. The fact that this apostle, who was appointed by Jesus Christ himself, did not enjoy immediate acceptance from believers may be partially due to Peter's abrupt insistence that a new apostle should be chosen by the apostles

themselves as recorded in Acts 2. In any case, Paul endured the constant distraction of having his credentials challenged. Keep in mind that if God is calling you to service for Christ, His credentials are far more important than the credentials of men, as valuable as those credentials can be at times.

But we would be wise to dig a little deeper into this discussion of Paul's calling, especially in light of current trends among evangelicals. Paul's occupation with the will of God was far from nominal. He spoke incessantly regarding God's purpose and will. He painted this discussion with a broad brush as he spoke of God's will for the entire world, and he spoke equally of his desire for his converts and disciples to know the explicit will of God for their lives. This one who had been called from the womb (Gal. 1:15) prayed that we all might be filled with the complete knowledge of God's will (Col 1:9). There is a new mood among evangelicals which seems to be reacting to the fatalistic ways of some Calvinists. We are taught that it is enough for believers to seek to align with the *purposes* of God and that we should feel no necessity to seek the *immediate will of God* in a given circumstance. This attitude will move us inevitably to a dangerous extreme. James admonished his own brethren who were going through deep difficulties:

James 1:5
5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
KJV

Paul's relationship to his co-workers. It is a given that Paul was that special apostle "born out of due time" (1 Cor 15:8) to whom special revelation was given by Christ. This apostle to the Gentiles provides us with the richest and deepest insight we can find anywhere regarding our position in Christ and ministry through His body.

It does not surprise us, then, that this same Paul would put these important truths regarding Christ and His body into daily practice in his ministry. Unlike many, Paul clearly saw himself as *an equal in ministry* and made it a constant point to include references to his many co-workers who were in partnership with him in Ministry. Paul was constantly confessing his indebtedness to those who served with him. He did not pander or patronize; he genuinely saw them as indispensable equals. Examples of this may be seen by examining the beginning and ending of most of Paul's epistles, and by noticing his constant references (by name) to his fellow servants and fellow soldiers. We are saddened when noticing how few pastors, elders, and spiritual leaders follow this intensely biblical practice.

2. Destination of the letter Vs. 2

a. First to the Church of God at Corinth

1 Corinthians 1:2

2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

The city of Corinth. Corinth, one of Greece's most important trade centers and enjoyed the advantages of having gone through "urban renewal" even though it was the hard way. The city which had been completely destroyed, was rebuilt by orders from Rome just prior to the time of Christ. At the time of Paul's letter, the city boasted at least one half million people of various backgrounds and ethnic groups. It was notorious for its idolatry and excessive promiscuity as well as for its education, (second to Athens) and its great obsession with sports. It was the "Sin Francisco" of its day in every respect. The church which arose in this city, in spite of its problems, was testimony to the marvelous saving grace of Christ.

The church at Corinth. Our understanding of what the church is and what it does affects far more than we realize. A thorough study of this vital doctrine will help us arrive at some basic facts that should not be ignored.

Truth About the Doctrine of the Church

1. *A general expression.* There is a general sense in which the word church can refer to any group of people, religious or secular. Acts 7:38, Mat. 16:18; 18:17.

2. *A local expression.* Local assemblies of believers or groups who met in households were referred to as churches (Col. 4:15). The elders to whom Paul ministered from Ephesus may well have represented several household churches. Paul also refers to local churches in the plural on numerous occasions. The term church occurs 77 times in the English Bible and 37 additional times in the plural.

3. *A doctrinal expression.* All who are *in Christ* are a part of His body, the church (Eph. 5:23, Col. 1:18.) This is not a *metaphor*, it is a real, working re-

A Consequence to Avoid

We must not think that because the Bible refers to the Israelites in the Old Testament as a church, that the New Testament church is a continuation of Israel. The Bible says this new manifestation was to be a mystery. Col. 1:24.

Individual groups of believers in a given locality must not compliment themselves by assuming they can claim the title of being the only church in the community. Certain sectarian groups make this claim in order to claim spiritual authority and claim control over their constituents. Christ alone is the head of the church and neither He nor the scriptures have ever remanded this authority to earthly leaders.

Perhaps the most damaging error which can be taught regarding the church is the idea that Christ has ordained a *physical* church or organiza-

ality which results from our position in Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 13.)

There is, however, an aspect of the ministry of the church which is His body which will terminate when Christ returns to execute His program directly through His physical body on David's throne.

tion which is succeeded in perpetuity by some rite. This view is held by Rome, to some extent by Adventists, and even by certain Baptist groups which hold that there is no "universal" body and that the biblical authority to carry out the ministry of the local churches is vested through the laying on of hands in baptism.

In daily practice, the singularly most important truth to understand is that Christ is working through His body, both in individual believers and in His whole church. It is vitally important for you and me, as individual believers, to minister to and through the fellowship of believers, our respective local assemblies. Paul's epistles, for example, were written primarily to believers in local assemblies. When we separate ourselves from the local church we deprive ourselves of the benefits of fellowship and ministry which Christ has provided on our behalf and we deprive our fellow believers of the blessings which we can bring to them through the administration of our spiritual gifts.

b. To all saints everywhere

The New Testament words, *saint*, *sanctified*, and *holy* all share the common root which essentially means *set apart*. When we came to know Christ we were set apart unto God. Truth about being set apart from sin unto God is revealed to us early in the Old Testament, and is a theme that is carried throughout the Word of God. The doctrine of separation from sin, worldliness, false teaching, and associations with disobedience is under great attack today. Generally, most anyone who stands for separation from anything is construed as a "legalist." In reality, God is greatly concerned with believers who are pure vessels which he can use (2 Timothy 2:21.)

Even mature believers in Christ continue to be amazed that they are addressed as saints in His eyes. This is not because our behavior is always saintly, but rather, because of our *position* in Christ. Once a believer understands the basics of salvation as they are revealed in the person of Christ and His sacrifice on the cross, it is important that he gain a grasp on the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Because of this process which Paul will mention later in this epistle, we are actually placed into the body of Christ. We are literally translated into the kingdom of God's Son (Col. 1:13), and we are seated with Christ in the heavens. Because God sees us *in Christ* He sees us as righteous and set apart from sin.

The more we discover about the Corinthians the more we will be aware that a number of them behaved like anything but "saints." That is both an encouragement for all of us as we deal with our sin, and a reminder that our goal is to set

our affections on things above where Christ is so that our life here below would adorn our Savior (Col. 3:1ff).

A quick glance at the phrase “called *to be* saints” reveals that the words *to be* are in italics. Those who are in Christ were called saints. That is to say, it is a condition that already existed, not a goal to which believers are to aspire. Our goal is to be Christ-like and so reflect the sainthood which is already ours in Christ.

When we speak of these things, we are discussing the doctrine of *sanctification*. God's Word speaks of sanctification in three contexts. There is our *positional* sanctification. By that we mean all who know Christ are set aside and sanctified in Christ. There is the matter of our *progressive* sanctification, the daily outworking of separation to God from sin in our lives (1 Thess. 4:3 & 40). Finally, our *ultimate* sanctification (Eph. 5:27) will occur that day when we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. For a more concise note on the scope of the doctrine of sanctification read Scofield's note 2 on Revelation 22:11.

c. Grace and Peace

1 Corinthians 1:3

3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

KJV

The biblical terms *grace* and *peace* did not serve merely as the customary Greek and Jewish greetings. The Bible expands these terms immensely and they are in themselves the basis of a serious study. In an elemental sense we may speak of both saving grace and living grace. We are saved through grace and cannot add anything to our salvation (Eph. 2:8-10, Romans 11:6), and there is a peace *with* God which results from our coming to Christ. There is also a *living* grace, a divine enablement for our Christian walk and a *living* peace with God which is available to the believer. These terms conceal some rich and deep truths which can delight the believer for hours of study. At the same time, they are under attack from without and from within. Rome, Orthodox religion in general, and the cults despise both of these doctrines as the Word of God teaches them. From within, there has been a whole new barrage of attacks against grace as folks have tried to strip it of its disciplinary role in our lives (Titus 3:5-6) and use it as an excuse for sinful disobedience. The grace which reaches is also the grace which teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live righteously, and godly in this present age. Be assured that there is sufficient *living grace* to enable us to obey God in this important area.

As we close this brief session, do not overlook the reference to both the Father and the Son. To properly understand *all* of the New Testament, one must understand that we worship a triune Godhood wherein each member (Father, Son, and Spirit) are consubstantial, coeternal, coequal, and whose work is conjunctive.

This marvelous interplay of the work of each Person of the Triunity is demonstrated beautifully in these two epistles.

As beautiful as the theology of the Triunity is, it is also beautiful for us to understand that each member is *personally* involved in us. Clichéd as it sounds, there are no words to express the wonders involved with this truth that *each* Person is intimately involved with us at this very moment! Even so, we will see that it is the second person of the Triunity, who is to be central to our fellowship with all three members. Again, Corinthians will assist us in calibrating our perspective and returning to a Christ-centered worldview and there may be a few surprises in store for all of us!

God Is Faithful

We have been outlining chapter 1 with the letter D.

In verses 1-3 we saw

A. The Document

1. The **Divine Authorization**. We saw the Apostle Paul, called by the will of God. We saw his close affinity to his fellow servants.
2. The **Destination of the Letter**.
 - a. First, to the Church of God at Corinth and to the holy catholic church.
 - b. Secondly, to all saints everywhere.

We took time at this point to notice briefly the doctrine of sanctification in its past, present, and future aspects. We move to the second point of our outline:

B. The Delight of the Apostle

1 Corinthians 1:4-7
4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;
5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;
6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:
7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:
KJV

We are reminding ourselves of the power of praise and encouragement. When people feel truly loved and accepted, when they feel valued and appreciated, they can accept criticism and correction.

Leaders in our churches, our homes, our schools, and even our government are wise to follow Paul's normal pattern of commending and valuing those whom he loved before making any effort to criticize. Rarely (as in Galatians) does Paul reverse this pattern. We all know when we are truly valued and loved. We need to hear it and we need to express it.

Hugh Heffner was interviewed about his life-style a few years ago and was asked how he got into the business of publishing pornography. He did not have any intelligent defenses for his disobedience to God, but he launched his opening volley with this pseudo justification: "I grew up in a traditional Methodist home in the 50's where it was unheard of for parents to express love and affection to their children." Christian friend, I know of some parents and pastors who exude about as much love and affection as a highway patrol motorcycle officer, and then they wonder why their children cannot wait to break away.

As we continue in this vein, we ask ourselves, *why?* Why was Paul commending these believers? We already know that they had their problems with morality, treatment of the poor, proper behavior in worship and twisted doctrinal ideas. We know that they were a flaky bunch who even distrusted Paul himself. In spite of all this, the Apostle commends them for their strengths. Exactly what did Paul see in them?

1. First, he was thankful for the *grace* of God given to them by Jesus Christ.

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

In the words "*I thank my God*" we recognize, as we have already seen, the duty of every authority figure to be thankful for those entrusted to his care or ministry. The teacher who thanks God for his students, the parent who thanks God for his child, the pastor who thanks God for his sheep **will also benefit personally from the act of thanksgiving**. The opposite is also true. The student who thanks God for the teacher, the employee who thanks God for his supervisor, the parishioner who thanks God for his pastor will find a whole new level of patience and acceptance. It even happens when we thank God for the cantankerous motorcycle cop.

In the words "*I thank my God*" we see that this was a very personal matter with Paul. He is not approaching these saints on a cold professional basis. He has already introduced his own person and his own personal relationship with God into the quotient.

When Paul said "*I thank my God always...*" Paul was expressing a long term, continual commitment to their needs. He was not like some pastors who stop praying for their former congregations. He was not some hirelings I have known who only prayed when they were paid. He has managed, in those very words, to remind these folks that he cares, that those folks are on his mind, and that, even though they are out of his arm's reach, they are not out of his care and his prayers. I suppose, if Paul had not spoken another single word of praise, these Corinthians, already sensed that this man was in their court for the duration. He was not going to disown them because they had a few problems.

Notice that Paul said: "I thank my God always *on your behalf*;" He was assuring these Corinthians that they had a champion, a defender, an intercessor before the throne. Of course, we all know that our true Champion, Jesus Christ Himself. Isn't also comforting to know that someone else is in your court, praying for you? This be an appropriate time to ask ourselves, on whose behalf do we pray every day? Whose cause are we championing before the throne of Grace?

Now, we get to the heart of the matter. We still have not addressed the question of the hour, *why*? For what was Paul praising these Corinthians? He said, "I thank my God for the *grace of God* which is given you by Jesus Christ;"

Look at the role that the word grace plays in this passage.

In verse 3, we saw grace implored. Paul greeted these believers with a prayer for grace and peace on their behalf. He was not talking about saving grace here. He was not speaking of the wonderful grace of Jesus provided through His shed blood on Calvary's cross. He was not talking about God's Riches At Christ's Ex-pense. These folks had already received *saving* grace.

Rather, in verse 3, Paul is imploring God on their behalf for *living* grace.

- Grace to sustain a holy life, for some were carnal;
- Grace to separate from sin, for some confused their testimony with idolatry;
- Grace to be silent, for some in this bunch talked too much!
- Grace to strengthen, for some were weak and vacillating;
- Grace to surrender, for some wanted their own way; and,
- Grace to serve, for some were selfish and self centered.

However, none of these is the grace for which Paul was commending these believers. We know this because the Apostle goes right on to explain himself. Look at these verses once again:

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

1. This was a grace that *enriched* them in utterance.
2. This was a grace that enriched them in knowledge.
3. This was a grace that extended their testimony, and,
4. This was a grace that enabled their gifts.

We do not want to overlook a precious thought. Our analytical minds would have us immediately address the issues of the hour, what's utterance, what *is* knowledge? What *are* these gifts? Moreover, we should address these questions. But we must not overlook the *sweetest morsel of all*. What made this so

precious was not the gifts of grace, the utterance or the knowledge. What makes this passage so precious is the *Giver*: Paul said, "I thank my God for the grace of God which is given you *by Jesus Christ*."

Jesus Christ, *personally*, gave these wonderful gifts to these believers. Now, mull that over and think of the implications. Ours is no Savior who sits off at a distance waiting for the events of history to take their course before His return. Ours is the Savior *who walks among the candlesticks!* Ours is the Savior who deals *personally* with His churches. This Savior participated directly in providing the graces that this Corinthian church needed. We have a gracious Savior who dispenses grace to you and me personally.

Add to this "*so that ye come behind in no gift*." The original word for grace is *charis*. The Bible's word for gift (as in spiritual gift) is *charisma*, or grace gift. Every spiritual gift is a gift of grace.

Our anti-Trinitarian friends are on the horns of a great dilemma here, for we read that *Jesus Christ* gave these gifts to these believers. Yet later in Corinthians, Paul will remind us that it is the *Holy Spirit* who imparts these gifts, severally, He wills. Paul further adds in Romans that God the Father is the giver of gifts.

God has not left us unequipped. The Lord Jesus Christ, himself, applies His grace on behalf of this very assembly.

What are the matters of *utterance* and *knowledge about*? These terms can represent two sides of the same coin. Both represent testimony. Utterance is the ability to speak it outwardly. It is freedom and liberty. Knowledge is the inward aspect. I know of men with great liberty who are not so great in the knowledge department and I know of a great many men who have the knowledge but cannot articulate it in a fashion that captures, enraptures, or even touches the hearts of men in the slightest way.

The abilities to know and utter God's Word are desperately needed today. The average person in the congregation knows little of the issues that pertain to utterance and liberty. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives utterance according to Acts 2:24 and Acts 4:31. Peter and John were both given utterance according to Acts 4:13. Paul prayed for utterance in Ephesians 6:19.

Do not assume that our pastors will come to us in the "fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" every time they enter the pulpit. Liberty and utterance are precious gifts. Paul admonished the believers in Rome concerning his forthcoming visit to Jerusalem:

Romans 15:30-31

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;
KJV

Later on, we are going to accuse the Corinthians of misplacing their emphases on spiritual gifts. We shall accuse them, in due time, for focusing on the gift rather than upon the Giver. We will make them out to be like little children who would rather play with the wrappings than the gift that came in the box. That task is reserved for another day. At this place in the letter we confine ourselves to complimenting and praising the Corinthian believers.

We want to grasp what Paul is really saying in these words. Paul has commended these believers because *the grace of Christ* has been *evidenced among them*. It has been dispensed through the gifts of Christ in utterance, in knowledge, and in all of the spiritual gifts.

What has been the common effect; the result? Paul cites two results that have come about because of the Lord Jesus Christ personally imparting his gifts. The first result is found in verse 6:

Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

Paul is telling us that the witness of Christ was authenticated *in* them. Paul did not say that the witness of Christ was confirmed *through* them, although no one would argue that point. Instead, he is telling them that this grace of Christ that was bestowed upon them increasing their utterance and their knowledge had also confirmed Christ's witness in their own hearts!

There is wisdom in that thought! When *you* are exercising the gifts that Jesus Christ has personally given to you, you too will have the witness of God's Word confirmed in your own life. The greatest way to strengthen yourself in the Lord and increase your own faith is to witness and minister to others. That is the advantage of using your gifts. Their use confirms the testimony in your own heart.

The first benefit of this wealth of graces bestowed upon these believers was a stronger faith for each one of them personally. There was also a second benefit equally as desirable...Paul noted:

So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second benefit that resulted from this wealth of graces was that it kept them waiting for the return of Christ. Some read the very opposite into this passage. They say that Paul is admonishing them here that waiting for the return of Christ is more important than the exercise of their gifts. I think they have it all wrong.

I believe that what applied a few sentences prior applies here as well. The believer who is busy serving Christ, busy using his gifts and active in ministry and testimony is always the believer who is longing for the Lord's return.

Some folks do not long for Christ's return at all. Other folks long for His return, but sometimes for selfish reasons. Those who work for Christ's cause long for His return because they want to see their Savior glorified and uplifted to His rightful position. That is the very first reason why we should long for Christ's return.

We conclude with:

1 Corinthians 1:8-9

8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

KJV

We have discovered the power in Paul's writing and ministry. We have covered nine verses, and in exactly nine out of nine verses the Apostle Paul refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Eight times, he mentions His actual name, and in one verse he refers to Christ with a pronoun, but *Christ* is present in each verse.

Paul was focused on a Person. Paul was consumed with the Person of Christ. The word "Christ" appears 69 times in this book alone, the word "Jesus" occurs another 27 times, and the word "Lord" occurs 70 times. Do you want to stay on target with your ministry? Keep the Lord Jesus at the center of your thoughts and your teaching!

And one of the sweetest morsels of all for chewing over in your mind *is* the wonderful day of His return. There are actually **three** Bible words which are used commonly in reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- One is pronounced par-oo-see' a (parousia)
- One is pronounced e-pif-an-i-a (epiphaneia)
- One is pronounced ap-ok-al'-oop-sis (apokalupsis)

Each speaks of one important aspect of his coming. Parousia is used most frequently. It speaks of the physical presence of the individual. If He were visiting our town today, we would speak of his parousia. In our Bible the word is used both in reference to the rapture and the second coming of Christ.

Epiphaneia means, "to bring forth into the light, to cause to shine." It refers to the fact that when our Lord returns, He will return in the brightness of His glory.

The word used in our passage here, apokalupsis, refers to the *unveiling* of the Lord Jesus Christ. It means to uncover or to reveal.

In his book Things to Come, J. Dwight Pentecost has written: "These words, then, emphasize three great facts in relation to the second advent: Christ will be visibly present, His glory will be fully revealed, and He Himself will be fully manifested."

Christian friend, Jesus Christ has not had his Second Coming as the cults teach. He has not returned secretly, as others would have us believe, and He is not walking the streets of Delhi reincarnated as some guru. When He returns you will know it. He will return *personally*. He will *be revealed in His full glory*, and the world will stand aghast *at the brightness* of His epiphany!

Should you be afraid? If you are a part of the fellowship you have nothing to worry about. If you have been called into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ which verse 9 speaks about, you do not need to be afraid of the unveiling of Christ which verse 7 speaks about! How do we know that? We know it because we read the verse tucked in between verses 7 and 9:

Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This pastor did not say that, God said it. God is faithful. He will confirm you blameless in the Day of Christ.

When President Nixon resigned from office, he still faced the legal consequences of Watergate. President Ford assumed office and pardoned Nixon for any wrongdoing that may have occurred. From that point forward President Nixon was *blameless* in the eyes of the law. He was unimpeachable, unaccusable.

That is the exact legal word we find in this text for the word blameless. You cannot be *charged* in the court of heaven. When the apostle said in Romans 8:33

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth

He was using the root of the word that we find here.

So. Perhaps, all of this time, while you have been musing about what a mess you have made of things, you have forgotten all about these crazy Corinthians. They were one mixed up bunch from man's point of view. Nevertheless, these folks were signed, sealed, and delivered. From God's point of view, they were confirmed blameless unto the day of Christ.

On what do you base your confidence? Do you know Christ as Savior? If you do, you are in the tightest fellowship that ever existed. Why would you join the Masons, or Job's Daughters or Rebecca? Why would you join the Elks or the Moose, or the Bullfrogs or anyone else? Whatever can they possibly offer you which fellowship in the body of Christ cannot offer you? These groups can never

make the promise God is making to you this morning: They can never confirm you blameless unto the end and at the coming of the Lord Jesus! Only Jesus can do that. Only Jesus can satisfy your soul.

Division in the Body

Intro:

In our previous study of 1 Corinthians 1 we saw:

The Document - in verses 1-3

The Delight of the Apostle - in verses 4-9

Here we learned about all the *good things* which God had been doing in the lives of these new believers who were just a couple of years or so old in the Lord. We also learned the importance of respecting and uplifting our brethren in Christ before we set about the task of correcting them.

We left off on the warm note of verses 8 and 9 where we saw that these believers were exercising their spiritual gifts while anxiously awaiting the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we were encouraged by the reminder of Paul that we have all been called into the **fellowship** of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son..

Fundamental and essential to any basic understanding of the word *fellowship* (Gr: koinonia) is the word *partnership*. It is a most precious New Testament word. To be a partner, in the most pristine sense of the meaning, means that we are under a common yoke, just as two oxen pull together as a team, combining their efforts synergistically in order to produce greater results than each ox could produce separately. That is partnership. This is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me...*" He was not suggesting that He sit up in heaven while we bear the yoke down here below. Instead, He was speaking of our *partnership* with Christ and the truth that He serves *under the yoke* with us.

When we talk about partnership, it is very important to understand the *fundamental rule of partnership or fellowship*. The principles of partnership must be of like kind.

Inventors, engineers, and builders all know this. They know that if you bolt two kinds of metal together, one will expand or contract, or melt, or break, or wear sooner than the other wears. Plumbers know what happens when copper pipes and galvanized pipes are not properly joined. Seamstresses know this when they sew unlike fabrics together, and farmers, farmers especially, know that you cannot put two different kinds of animals under the same yoke.

We break these rules all of the time. We break them by joining with unsaved pastors in evangelistic crusades and ministerial associations. We break them in

business when a believer becomes yoked with an unbeliever in a partnership. We break them in marriage when a believer marries an unbeliever. J. Vernon McGee brings a smile when we read what he says on this subject in his Through The Bible series:

"There is a passage in the Old Testament that makes me smile because I know God had man and wife in mind when He wrote it. He said among other things that they were not to hitch an ox and an ass together for plowing. They were not to plow together. Well, in marriage I have seen many an ox and an ass hitched up together! That ought not to be because marriage is a partnership." pg19

Later, in our study of Corinthians Paul will bring this theme up again, so we will pass on it for now. Just keep in mind some of the things it means when we say we are partners with God's Son, Jesus Christ. It means that we share common resources. All that God has is at your disposal...and all that you have should be at Christ's disposal. It means that we share common interests and goals. Do not make Jesus Christ a partner with unbelief! Do not embarrass Him that way! Do not make Him a partner in sin or idolatry.

And, when we are partners with someone, it means we share a common cause in service, a common Goal. Is our cause and Christ's cause the same or do we have separate agendas?

We want to change direction now and appreciate a masterful technique that Paul uses repeatedly. Paul is a master at *transition*. We are going to see this on a number of occasions as we go through Corinthians together.

In verse 9, Paul is talking about our rich fellowship in Christ. In verse 10, Paul is now going to address the first of the 23 problems which the church at Corinth was experiencing, the problem of *division* in the body.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.."

First, Paul introduces the subject of fellowship and then he addresses the problem of fellowship that this church was having. This brings us to the third point of our outline. We saw the Document, in verses 1-3, the Delight of the Apostle in verses 4-9, we now see:

C. Division in the Body.

You see, division hinders fellowship. It hinders partnership. If you will look closely at the next few verses, you will see that they organize themselves easily.

In verse 10 we see the plea for unity
In verse 11 we see what prompted Paul to discuss it

In verse 12 and following we why disunity is foolish

We have already read verse 10. Please examine it with me.

1. "Now I beseech you... "That is the nature of the request. Paul could have used much stronger language here. He could have said, "Now I command you..." and it would have been quite appropriate for Paul to do so. It would have been within the scope of the proper exercise of his authority. Instead, Paul said, "I *beseech* you." By now, you probably already know the reason why. Beseech is the Bible's *love request*. It is that old Greek word *parakaleo*. The word also associated with *Paraclete*.

It is true that there are many commands in the Word of God, but it is also true that when the HOLY SPIRIT BEGINS DEALING WITH US in our hearts...at the root level...He is the One who *beseeches*, He is the One who *admonishes*. He comes alongside and encourages us, He nudges us to do what is right.

The Corinthian church is dealing with a problem of unity. Matters of unity are matters of the heart. Yes, it is true, that Paul is going to deal with our *minds* in a minute -- but you need to know this first. Unity begins in the heart.

Sometimes, when problems arise in the church, pastors will preach on unity, almost as a manipulative tool, implying that members who do not agree are the ones dividing the body. I have never seen a case when a sermon preached on unity during a time of crisis in a church ever brought unity back into focus. Unity is an issue of the heart. When Euodia and Syntyche were having their catfight at Philippi, Paul said:

Philippians 4:2

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

He did not say, I command you to be of the same mind. The *nature* of Paul's request - it was a love plea.

2. We also see the basis of Paul's request. Paul says, "Now, I beseech you, *brethren*." A brother is one who comes from the same womb. It speaks of common origin, a common family bond, a common family cause. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

Sibling rivalry is the worst kind of rivalry. Sibling rivalry brought Israel to her knees. Anger between brothers is far more consequential than anger between enemies. Every parent is aware that brothers and sisters fight now and then when their old natures gain control, but parents who *tolerate* sibling rivalry among their children you are planting the seeds for future tears and heartache.

Paul is saying, it is unthinkable that we should scrap -- because we are brethren. We are from the same womb and we were all *birthed* through Jesus Christ. We are all the sons of God. Our Heavenly Father does not want to see His children scrapping.

3. Then there is the importance of Paul's request. Did you see it when you read the verse? Paul said "Now, I beseech you, brethren, *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" That is the highest authority Paul could invoke. Paul wants these believers to know that scrapping is no small issue with the Lord. This issue goes all the way to the top. Paul says, I am begging you, in Jesus' name to stop this! For the sake of Christ, don't do it! It stands against everything for which Jesus Christ died. In His great prayer for us recorded in John 17, the Lord Jesus prayed.

John 17:22

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

KJV

Talk about ruining the plan of God! He clothed us with his glory that we would be one, specifically so that the world could identify us. And like little girls playing in the dirt with their new dresses on, we have defiled that glory in the mud of wrangling and disagreement.

4. There is also the essence of Paul's request. Exactly what is it that Paul is requesting?

Paul requests: "*..that ye all speak the same thing..*" that's one thought; "*...that there be no divisions among you*" that is the goal. "*...that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*"

No one needs a degree in the English Bible or original languages to know ultimately, what Paul is requiring.

In the computer world, when two pieces of software work together perfectly, we say that they have a *seamless* interface. That is the ultimate goal of the programmer. The ultimate goal of the church is exactly the same thing. That God would take our varying races, cultures, backgrounds, personalities, and styles and mold them seamlessly into one presentation of Himself. Paul wants us to be *perfectly*, seamlessly knitted together.

Ultimately, we know exactly what Paul intends by these words but we sometimes misunderstand what Paul meant when he said "*I beseech you...that ye all speak the same thing.*" What does it mean *to speak the same thing*?

a. Paul did *not* say that Christians should be able to speak *anything*.

Some folks use passage such as this to argue for the kind of UNITY in the body that allows *anything* to be taught. They teach the doctrine of inclusivism. The first church I pastored was a classic example of this. On the one hand, they were an IFCA associated church and subscribed to the IFCA doctrinal statement. On the other hand, they were a community church and did not require church membership. Because ours was the only gospel preaching church around for miles, we had Calvinists and Arminians in the church. We had Charismatics and non-charismatics in the church. We *had* to agree. We had to get along. We had no choice. And we all dearly loved each other. But there was a problem. There was a problem with division in the body. One teacher would teach that you could lose your salvation. One would say that is impossible. One would encourage the children to speak in tongues. His son, who taught another class, would warn about the errors of speaking in tongues! In that little church, they thought that speaking the same thing meant speaking anything. That attitude actually brought division into the body.

Somewhere in the back of most serious churches you find a doctrinal statement. One must agree to a doctrinal statement in order to join a particular church as a full-fledged member. I have had folks in all of my churches who could not agree with the doctrinal statement of the church. They served alongside of us in many ways and gave and helped and prayed, but they could not join. They were a part of us in every way, but they could not join the church or teach a class regularly. Why, because Paul commands us that we all speak the same thing. Most doctrinal statements do not contain all of the doctrines that a particular church teaches, but they do contain those doctrines that, if challenged, could cause division in the body.

When Paul said that we are to speak the same thing, Paul did not mean that Christians could speak anything.

b. Nor did Paul say that we should only speak and teach the things upon which we all agree.

There are some mission organizations whose doctrinal statements could be read off the back of a postage stamp. They believe that Christians should not disagree with other Christians on any doctrinal matter. The Assembly of God Church in a town where I formerly pastored boldly proclaimed on their sign, "All faiths can worship here." All faiths cannot worship where Christ is truly exalted. The same Apostle Paul who wrote these words was the apostle who instructed us to reprove and rebuke with all longsuffering and authority. He is the one who said we are to *reject* heretics after the first and second admonition. He is the one who instructed us to rebuke those who sin before all!

In 2 Timothy 4:14 Paul tells how Alexander the Coppersmith stood against him and did him much evil, and how that, at his first defense, no man stood with him, but the Lord stood with him.

This is no mealy worm Christianity that you endorse! It is a man's faith! It is born in love, and defended through conflict. Paul did not intend that we should only teach those things regarding which everyone agrees.

What did Paul mean? Paul was intending that we *use* our speech as a mechanism to promote unity, and that the proper use of our speech will do two things:

1. It will avoid the appearance of factions and divisions in our assembly, and;
2. It will heal the factions already existing.

Look specifically at the words "*but that ye be perfectly joined in the same mind and in the same judgment...*" The words *perfectly joined* connote the idea of healing of wounded tissues. Wuest's Expanded Translation of this passage conveys in strict detail what I believe the Spirit of God intended:

"Now, I beg of you, please, brethren, my appeal to you being enforced by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ {that Name holding within its compass all that He is in His glorious Person and wonderful salvation}, I beg of you, please, that all of you be speaking the same thing, that there be no factions among you, but that the breaches in your fellowship caused by these factions, having been healed, you may remain perfectly united in the sphere of the same mind and in the sphere of the same opinion."

In other words, through Paul's particular choice of words in this verse he is encouraging these dear believers to begin healing breaches which already exist.

What is the *same mind* we are to have? It is the mind of Christ. It is the mind of the servant. How are we to mold our minds and judgment? We do so through the careful use of our speech.

Verses 11 and 12 reveal two more important problem solving characteristics of Paul. First, we saw that Paul approached them as a beseeching brother. Now we see that Paul approaches them with facts and names.

During my years in the ministry my greatest enemy has always been "the General." General funds and general charges are two generals which are impossible to manage. *General charges* are impossible to answer.

When folks are unhappy, it is very often in their nature to come to the pastor and they say, Pastor I am burdened about the spiritual condition of the church. Everyone says that these people are cold and unloving. I always ask two questions when I hear these kinds of remarks. First, I ask who is saying this. To this they reply, well *everyone* is saying it. Then I ask them to name one person who is saying it, and, of course, they cannot.

Next, I ask tell me *which* of my people are cold and unloving. Is it so and so, or is it so and so? In all the years of my ministry, I have never had anyone carry the conversation beyond those two questions.

In contrast, notice Paul. Notice that not even once will you find the Apostle Paul make a general charge about any group of people. [Please note that Paul's reference to the Cretans in Titus 1:12 represented a rebuke to those who were making insolent remarks. Paul certainly did not agree with them.] There is no justification for making blanket accusations.

Secondly, when Paul does treat a legitimate issue, he puts real names behind it. "It has been reported to me by those of the household of Chloe" He dealt with specifics and he never lowered himself to generalities.

The third reason why Paul was such a good problem solver is found in verse 12 and the following verses. Paul had a knack for showing erring believers how unreasonable their behavior really was. He did not make fun of them, but he was quick to show these believers how foolish their divisions were.

Some claimed to be of Paul, or of Apollos, or Cephas. Why would some choose Paul? Perhaps because he was the founding pastor some thought he could do no wrong. He had gone through the birth process with them. He had powerful teaching skills.

Why would some choose Apollos? He was the great orator. Perhaps he was the people's pastor, the silver-tongued orator of his day who always got to the heart.

Why choose Cephas? Maybe it was because Peter could really lay it on the line. He kept those annoying Judaizers at bay.

Would it not be logical and spiritual to join the Christ party? It was not that they followed Christ; it was that they were the namedroppers, the super spiritual, and the elitists. If a person was not of them, my guess is that he would simply be seen as part of the uninitiated.

Paul treats the matter with wisdom. He simply shows how that Jesus Christ is so far superior to Paul, to Apollos, to Cephas, and to the Christ party and that it is child's play to argue about such things.

Styles and personalities will come and go and each one will bless us in some way. Each one will leave us lacking in some way. However, Jesus Christ alone will always satisfy. Jesus Christ alone deserves our loyalty. No earthly leader does. Jesus Christ is the One upon whom we can all agree. When Jesus Christ is your focus and when Jesus Christ is my focus we will be of the same mind. That is the beauty of this! The more focused each of us are individually focused

on Christ, the more we will speak the same thing and be perfectly joined together.

In summation:

- The basis of our unity is the fellowship we have in Christ - verse 9.
- We should not command unity as much as we should plead for it among ourselves - verse 10
- Speaking the same thing never suggests compromise, but rather it is the method by which we heal old wounds and mold ourselves into a common mind.
- When we deal with problems in our assembly, let's give the general a decent funeral and determine that we will deal only with specific, verifiable issues. And, above all, let us remember.
- No person, or personality is strong enough to mold us together. Jesus Christ alone stands tall enough to be the basis for our common mind.

Then, and only then can we experience the words of Christ: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love, one to the other..."

The Foolishness of God

Intro:

The story is told of a Canadian preacher who advertised his messages on public billboards a number of years ago in Canada. When he approached this passage, he advertised his message with the title: "The foolishness of God!" As a result, he was hauled in before the magistrate a few days later and reminded that Canadian law forbade the public blasphemy of God. The pastor was quick to point the magistrate to this text and the misunderstanding was clarified. We have come a long way from that day to this day. During the week these notes were written, we had a court case involving a believer who was not even allowed to pay for the public posting of a sign which says "Jesus is Lord!"

We have come a very long way down the road of rebellion, and that is why it is important to understand exactly what the Apostle is teaching as we contrast the foolishness of God with the wisdom of men.

Focus on 1 Corinthians 1:18. Previously, we learned about the importance of speaking the same thing. Paul warned these believers (and us) about the danger of nurturing party spirits.

As indicated, Paul is a master at transition and he is about to make another marvelous transition right before our eyes. The transition itself can be observed in verse 17. Remember, as you look at it, that Paul has just been showing the Corinthians how foolish it is to line up behind personalities and teaching styles. He even reminds them that he avoided baptizing folks, for the most part, just to ward off the temptation that anyone might have had to brag that they had been baptized by an apostle, by Paul himself. So Paul declares:

1 Corinthians 1:17

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

KJV

Paul is not asserting the insignificance of baptism. He is merely stating that his focus was to preach the gospel. By the way, folks who believe that baptism saves are clearly on the horns of a dilemma here because Paul separates the issue of the gospel from the issue of baptism.

Returning to the point at hand, we want to identify the transition that Paul is making. These Corinthians believers had been playing the world's game. In Paul's day, teachers were very prestigious. Both Jews and Gentiles honored them, and all teachers, of any consequence, had a string of *disciples* following them around. When the Lord Jesus taught, He too, selected his own *disciples* who followed Him. These teachers, with their little bands of followers were philosophers who represented the *wise of this world*.

The folks who were saying, "I am of Paul, or Cephas, or of Apollos" were simply parroting the world. They thought it natural that, within Christianity, we too would have many *teachers* and *disciplers*. However, there is only one worthy teacher, and we must all be His disciples. You cannot be Paul's disciple and be Jesus' disciple! No man can serve two masters! These believers were mimicking the world's values in their estimation of what was important to God, so, when the Apostle said: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect," they knew exactly what he was saying. *The transition made perfect sense.* Now, unfolding before our eyes, is one of the most striking of all Pauline passages. We have in front of us a marvelous dissertation contrasting God's wisdom with man's wisdom.

Regretfully, like those Corinthians of old, we have many believers around us today who have begun to mimic the world's ways. They have begun to honor the wisdom and value systems of the community. Ironically, they do this especially when they are trying to win the lost. There is one church, for example, in a community where I served, which plasters a quote from Nietzsche right on the front of its weekly bulletin. Neichie was, of course, one of the world's wise men in our generation, but he was also a Christ rejecter.

Examining the verses which we have in front of us, we will define our subject, and assign three points to it:

The subject is found in verse 18: **The Preaching of the Cross.**

In verses 18-23 we will see **It Rejects the Selected**

In verses 24-29 we will see **It Selects the Rejected**

In verses 30-31 we see **It Delivers What is Expected!**

The third point will fall in place after we have seen the first two points.

I. The Preaching of the Cross Rejects the Selected Vs. 18-23

Now, read verse 18:

1 Corinthians 1:18

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

America was powerless during the Viet Nam conflict because our soldiers reported that they were not allowed to play by the rules. One day they could take a hill, the next day they were forbidden to take the same hill. The enemy could attack, kill, and then retreat to their privileged sanctuaries where our boys could not pursue. Traitors within our own government were determined that we would not win that war. Many claimed that our boys bled while politicians waffled. One cannot win a war when the lines are not drawn in the sand.

The Apostle Paul is drawing the lines in the sand: There are two groups, and only two groups of people. There are those to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness, and there are those to whom the preaching of the cross is the power of God. There are no neutrals. There is no spiritual Switzerland. You, yourself are in one of these two groups this very hour.

That is where the line is drawn in the sand. That in fact, is what it means to be saved. A saved person is one who believes that Jesus Christ personally procured his salvation through His death on the cross. Christ shed his blood as a sacrifice, an offering to satisfy the holiness of God. The Bible says, *"For by one offering hath he perfected forever, them that are sanctified."* Christ's death secured our salvation and His resurrection authenticated it. That is the gospel. It is the gospel of the cross. That is the line in the sand.

Womanist professor Delores Williams, of Union Theological Seminary in New York has said:

"I don't think we need a theory of atonement at all. Atonement has to do so much with death. I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff. We do not need atonement, we just need to listen to the god within."

Delores Williams is an enemy of the cross. She is among those who are perishing, those who account that the preaching of the cross is foolishness. Ms. Williams needs the love Christ. Note that the Bible does not say she *will* be lost. The Bible says she is lost right now.

The wise of this world are the best that the world has to offer. They are the select. **Why, then has God rejected the select?** Why has God rejected the *wisdom or philosophy of the world?* He has done so for very good reasons. He has done so because the wisdom of the world has rejected Him. He has also done so because He does not want any flesh to glory or to brag in his presence, (vs. 29).

Notice *how*, the world in its wisdom has rejected God.

First, see they have rejected God's *method*. The *preaching* of the cross is foolishness.

When one preaches one makes *an announcement* or *declaration*. That is what preaching is. When one preaches, he announces *with authority* a fact that already exists.

The very thought shivers the timbers of the philosopher. For if there is anything the wise of this world hate, it is to declare anything as absolute fact. When something is declared fact, it is no longer debatable. The essence of philosophy is debate. For a healthy environment, the philosopher must declare that everything is in a state of change, and absolute truth cannot be known.

Someone has said that *a philosopher is a blind man running around blindfolded in a dark room chasing a black cat that is not there*. It has been said that with good cause. The joke is that the philosopher *wants* it that way. If he catches the nonexistent cat he is out of a job. It is as simple as that.

The wise of this world reject God's METHOD - preaching.

Secondly, they reject the *message* itself. The preaching of *the cross* is *foolishness*. To be *fool-ish* is to be like a fool. The word for fool simply means *simple one*. A fool is a *simple* person, a simpleton.

That is the strange thing about the gospel. It is so naked, so bare, so simple, and so elementary. I have been in the Lord's work for more than forty years. During that time I have never had anyone turn away from the gospel because they could not understand it. I have had many folks say to me "*What you are saying cannot possible be, it is too simple, too easy. There must be more.*" We have worked too hard at improving our minds, these scholars would say. This gospel offends us!

God has rejected the wise because they have rejected the *method*, the preaching of the cross. God has rejected the wise because they have rejected the *message*, it is the preaching of the cross.

God has rejected the wise because they have rejected the Maker. They have rejected God himself.

1 Corinthians 1:21

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

KJV

Notice, especially, those words "*the world by wisdom knew not God.*" Every philosopher in every age wears a different face. Every religious leader wears a different robe, but the agenda is the same: Unbelieving men are not just rejecting God's methods. They are not just rejecting God's message. They are rejecting God Himself. It is unthinkable that there is an absolute Creator being who holds free, thinking men, accountable to Himself and Himself alone!

David Feddes of the Back to God Hour reported a few years ago on the Re-Imagining conference held in Minneapolis. This Global Theological Conference for Women, sponsored by the World Council of Churches and funded by American denominations, centered on re-imagining every aspect of the Christian faith. Instead of praying in Jesus name, these women chose to end their prayer with the words "*through the power and guidance of the spirit of wisdom, whom we name Sophia.*"

Jesus, too, was re-imagined in this conference:

"..He became she. God was found, not in a Jewish carpenter from Nazareth, but in a vaguely feminine entity called *Sophia*, the Greek word for wisdom, which conveniently happens to be a feminine name."

The Bible says that when men reject the knowledge of God, they will *exchange* His truth for a lie. Read Romans 1:25. The ultra-feminists who are re-imagining God are doing just that. I like Feddes' words when he says "*They felt more comfortable worshipping an abstract projection of their own femaleness than the living God whose supreme revelation of himself was that of a carpenter from Nazareth who died to take away the sins of the world.*"

The Ebenezer Lutheran Church in San Francisco, the "Her Church" fleshes out this foolishness in its liturgy and practice. We are not surprised. The world, by *wisdom* does not know our God. Any extreme view will be embraced before unbelieving men will worship the living God.

We see, then, that **the Preaching of the Cross Rejects the Selected.** Those who are the choice cuts in the world's eyes are dog food in God's eyes. Am I being harsh? Listen to the Apostle's own words:

1 Corinthians 1:19-20

19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

KJV

Many of you will go to work tomorrow. You will do what you were hired to do. You will produce the goods. You will deliver the product. You will perform. You will do what you agreed to do. When you receive your check, it will not be a reward, it will be a pay check, given in return for services rendered.

The wise of this world are a breed of another stripe. The philosophers of the world have been around since the days of Genesis offering their alternate solutions and campaigning against God. They have offered us solutions for every need of mankind. Through their own ingenuity and logic, they have set us all straight. They have poured out their answers for our economic problems, our political problems, our moral problems, our drinking problems, our AIDS problems, our educational problems, our law enforcement problems, our international problems, and even our dandruff problems.

Why then, do they all exist? Why hasn't utopia come? Where have all the flowers gone? Where are your answers, University of California at Berkley? Where are your answers, Washington and New York? Where is the scribe? The wise man, was, of course, the Greek philosopher. The scribe was the Jew, the rabbinical hair splitter. The disputer was the "questioning reasoner," probably a master of the Socratic method. They were the best of the best.

Here is the gauntlet, you worldly scholars! You have had at least three thousand years! You Chinese and Egyptians whose history goes back thousands of years, where have you led us? You venerated gurus sitting in your caves in the Himalayas, you Teutons who willed us the atomic bomb, and Arabian warriors who taught us cruelty in battle – we call upon all of you to stand and deliver! this is your day! this is your hour. Stop campaigning, you have been voted into office, now get the job done!

I repeat you, the average Christian, go to work tomorrow, you will have to deliver the goods or be fired. If you were smart at all, you would have gotten tenure at the local university and then you could go on for the rest of your life campaigning against God, and never delivering the goods or accepting responsibility for your own philosophical failure.

So, what is our point? The world's winners are really the world's losers because they have rejected the Lord of Glory.

There is so much more to say about the Jews who demand signs, and the Gentiles who bow at the feet of the goddess of wisdom, but we must turn our focus to the other side of the coin. The preaching of the cross rejects the selected, but thank God:

II. THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS SELECTS THE REJECTED.

We have just argued that the world's winners are really the world's losers. Now, we see that the losers, are really the winners:

1 Corinthians 1:23-25

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

KJV

There is a touch of irony here. Any salesman knows that if the dent is on the left rear of the car, you start by showing the customer the right front. You put your best foot forward.

But that is *not* how we proclaim the gospel. We are not selling a product. We are *proclaiming a fact*. We start with preaching Christ *crucified*. We start with what offends folks, what represents a scandal to the Jews and mental retardation to the gentiles. We do not *slip* the message of the cross somewhere near the end of our presentation as an incidental subheading. The cross is the focus.

In recent years there has been a significant debate concerning the Lordship of Christ. Many are accusing Dispensationalists of fostering *easy believism* because they do not give unbelievers a strong enough dose of the Lordship of Christ before they are saved. That is not what causes easy believism! The root cause behind easy believism (a misnomer that should be replaced by the term "believing in vain,") comes from presenting *bloodless crosses*. When God's man keeps the cross of Christ up front where it belongs, the offense of that cross, the foolishness of that cross, will divide the world from the called out ones. The tool that does the culling in the evangelistic harvest is the cross of Christ.

*"When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.."*

*"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all..."*

Do you know where and when men submit to Christ's Lordship? They do it when they survey an ugly, bloodstained cross and kneel at its foot.

We preach Christ crucified! That is a scandal to unbelievers. However, notice what else verse 24 says:

1 Corinthians 1:24

*24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.
KJV*

Unto us who are *called* it is the *power of God* and the *wisdom* of God. In a verse or two, the Apostle is going to explain in more detail why he does not need to use the wisdom of words to get his point across. But the cat has already been let out of the bag. He has already revealed the secret. The power is not in words. The power is in the preaching of the cross.

Pastors need to remember this. Sunday School teachers need to remember this. All of God's servants need to remember this. The power is not in the person. The power is in the cross. Corrie Ten Boom, in her book, tells the story of a Woodpecker who was pecking along when a bolt of lightning hit. He drew back in great surprise and flew off saying *"My, what power I have in my beak!"* Christian servant, there is no power in your beak and there is no power in my beak. The power is in the message of the cross.

Here is some more good advice, stop trying to groom the Woodpeckers! Why do we demand our leaders be so educated, so suave, so degreed, so articulate, so young, or so charismatic? If one really believes this book; if one really believes the power is in the message and not the man who delivers it, then one will take great care to choose his pastor's, teachers, and leaders, by their proximity to this cross. The power is in the cross!

We will need to continue in the next section, so in place of a closing summary, we describe an incident that occurred years ago in London as recorded by H.A. Ironside in his book of I Corinthians.

In Spurgeon's day all of London was alive with great men of God. Many of our great pastors and authors lived and preached literally within a few miles of each other and at the same time. F.B. Meyer, Parker, and Sangster were just a few. During those days, a gentleman who lived in a country town visited London to hear some of these great men of God. Writing home to his wife he said, "Last Sunday I went in the morning to hear Dr. So-and-so," (He named one of the most eloquent men in London at that time), "...and in the evening I went to the Metropolitan Tabernacle to listen to Charles Spurgeon. I was greatly impressed by both of them. Dr. _____ is certainly a great preacher, but Mr. Spurgeon has a great Savior"
- {I believe this is a quote from Ironside.}

It is not enough to have a great message. We must communicate to the world that we have a great Savior. Do you have a great Savior? Can you say with Paul, but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God? Can you truly say you are saved today? Have you settled the issue once, for all?

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

The power is still there...

Square Nots

Intro:

We are of the order of the cross. We have been rallying behind the flag. Our theme is the preaching of the cross. Our leader is the One who died on that cross. We have been raising its standard, embracing its offense, and proudly standing in the footsteps of those who have gone on before us. The line has been drawn in the sand. To those of us who are *being saved* this cross is the power of God unto salvation.

To those who are *being lost* the preaching of the cross is foolishness and sheer stupidity. When we take our stand beneath this cross of Jesus we take our stand with the rejected and despised of this world, the cast-offs and off scouring of society.

Take notice of the outline we have been following concerning the preaching of this cross:

In vs. 18-23 we see **It Rejects the Selected**

In vs. 24-29 we see **It Selects the Rejected**

In vs. 30-31 we see **It Delivers What we Expected**

We now see:

II. The Preaching of the Cross Selects the Rejected

Examine verses 26 through 28 with me now:

1 Corinthians 1:26-28

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

KJV

A. First, examine the actual Records

When I was very young in the ministry, I once candidated at a church where the people seemed quite enthused about my preaching. I met with the board of elders for that final cross-examination.

The atmosphere was congenial and things were going very well until the inevitable question came along. It was worded something like this: "And how much does it take for you to get by on?" The very wording of the question revealed to me that I was not with a very generous, though congenial, group of men. I responded "Well, that depends." This raised a few eyebrows and questioning foreheads. I said "If your church is grossing ten or twelve thousand dollars a year, I will be pleased to come on a few thousand dollars per year and together, we will trust the Lord for the rest. If, on the other hand, your church is grossing forty or fifty thousand dollars per year, I believe it would be responsible for you to provide me with a salary of seven or eight thousand dollars."

One man quickly broke the stunned silence with the response "Well, you can be sure this church does not gross forty or fifty thousand dollars per year!" The treasurer was in the room, and so were the church books. He leaned around behind him, opened the books, and announced, "Last year we grossed fifty thousand dollars." I said, "Then, brethren, you know my answer." That ended the discussion, and it ended my candidacy, by the way as well. God graciously spared me from the stress of working under that burden.

Now, when that treasurer turned around and looked at those books, there was no more argument. There was no more guessing. The *record* revealed the facts.

Paul has been arguing that God does not cater to the wise and mighty and that He has purposely chosen the preaching of the cross as the catalyst, the divider of men. Then he tells these believers to look at the record!

"...for you see *your* calling, brethren..."

Get out your calculators and count up the wise and noble among you. Not many princes and princesses, kings or queens, presidents, and emperors are likely to be available! Be advised that Paul did not say "not any," he said "not many."

Lady Huntingon, who had been a great help to the Wesleys and to Whitfield was known to say when giving her testimony "*I am going to heaven on an 'm'. I am so thankful that God did not say 'not any noble' but He said 'not many.'*"

We do not withdraw the offer of salvation from the wise and noble, but when it comes to the records, anyone who can add two plus two knows that this gospel reaches the down-and-outer first. Let the record stand.

Now, for the second "R" in the series.

B. Confront an important Reality.

Look at the wording of these verses. "For you see your **calling** brethren...not many are *called*...but God hath *chosen* the foolish...", and again, in verse 28...."the things which are despised *hath God chosen*.."

Here is the reality. God has chosen those whom he draws to himself. Would-be theologians would peer into the mind of God and ask, "Why me? Why did you choose me and not someone else who was far more worthy than I? Why me, Lord?" The answer is in front of us. God chose you because you did not qualify.

In the past, I have received some appointments and offers in that I felt were quite complimentary to me. I have had some men try to talk me into taking some very high paying jobs with great responsibility. I never had anyone tell me, "I have chosen you because you are a loser! I have chosen you because you were the *least qualified* for the job!" Yet God does this very thing to us!

Have you ever wondered why the doctrine of election is hated, even though it is taught so thoroughly in scriptures? The reason it offends us is that it shows us to be the fools we really are. Spurgeon once said:

"It is clear to everyone who will observe either Scripture or fact, that God never did intend to make His gospel fashionable; that the very last thing that was ever in His thoughts was to select the 'elite' of mankind, and gather dignity for His truth from the gaudy trappings of rank and station. On the contrary, God has thrown down the gauntlet against all the pride of manhood; he hath dashed the mire into the face of all human excellency; and with the battleaxe of his strength he has dashed the escutcheon of man's glory in twain. 'Overturn! overturn! overturn!' seems to be the very motto of the Lord of Hosts, and shall be so 'until He shall come whose right it is to reign, and he will give it to him', for his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. There is no doctrine more truly humbling than the doctrine of election;...."

Those are weighty words: "*There is no doctrine more truly humbling than the doctrine of election.*"

Think about that. Most folks who get into heated discussions about election are offended by the doctrine because they feel that it would be *unfair* for God to choose some and not all. If I am a king, and I have in front of me a penitentiary full of men who have received the death penalty, I have performed no injustice because I choose to pardon some and not all. In the same way, God is not unfair, unless you think that all men are not under sentence from God. God gives Satan no chance to be saved, and yet that does not offend us. It does not offend

us because we see *no good* in Satan. But it is the assumed good we see in men which, we think, makes them worthy of the right of salvation. The doctrine of election eliminates the whole issue. God chooses the unqualified, those least worthy.

There are many more things we should rightfully address on the subject of election. For now, all I ask you to grasp is the *reality*. The reality is that God chooses whom He will and He has elected to choose the foolish, the weak, the base, and the despised.

C. It's time to observe the Reason.

Why then, has God chosen to invert this pyramid, and select His own from among the lowest of humanity?

a. Not many wise... Just look at that group of disciples, not one of them, except for Judas, even had a shirt and tie. They did not splash on a fifty dollar bottle of cologne. Their scent was the scent of decaying fish! There was no doctor, or philosopher among them. And look at John the Baptist! In Jesus' own words, there were none greater among men than this one who had no political or social position. He certainly would not have been published in a gentlemen's magazine. The greatest man who ever lived would have been classed as a demented homeless person if he were to walk our streets.

Not many mighty! Peter once drew a sword and the best he could do was cut the man's ear off! Not many noble! Do you know what it means to be noble? Essentially, it means that you are able to trace your pedigree, your family line! Are some among us who don't even know who their real father was? Don't let it bother you! That just makes you a perfect candidate for the gospel! Do you see the beauty in this? I believe it was in a classic World War II movie where the commanding officer once told his outnumbered flyers, "*Once you accept the fact that you are dead you will make good soldiers!*"

Friend, once you accept the fact that you are dead, Jesus Christ can save you! In the year 178 an anti-Christian philosopher once mocked Christianity with these words:

" Let no cultured person draw near, none wise and non sensible, for all that kind of thing we count evil; but if any man is ignorant, if any man is wanting in sense and culture, if anybody is a fool, let him come boldly [to become a Christian]...We see them in their own houses, wool dresses, cobblers, the worst, the vulgarest, the most uneducated persons...They are like a swarm of bats orr ants creeping out of their nest, or frogs holding a symposium around a swamp, or worms convening in the mud."

We still ask why this is so. What is God's reason? It is a twofold reason:

a. First, it is to shame the wise and the mighty. It is to blow away and reduce to ashes the self-inflated images of the noble. That is God's purpose! Has it shamed and confounded the wise? The wise have been trying to reason Christianity away for centuries!

There is a story of a philosopher who lived literally in the days of Paul. He argued firmly against the teachings of Paul crying out "*There is nothing in it. It is so empty it isn't even worth answering.*" As the years rolled on and he grew into a grey headed old man. His own daughter converted to Christ, and then, his wife began sneaking off to the secret meetings of the Christians. In his confusion he said, "*There, I proved to a demonstration that it was all stupidity, and yet these people stick to it. I answered all their arguments, did I not? I not only answered and confuted, but I clinched my arguments in such a way that I thought I had put an end to the folly altogether. Here I see it in my own household.*" He later said "*I feel it in my own heart it has beaten me, it has confounded me; I could syllogize and rationalize and beat poor Paul, but Paul has beaten me. What I thought was folly has confounded my wisdom.*"

Moreover, the so-called mighty are no better off. Let the testimony of the Caesars of old or the Communists of our day refresh your mind with the facts. When one believer is crushed very often ten more hear the gospel message and rise to stand in his place.

We argued that there were *two reasons* why God has chosen the foolishness of the cross. The *first--was to confound the wise, mighty, and noble.*

b. The second is to direct the glory where it belongs. We see this in verse 29.

1 Corinthians 1:29
29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.
KJV

Notice what Paul did not say. Paul did not say, "That no *man* should glory." He chooses the word *flesh*. *Flesh* is the word that puts us in our place. It puts the wise man in his place, the warrior, and the nobleman. We are all made up of the same corruptible, decayable, disease-prone stuff called *flesh*. When Paul focuses on this word it puts our stupidity in the limelight! That atheist who shakes his fist at God is nothing more than a hunk of meat which will begin stinking a few days after he dies! The greatest warriors, the greatest minds, the richest men who ever lived are all worm food! Are they going to glory in God's presence? No!

The glory belongs to God. Let's add another R to our list of R's.

1. We have examined the record and found that God calls the weak.
2. We have confronted the reality that God Himself does the choosing.
3. We have observed the reason - so that the wise of this world may be shamed and so that no flesh will glory in His presence. Now,

D. Let's experience the Results.

1 Corinthians 1:30

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

KJV

This is where the gospel works its miracle. This is the power and beauty of the gospel. We must not think that all the gospel does is save the poor and the weak and the basest of mankind. One must never think that God ends His process with the offer of redemption. That is only the beginning of the process..

Notice the result of the preaching of the cross as we break this apart.

- a. Of Him (that is God, the father. He is the prime mover, the first planner);
- b. ...are ye in Christ Jesus. Because of the preaching of this cross you and the weak, the despised,, I the nobodies of this world, are placed directly into Jesus Christ. That is the ultimate. Is it any wonder that Christians stand in amazement? We sing

*"Alas, and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die?
Could He devote that sacred Head, for such a worm as I?"*

It goes further and further and gets deeper and deeper, for not only did the Lord of glory become, as it were, a *worm* for us, as the Psalmist so aptly describes, but he took you and me and *elevated us to our new position in Christ Jesus!* That is what He did for you! That is wisdom! That is nobility! That is might! He raised us from the lowest to the highest through the preaching of the cross of Christ!

Please be discerning here. The issue is *wisdom*. It is not so much that Jesus Christ *gives* us wisdom as it is that he becomes our wisdom when we are placed in Him.

It is true that men who receive Christ on the whole do become wiser. The gospel educates men. When you think with God you learn to reason as God reasons with us. I believe the man who walks with God becomes better at everything he does. Wherever the gospel has gone it has elevated the base and the despised and turned them into workers, scholars, and leaders of men. This gospel changes your finances, and it changes your politics. It even changes your health and

hygiene habits. Paul will soon make it clear that the practical wisdom of the believer is quite another matter.

The argument of verse 30 is that because we have been placed in Christ, He becomes our wisdom. It is also important to make a small adjustment in the English text in order to carry out the proper meaning.

Paul says, "But of whom are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, *even* righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." Now, the careful student of scripture will not let this point slide by. Paul is saying that Jesus Christ is made wisdom unto us, *even* righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. In other words, God's wisdom is played out in our lives through Jesus Christ by the application of

1. righteousness and sanctification, and,
2. redemption.

These are the very things which worldly wisdom *cannot* offer. It cannot make men righteous. The wisdom of men, skews our ideas of righteousness. It finally gets so bad that we call good things bad and bad things good! Worldly wisdom cannot produce true righteousness.

Worldly wisdom cannot sanctify men. It cannot make them holy. The more laws we write the more it seems we are compelled to break them. Laws are like magnets; they draw out the worst in men. The more we *educate* men, the more depraved they get. Worldly wisdom cannot sanctify men.

Moreover, worldly wisdom cannot redeem men! Earthly riches cannot buy men back from the slave market of sin. "Forasmuch as ye know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold" Peter said...."but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Finally,

E. Consider *your response*.

If you are a believer look over these verses and ask yourself some challenging questions.

1. Are we approaching the lost the way God approaches the lost, or do we do it in reverse? Do we choose to go to the up and outer first, and then the down and outer? Is God's focus our focus?

2. Are we presenting the wrong gospel? Are we sugar coating it? Are we taking too long to get to the substance of it? Do we try to obscure the offense of the cross in order to make it more acceptable? Lastly,

3. Are we mixing the world's wisdom with God's wisdom in our presentation of God's Word and thus confusing the message?

If you are without Christ you need to consider your response, for there is simply no middle ground. Either you are covered by the blood of that Cross or it is foolishness to you. Either you have submitted to the message of the cross, or in your profound wisdom you have found some argument to side step the issue and put Jesus Christ off. Your wisdom is not God's wisdom. Your timing is not God's timing. In your wisdom, you may be saying you are not ready yet. In God's wisdom, today is the day of salvation.

Consider what God wants to do for you this very hour. He wants to place you in His Son, Jesus Christ. He wants to give you His Son's righteousness and forgive your sins. He wants to *be* your sanctification, (your power for holy living.) He does not say clean up your act and then come to me. God always says, "Come to me, and I will clean up your act.

If I were selling you a car or a home today, I would tell you to go home and think about it. In truth, I am not selling you anything. However, I am offering you a gift that is so precious, and so easy to receive, that you do not need to consider for one more minute! The Savior knocks, but you must open the door.

Words of Wisdom

Intro: It is important to remember that our theme has been the Preaching of the Cross. We have come to understand that God despises the wisdom of this world and has chosen, instead, ***the preaching of the cross*** as the means of bringing men to Himself...

1 Corinthians 1:30

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

KJV

The Lord Jesus Christ is everything to us. I am instructed by the words of Godet on verse 30 as he notes:

Jesus Christ is wisdom to us by *His teaching*; He is, Righteousness to us by *His death and Resurrection*; He is Sanctification to us by *His elevation to Glory*; and He is Redemption to us by *His future resurrection*.

If we take a mental vacation and separate the teachings of chapter 1 from the teachings of chapter 2 we could be armed with just enough biblical information to make us dangerous. We not only need to know that earthly wisdom fails, but we need to know why it is flawed. We need to understand why philosophy and science are both doomed to failure.

In the previous lesson we asked you to Consider Your Response to the truths we learned in chapter one. When we look over chapter two, you discover that this is exactly what the Apostle is doing himself as he writes this chapter. He laid the foundation in chapter one, and now, he makes his conclusions in chapter two. At the same time, he is going to give us some new information to help us build on the things we learned in chapter one.

Based on what Paul has taught us about the Preaching of the Cross in chapter one we must attend to three matters:

- 1. We Must Guard The Way We Evangelize.** Vs. 1-5. Then,
- 2. We Must Understand Why Worldly Wisdom Is Flawed.** Vs. 6-13
- 3. We Must Learn How to Access God's Wisdom.** Vs. 14-16 (and on into chapter 3...)

To begin, notice:

I. We Must Guard The Way We Evangelize. Vs. 1-5.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

KJV

If God despises worldly wisdom it makes perfectly good sense that my presentation of the Gospel should *not employ* worldly wisdom. If I do not agree with the world's *conclusions*, I should not use the *world's logic* either. Now that I am a believer in Christ I have accepted God's Wisdom that is the world's foolishness, it would be a backward for me to use the world's foolishness to try to further the cause of God's wisdom.

A. I would not use the world's wisdom because it conflicts with God's testimony. Verse 1 requires this. It just would not make sense. Used car dealers seemingly know only one way to sell cars, the "*Yell it and Sell it Method.*" The louder the commercial shouts the better the commercial is, (in their eyes). Now, imagine someone trying to sell a rare *Ming Vase* using the *yell it and sell it* technique! Visualize a Ming Vase dealer wearing a cowboy hat, running a tape showing a row of Ming Vases, saying, "*Come on out, bring the family, we're open 'til midnight!*" When Christians use the world's techniques to advance the preaching of the cross, they look no less foolish. The world's wisdom conflicts with God's testimony. It makes the gospel and its advocates look backward and cheap.

In verse 2 Paul explains:

1 Corinthians 2:2

2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

KJV

There can only be **one** starting point. Paul was not declaring that the only important thing was the gospel.

I have a dear friend who sums up his whole philosophy of ministry in three words: "*Just preach Jesus!*" This sounds good on paper but it simply isn't biblical. That is not Paul is saying here.

Paul is saying that Jesus Christ is the starting point and foundation of our message. He is the first piece in the puzzle of life. All of the other pieces fit around Him. God's wisdom is *focused*. The scriptures focus like a laser beam on Jesus Christ. He is square 1. *The world, on the other hand, shifts from one idea to another, to another, and to another, until, it finally comes full circle.* The world's wisdom shifts like the sand dunes. So, according to verse two we may assume that the world's wisdom will not lead you to the crucified Christ.

B. Man's wisdom may sound enticing, but there is no power associated with it. Verse 4 requires this. It's like those irresponsible cellular phone ads in your paper. Buy a phone for \$50 dollars. That is very enticing; it is promising. When you get out the magnifying glass and read the small print you discover that that is what the phone will cost you *after* you sign over the rights to your first-born child. Now, Paul says, in contrast to the world's enticing words, God's wisdom. It is driven by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. It delivers what it promises.

Therefore, according to verse 4, the world's wisdom cannot deliver the goods.

C. If one is convinced to receive Christ, based on the logical arguments given to him by some other person, his faith will not stand.

Recently I read the story of a pastor who was entertaining a visiting pastor in his church. Standing in the back of the room he pointed out a certain person and he said, "*Do you see so, and so? He is one of my converts.*" The other pastor made some encouraging response and the first pastor replied, "*No, I mean he is one of my converts, he is not the Lord's convert*"

Every pastor fears this. We know that when folks are attracted to Christ through the strength of personality or reasoning they are usually converts to the moment only. It is a risk you take when you enter the ministry. This is why Paul said, "*I was with you in much weakness, and in fear, and in trembling.*" He dreaded the thought that we would be winning folks to Christ through the strength of his own personality and preaching. He knew if that were the case, that he would have nothing of substance to offer to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Does *your* faith stand in the wisdom of men or in the power of God? Secondly,

II. We Must Understand Why Worldly Wisdom Is Flawed Vs. 6-8

1 Corinthians 2:6-8

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

KJV

There are many believers who read what Paul has to say about God's wisdom in chapter one, but they never finish reading chapter two. The result is that they come up with some very embarrassing conclusions!

I have heard some pastors literally elevate the beauties of ignorance! They have it in their craw that any kind of education and learning is foolishness with God. That is a lie. That is stupid. God is not some backwoods hick who is opposed to education. God is truth! All of God's truth should interest us. Christians have traditionally been the leaders in good teaching and education. God is not opposed to education. God is opposed to man's wisdom.

Christians are not ignorant. We are the only ones in the position to *gather and assimilate truth properly*. We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, and it is a wisdom so fully revealed, that if the leaders of Paul's age had understood it they would never have crucified Christ.

The question remains, *how* is our wisdom *superior to the world's wisdom*? Let's talk about the world's wisdom. The rivers of the world's wisdom (without exception) flow from three fountains:

- 1.) Philosophy,
- 2.) Science, and
- 3.) World religion.

A. Consider philosophy. Philosophy is a *rigid discipline*. Christians sometimes think it concerns itself with aimless meanderings and rabbit trails. It does that too, but at its heart it *is* a discipline that concerns itself with about five major areas of investigation.

One of those areas is epistemology. Epistemology concerns itself with one question and only one question, what is truth? The epistemologists then begin offering their theories on what truth is. How can we identify it? How can we verify it?

Philosophy has performed a great service to us in its relentless effort to categorize, analyze, record, and *then discard* all the ideas that men have had about how to determine what is true. They have served us best by repeatedly *disproving* their own theories.

As an example, one philosopher may argue that knowledge is intuitive in man. Another argues the doctrine of *immediate perception* while another argues that *social criteria* are the methods for determining what is true.

We simply want to underscore that philosophy has done us a great service by disproving all of its own theories of epistemology! Philosophers have never found a valid epistemology. Christians have not only found a valid one, but Paul will also soon explain how sophisticated it really is.

The other disciplines of philosophy such as metaphysics, and logic meet the same fate. For the philosopher, the end result of all those pursuits end with the same depressing conclusion. To loosely quote the dying words of the famous Socrates, "*...the only thing I can know for sure is that I don't know anything for sure.*" Thank you for your witness, Socrates. You may leave the stand.

B. Consider science. It is time for Mr. Scientist to grace us with his wisdom. How does he determine what is true? What are the tools of his trade?

The scientist clears his throat in order to speak with authority and declares to us "*We scientists deal only with the facts. We accept only the things that can be proven! Through our efforts mankind has been able to find real truth.*"

"*Excuuuuuse me!*," the philosopher asserts as he rises to his feet, "*You are per-juring yourself on the witness stand!*" The philosopher then explains some of the great errors and religious presuppositions of the scientist.

For example, the philosopher points out that the scientist has *limited* his information sources. You see, the scientist relies on the *scientific method, a method which is most unscientific!* The scientific method insists that all facts must be ascertained by one or more of the five senses, touch, taste, hearing, sight, and sense of smell. If information *cannot* be observed through one of these senses, science ignores it! In the mind of the scientist, he has limited himself to the dogma that truth may only be discerned in a material context. This is why we call scientists materialists. They deal only with the material world.

Science limits its sources for gathering truth. If every living thing on planet earth was created without olfactory nerves and no living thing could smell, would that prove that odor does not exist? Of course not. Science has no peripheral vision, no outside point of reference.

The philosopher says, "Mr. Scientist, you have not considered the fact that knowledge could occur intuitively in your heart, or that knowledge could occur metaphysically, (that is, that there could be sources of knowledge beyond the material world which we know)."

Yes, the scientist makes *other* errors too, with his *logical process*. Empiricism *is* his logical god. He always treats his data by comparing things that are similar. His inductive processes have precluded deductive logic as a starting point in any investigation. We have only touched upon the discussion.

Hold on to the argument at hand. The scientific method is flawed *because it limits the places where the scientist can look for truth* and it relies on the *human senses* for verifying it.

So when it comes to the big issues of life, the things which really matter, Mr. Scientist is like the little boy in his bedroom looking for his shoes. He suspects they could be under the bed, but he looks everywhere else in the room for his shoes *because he is afraid that there might be a spook under the bed*. Unfortunately, some of us feel that the spook the scientist is afraid of finding is the living God who will hold him accountable.

We move now to the third major point of the lesson:

III. We Must Learn How to Access God's Wisdom Vs. 9-10

Now, we examine the Christian position. If you have held on to these ideas, you are now ready to follow the logic of verse 10. It is pure dynamite. Verse 10 deals with worldly wisdom. It is directed specifically to Mr. Philosopher and Mr. Scientist. We now bring the Apostle Paul to the stand in order to assert his argument:

1 Corinthians 2:9-10

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

KJV

When the scientist says he can only find truth through the eyes and ears, he has closed himself off from God's source of truth. When the philosopher teaches that truth is *intuitive* and the processes for validating truth are innate in man, the philosopher he has closed himself off from a great pool of information.

This is because God uses a mechanism for revealing truth that transcends all the methods and machinations of philosophy and science. What is this new dimension? What is this third mechanism? How do we tap the reservoir of God's truth and gain access to the treasure room of God's knowledge?

10 But God hath revealed [them] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

The things of God are revealed to us through His Holy Spirit.

So, we see, there are three possible information sources. Man may look inward and determine some things intuitively. Man may look outward and determine some things empirically. However, man must look upward and determine God's

truth spiritually. This is why Paul can say, "... we speak wisdom among them that are perfect..." Only Christians have the whole picture. Truth is a three-legged stool. One leg is intuitive. God writes certain things in the hearts and consciences of men. Men know certain things instinctively unless they choose to deny it as noted in Romans 1:19. One leg is through natural creation. God does reveal His truth to us in creation, in the material universe. Men can learn many things in creation, unless they choose to deny it, II Peter 3:5. One leg is through the Holy Spirit. That aspect of truth is available only to those who are in Christ. No three-legged stool can stand on two legs.

How do I discover the things that God has prepared?

A. God has prepared these things for those who love Him. Did you see that in verse 9? Approach this Bible like a textbook and you will never find the living God. Approach this book as though you were seeking the darling of your heart, the lover of your soul, and He will unlock His treasure house and take you by the hand through its stores.

B. God disseminates this truth through a Person, not a method. He instructs us through His Holy Spirit. The truths revealed in the next few verses are so mind expanding and exhilarating that Christians virtually jump for joy and shout Eureka when it finally dawns on them. The whole process of inspiration and inscripturation is laid out for us in this gold vein of biblical truth. We will see just how the process works and why it is so accurate in another study. It suffices to point out that this truth is revealed through a Person, God's Holy Spirit.

C. This Person is eminently qualified. He is the Holy Spirit of God. This lesson was introduced by declaring that the world relies on three main sources for wisdom, philosophy, science, and world religions. At this point, we also part way with the world's religions. You see, they too agree that there is additional information that the philosopher and scientist can't provide. They instinctively know that there is a metaphysical plane. But when they rely on guides to lead them into the unknown, they rely on unworthy guides. Knowingly, or unknowingly, they rely on demonic channeling and other false sources of spirituality.

D. Only the Holy Spirit can guide us into God's truth. He is the only one qualified. Verse 11 continues:

1 Corinthians 2:11-12

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

KJV

A while ago I had to have my car repaired. I called the hospital and set up an appointment with an eminently qualified heart surgeon. You say, how foolish! It is no more foolish than when one goes to

a secular counselor to assist him with his spiritual problems. It is no more foolish than when men go to churches each Sunday where God's Word is never opened, or hardly referenced! You need to go to the One who is qualified. The only One who is eminently qualified to administer God's truth to the heart is the Holy Spirit.

E. God's Holy Spirit reveals this truth to us freely. We lay before you no esoteric cryptogram. We tell you with joy that if you seek, you will find. If you ask, it will be given unto you. If you knock, it will be opened unto you. This information is given *freely*.

How does God do this? He does it through a process that is so spotlessly perfect that it leaves us breathless. He has given us His written word, which He, in turn applies to our hearts. That is the stuff of yet another lesson.

F. While the Holy Spirit reveals God's truth, He does it first, by pointing us to the person of Jesus Christ.

Do you want to know God's truth? Do you want the pieces of the puzzle of your life to begin to come together? Your journey begins with the Person who said, "I am the truth," the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One about whom this book is written. If you would have the *mind of Christ* (referred to in verse 16) you must have the Person of Christ.

How do I *know* when the light has begun to dawn on some seeking person? How do I know when God has begun revealing this truth to that soul? I know because Jesus Christ becomes the center of the seeker's focus. Has your life been a two-legged stool? There is a Spirit of God, ready to reveal the truths of God to you.

The Wisdom of Words

Intro:

"Luther said he studied his Bible as he gathered apples. First he shook the whole tree, that the ripest might fall; then he shook each limb, and when he had shaken each limb, he shook each branch, and after each branch, every twig; and then he looked under every leaf. This morning we are back under the apple tree in 2 Corinthians 2...We shook some of those ripe apples off in our last study...but there is still plenty of harvesting to do..."

The last time we approached this passage as it related to the wise of this world. The title of our study was, **Words of Wisdom**. We explained how that the world is only partially equipped to understand God's truth when they simply rely on their hearts, their eyes and their ears.

We want to focus again on verses 9 through 16, approaching them this time from *our* perspective, from the perspective of the believer. We want to talk about *our faith* in the Word of God so that we will not rest in the reasoning of men. The last lesson was titled, **Words of Wisdom**, but this one is titled **The Wisdom of Words**. The reason for the title will become clear as we proceed.

We have already seen in verses 1-8 that God's Wisdom is hidden from the world, and therefore, we must not use the *world's wisdom* in trying to attract men to Christ. Folks using septic tanks in rural areas are aware that those tanks have to be pumped now and then. We affectionately call those pumper trucks *honey wagons*. Trying to convey the gospel using the world's methods is like trying to carry milk in a honey wagon. No matter how much you try to scrub one of those trucks, it is simply unfit to haul milk. No matter how much you try to scrub up the world's wisdom, it is unfit for spreading the gospel.

By examining verses 9 and 10, we look at the other side of the coin. We see that God has chosen to reveal His wisdom to us and that He has *already* done it. Some folks think that verse 10 refers to a *future day* when we will get to heaven and see all the things that our eyes have not yet seen and we have not imagined. That may all be true, but that is not the truth of verse 10. The truth of verse 10 is that God reveals His wisdom.

When we speak of God imparting His wisdom to us, we use the term *divine revelation*. In this case, the word for *reveal* in verse 10 carries with it the thought of God *unveiling*. God unveils His truth.

One can only unveil something that has previously been veiled *or* hidden. That is exactly the idea behind this important doctrinal

word, revelation. By definition, revelation is the act of God unveiling truth to us which otherwise would be unknown.

How does God *reveal* His knowledge to us? Here is a list of facts about divine revelation as they are "revealed" in this passage:

I. The doctrine of revelation is *biblically* correct. Recall verse 9:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
[Underline mine.]

The apostle Paul is referring to the Old Testament scriptures. By referring to the Old Testament, Paul was recognizing that the Old Testament scriptures were of God, and he was using them to argue that *his own teaching* is of God.

Obviously, Paul was not quoting from the King James version, but he was quoting directly from Isaiah 64, verse 4. You will want to look at Isaiah 64, even if only for a minute, so you can see how perfectly the scriptures support Paul's argument. Notice verses 1-4.

Isaiah 64:1-4

1 Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,

2 As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

3 When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

KJV

*In the first three verses, Isaiah is allowing himself the luxury of dreaming. Would it not be wonderful if God would just show His hand! How much easier our task would be, if God would just zap a few lightning bolts in a few choice places and set some matters straight! We desire *the confirmation of phenomena*.*

However, in verse 4, Isaiah recognizes the truth of the matter. The lion's share of God's wisdom is revealed to those who wait on God. It is not emblazoned across the skies. If it were, God's exquisite program could not be worked out.

As we return to Corinthians, we should not be surprised that God has chosen to *restrict* the dissemination of His truth. He only allows it to be discovered by those who seek Him, those who *wait* on Him.

II. God reveals His truth supernaturally.

Because this was the thrust of our previous study, we omit an extended discussion here, but remember the argument of verse 9. God does not use eyes, ears, or the heart (intuition) to reveal His wisdom. We will never learn it on our own. We will never learn it in a boat out fishing in God's creation, in spite of what your fishermen friends argue on Sunday mornings.

III. God reveals His truth personally. Vs. 10.

He uses His own spirit.

I once requested a service call to repair a cut phone line here at our church. When I talked with the service dispatcher, I gave her an explicit description of the problem and specific directions for securing the key to the building. She even repeated them to me. When the technician arrived to do the work she knew nothing about those instructions. As the information passed from one person to the next, some of it was lost. I was not surprised, because I understood *human nature*.

We do not have this problem with God's revelation. Because the work of revelation is entrusted to the Holy Spirit Himself, and because He is one with God Himself, He is the only one who can be trusted to deliver the goods with accuracy!

Have you ever noticed that the *cultists* miss this point! When they claim their books are inspired by God, they never talk about the role of the Holy Spirit. That is a dead giveaway that their source is *unreliable!* No human can search the deep things of God! Not even the apostle Paul could make such a rash claim! The Vedas make no such claim. The Classics make no such claim. Only the Bible itself insists upon the participation of the Holy Spirit of God in the revelation process.

Why this is so critical? May I use human terms and explain to you what a *challenge* it was for God to take the wisdom that is on His level, and place it on your level? Isaiah 55: 8 begins with these words:

Isaiah 55:8-11

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

KJV

I have had many occasions when I have had to speak through an interpreter. A good interpreter is a valued asset. Crossing language barriers is very difficult. However, we are not speaking here of crossing *language barriers*, we are *speaking about crossing the wisdom barrier*. God's thoughts and ways are so far from ours that the only possible way to match them with our puny little thoughts and vocabularies is for His Holy Spirit to do the work Himself. He alone can search the *bathos*, the deep things of God.

IV. God reveals His truth freely. Vs. 12.

Romans 8:32 records:

Romans 8:32

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

KJV

If God loved you so much that He gave His own Son for you, why would He not give you anything else that He has? Our God has treasures for you to discover. Harry Ironside said:

"Take a poor, simple, ignorant Christian who can barely read or write and put him down over his Bible in dependence on the Holy Spirit of God, and he will get more out of a given passage of Scripture in a half-an-hour than a Doctor of Divinity or Doctor of Psychology, who studies it with a lot of learned tomes about him depending upon his intellect instead of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God opens the truth to those who depend on Him."

So, why not clear off a corner somewhere you can call your own and get into this book, and start picking some of the apples in this orchard for yourself?

The fifth item is getting us to the *heartbeat* of today's message.

V. God reveals His truth verbally. Vs. 13

He uses words, words, words.

1 Corinthians 2:13

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

KJV

God does *not* use the words which man's wisdom teaches, but He uses the *words* that the Holy Spirit teaches. He uses *words*.

Words are very important to God and they are very important to us. Words are the medium through which God conveys His truth.

The Bible says that God *created* the heavens and earth through His Word.
The Bible says that God *upholds* all things through His Word.
The Bible that God makes Himself *accountable to us* through His words.
The Bible says that we are *accountable to God* FOR OUR WORDS.
The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the living WORD of God.

The Bible speaks of *speaking* and *hearing* hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times.

Everything we know to be true about God has been revealed to us through *words*. You may feel your *promptings* and they may be right or wrong, but that is not *revelation*. That is not *inspiration*. You may feel you are being *moved* by the Spirit of God to do something, but that is not *revelation*. You may call it moving, leading, prompting, nudging or whatever you want, but it is *not revelation*.

Words are the vehicles through which God conveys truth to man and that fact cannot be overstated. Satan knows this. He knows that the fountainhead starts with the issue of words. Do you remember what he said in the garden to Eve? He said, "*Hath God said?*" Did God really say that?

Please grasp this truth. If we can corrupt the medium we can corrupt the message. This is why Satan loves to play games with words. Notice what Peter says in 2 Peter 1:16 about the matter of words.

2 Peter 2:16-3:3

16 *But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet.*

17 *These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.*

18 *For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.*

19 *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*

20 *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.*

21 *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*

22 *But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

*2 Peter 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:
2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:
3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,
KJV*

God's richest truths are conveyed to us through *words*, and, God's greatest judgment will be on those who with *feigned words* corrupt His truth. Revelation 22:18 warns us:

Revelation 22:18-19

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

KJV

Please pardon the personal intrusion. If God is so serious about his Word, why do you mess with it the way you do? When people warn you that the translation you are using is sloppy and careless why do you ignore it? When people explain to you how that certain versions such as the New International Version are so bad that even the English Bible reader can see the liberties that the translators take, why do you still insist on using it? Why must the criterion always be: That which is easiest to read must be the best?

Friend, if God reveals His truth through *words*; if apostates fight their battle through *words*; if the whole struggle between light and darkness is a struggle with *words*; then why are we so careless about what we sell in our Bible bookstores?

VI. God reveals His truth through perfectly chosen words. Vs. 13

Read verse 13 again:

1 Corinthians 2:13

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

KJV

Do you see those *words "comparing spiritual things with spiritual??"* There are two very plausible explanations for what Paul is teaching us. Vine has an excellent and concise summary of both. I am going to deal solely with what I believe represents the best treatment.

In our English version, this phrase seems to drop off: "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." With spiritual *what?* The second time that word *spiritual* occurs in this passage it occurs in the *masculine*. Following the basic rules of Greek grammar, all we have to do is associate it with the previous masculine noun. When we do this we understand clearly, what Paul intended. The most consistent way to render this is to understand that the Holy Spirit compares spiritual *things* (those deep truths in the mind of God,) with spiritual *words*. We call this the process of *inscripturation*.

When God gave the scriptures, He took holy men of God and carried them along under the power and instruction of the Holy Spirit. We can only peek at this mystery. We cannot fully explain it. We do know some things that are not true. We know that the Holy Spirit did not *dictate* God's truth, for we know He used the verbal and logical processes of the writers. We also know that the Apostles were not themselves inspired; they were only *borne along*, by the Spirit. Finally, we know it was not *intuitive* on the part of the apostles because we see the Holy Spirit is the one who actually matches God's thoughts with men's words. This was an aggressive, hands-on project.

So, once again, what are we saying? We are saying that not only did God choose to use words as a means to reveal His truth; he participated in the process of matching His truths with the style and vocabulary of the holy men He chose.

No other "inspired" book makes such a bizarre claim! Other inspired writers simply declare that they are gods or that God has dictated this truth to them.

The greatest miracle we are familiar with in our existence is the miracle of child-birth. Every new baby is a new surprise and another wonder. However, it is not until that child grows a bit that we really see what a miracle it is. As we see "her mommies eyes or his daddy's smile appear, or her aunt's temperament, or his grandpa's baldness." It is all there in this miracle. In the same manner, the giving of the Word of God, the inspiration of scriptures is a birthing miracle. It is a miracle of birth on a far higher plane! I have never denied the miracle of birth because I could not understand it, and frankly, I am sadly humored by men who deny the inspiration of scriptures because they think that if it is not explained to them, it simply is not true.

Oh, we know the miracle occurred, because we have been watching the results ever since! We have seen the change in our lives and in the lives of ten thousands times ten thousands more! Holy Bible, book divine, precious *treasure*, thou art mine! Finally,

VII. God's truth is revealed exclusively. Vs. 14-16

We used the word *revelation* earlier. Then we used the word *inscripturation* to help you see how God's Word is inspired by God. There is third a word that we call *illumination*.

When Christians speak of illumination, they speak of the fact that not only did it require the Holy Spirit to bring this book about, it requires the Holy Spirit in order for men to understand it. The Holy Spirit must *illumine* the Word of God.

We see the evidence of this in verses 14-16:

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

KJV

The *natural man*, the man who does not know Christ as Savior, (the man who does not have the Holy Spirit of God residing within him), can never understand the things of God.

We often fault Hollywood for the way they portray Christians and we know that their motives are not all pure. However, have you ever considered that Hollywood could not portray true Christians even if they wanted to? If it were not so sickening, it would be laughable. Any similarity between a typical Bible believing Christian family and what Hollywood portrays is purely coincidental. What is the problem? Hollywood does not have a clue. They do not have the Holy Spirit. So, why should we expect them to figure us out?

Why would we expect *them* to behave like us? Whatever made us think, in our wildest dreams, that even if we could control the government, (perish the thought), we could ever make unbelievers behave morally and righteously? He that is *spiritual* discerns all things. Those who are not saved never will.

We will pick up with a few more thoughts on these verses as we move into chapter three, but for now, I just want to warm your heart with one final thought about this precious Word of God.

Because it was given to us by the precious Holy Spirit, it not only reveals to us the *mind of God*, the Father, it expresses *the mind of Christ*. *It is the expression of Jesus Christ Himself*. It is, in fact, a seamless expression of all the Persons of the Triunity.

Do you ever feel like the presence of Christ is on the other side of the moon? Do you ever wonder if you will again feel His warmth like you did one day in the past?

I read a hunting story about a dog named Sam, dearly loved by his master and a perfect performer in the field. One day Sam and his owner were separated in the wild and the dog was not to be found. Night was upon them. Then the owner remembered an old trick he was taught by a friend. He took his coat off, laid it under a tree, and went home. He worried all night, but when he returned the next day, there was Sam, curled up in his jacket. Sam found the next closest thing to his owner.

Christian friend, when you feel lost, may I suggest that you find some part of God's Word to curl up in? These scriptures represent that jacket; they are what speaks of and provides the scent of Christ. When you cannot find Christ in your experience, curl up in His Word. You will always be reunited.

Unbelieving friend that dry, dusty Bible on your lap can become your most precious possession. If you will come to the Savior whose name is written on every page, the Holy Spirit of God stands ready to shed His light on every page. The book that may be a puzzle to you now will begin to reveal its deepest treasures, starting with the Person who is revealed in it, Jesus Christ Himself. You too, can have the mind of Christ.

Election Results!

We go to work immediately on the concluding verses of 1 Corinthians 2 and the first few verses of chapter 3.

We have a two-point message. The first point is directed at our *minds*. The second point is directed at our *hearts*.

The first point is titled: **Let's Talk Terms** and the second point is titled, **Let's Talk Turkey!** First, then,

I. Let's Talk Terms.

Christians tend to group the world into two classifications, the *saved* and the *un-saved*. In general, that classification is correct. There are only two races. In our passage before us, Paul is going to list *three* groups, three genres. There is the *natural* man, there is the *spiritual* man, and finally, there is the *carnal* man. We begin with:

A. The Natural Man.

1 Corinthians 2:14

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

KJV

It is wise not to toss Greek words around unnecessarily, but case it will be helpful in order for us to see the similarity of these words. The term for the *natural man* in the Greek is *psuchikos*. If we were to transliterate this into English we would say that the *natural man* is the *psychical* man. We draw the word *psyche* from this Greek root.

What does it mean to be a *psuchikos*, a *psychical* man? It may help to explain it this way. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:3:

"And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Man is a *tripartite* being. He has body, soul, and spirit. Man's body corresponds to that physical part of him which was created in the garden by God out of the dust of the ground. It is the part of us that comes from the dust and returns to the dust. When God *breathed* into man's nostrils the breath of life, man became a

living *soul*. This is what separates man from the plant and biological world. Man and animals both have *souls*. The word *psuchikos* means, "of or belonging to breath." Now, we must be careful to distinguish that man's soul is different from an animal's soul because God did not breathe into animals the breath of life or lives. While we might say that both man and animals have souls, man has a special kind of soul breathed into Him by God. What makes this soul unique is that it can host the third part of man, his unique *spirit*. What separates men from animals is the fact that men have a unique *spirit*. Animals do not. Our three parts, then, are *body, soul, and spirit*.

When Paul speaks of the natural man, the *psuchikos*, he is speaking about the man who has body, soul, and spirit, but he is dominated by his soul. he is *soul-ish*. This soulish man is a very selfish man. His "soul" purpose for existence is to look out for his personal good.

Even when unsaved men try to good, they do it ultimately for their own benefit. For example, the unsaved man who buys a 2-karat ring for the girl he loves may think that he has just done something unselfish. In truth, he has convinced himself that *love is the best policy*, and that ultimately by loving others, in this case his wife, he benefits himself. Though it sounds cruel, the *psuchikos*, the natural man always acts in behalf of his own soul. I made a soulish decision, for example, when I accepted Christ. I wanted a fire escape, pure and simple. I acted in my own best interest.

You must remember that the natural man does the best he can, but he does not have the advantage of the additional truth the spiritual man has.

The problem gets worse because the soul is also the seat of man's intelligence and his emotions. Your mind may be a part of your physical body and be subject to the diseases of the body but your soul provides the seat of your consciousness. Because our souls are *self-centered*, they use our minds and emotions to their advantage as well. In truth, that natural man is led far more by his emotions and needs than by his conscience. In the words of the country singer, our hearts have a mind of their own.

Of course, you must not think that an unsaved man does not have a spirit. He has a spirit just as much as he has a body, but his body and his spirit are under the control of his soul and his soul is programmed with one prime directive, self-survival, self-perpetuation, and self-glorification.

Examine verse 15:

1 Corinthians 2:15

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

KJV

B. Secondly, Paul introduces the spiritual man. Vs. 15

The Greek term for *natural man* was *psuchikos*, representing *the breathish, soul-ish* side of man. The Greek term for *spiritual man* is *pneumatikos*, that which pertains to the third part of man, his spirit. The spirit of man exists forever.

When a man receives Jesus Christ as Savior, the Bible says that God's Holy Spirit makes us a *new creation* (2 Cor. 5:17) and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us (Romans 8:9). Does the Christian still have the same body? He does, at least for now. Does the Christian still have his same soul? He does. If he used to be an artist he is probably still an artist. If he used to be analytical, he is probably still analytical. However, something is different, surprisingly different.

He is now a *pneumatikos* instead of a *psuchikos*. He is a spiritual man, a man of the Spirit, and because He is a man of the Spirit and has the equipment to receive and understand God's truth. He has the Holy Spirit living within Him, revealing the mind of Christ to Him. It is the perfect arrangement.

It would be easiest to conclude the matter here, before the waters get muddy, but we cannot, for we know that we have a colossal problem on our hands. While it is true that all of God's children are *spiritual*, and all of God's children are *pneumatikos*, we regret to announce that many of God's children are still behaving like they are *natural men, or psuchikos*. We must pay very close attention to this matter.

Some Christians would tell us that if a Christian, a *pneumatikos* falls into sin and begins behaving like an unbeliever, a *psuchikos*, that he loses his salvation and becomes *psuchikos* once again. The Holy Spirit *un-regenerates* him, leaves Him, and this man is once again lost.

But that just doesn't make sense at all. Because a new Christian is a born again one, he is a new creation and he cannot become *unborn*. His new life in Christ cannot be *annihilated*. So, what does happen when a Christian, a *pneumatikos*, starts acting like a *psuchikos*?

Paul answers that in chapter 3, verse 1 because that is exactly how these Corinthian believers were behaving! If Paul thought these folks had lost their salvation, he would have been lying to them because he has already called them saints, elected ones. Therefore, Paul introduces a *third term* to help us understand what occurs when *believers are not obedient to the Spirit of God who dwells within them*.

Notice exactly what Paul says and why he uses these exact words to explain himself. Please read this with your understanding:

1 Corinthians 3:1

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

KJV

First, we saw the natural man, the psuchikos, and then we saw the spiritual man, the pneumatikos.

C. Thirdly, we see the carnal man, the sarkikos. Vs. 3:1

Paul is not saying that these believers were no longer spiritual. He is not saying that they were no longer pneumatikos. He was saying that he could not treat them as if they were spiritual, because they were *carnal*. They were fleshly. They were behaving like the natural man would behave.

What was Paul doing? He was introducing a *third term*, to help these believers see that they were not living up to their position as spiritual ones in Christ.

These believers were God's chosen ones, His elect. However, God was not getting very good election returns. In their position, they were spiritual, born of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, in their practice they were behaving as the natural man behaves, still under the control of their flesh. They were carnal.

There are only two races of men, the redeemed race and the fallen race. There are only two groups. However, among the redeemed, many are carnal, are behaving like unbelievers. J. Vernon McGee wrote:

The Greek word for carnal is 'sarkikos' which means 'fleshly'. In Latin and French the word carna means 'sensual.' We get our word carnival from the two words, 'carne vale' which means "farewell flesh." You see, carnival was something they had before the season of Lent. During Lent they would practice farewell to the flesh with certain denials of pleasure to the flesh; so just before Lent they would gorge and gourmandize the flesh, get drunk, and satisfy and satiate the flesh in every possible way. Then they would be able to do without such things during Lent! An example of this is the Mardi Gras in New Orleans. That literally means "fat Tuesday" and refers to the Tuesday before Lent begins..."

To be carnal is to be fleshly. We have discussed enough terminology. Now,

II. LET'S TALK TURKEY.

The question that should occupy each of us is only three words long, *am I carnal?* If Paul were writing to me, would he write to me as a natural man, as a spiritual man, or as a carnal man? To help us sort the issue out, Paul uses an analogy. He tells us that BEING carnal is like being a babe when you should be grown up.

There is nothing as tragic as a baby that never grows up. While these believers *should* have grown, they were carrying *three disorders* over from their childhood. So let's do a crash course in early childhood development and observe these *babyish* disorders in these believers who should have been fully matured as adults.

A. Notice first, that they had an eating disorder. Vs. 2

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able [to bear it], neither yet now are ye able.

Babies require milk. However, a baby who remains too long on milk alone will soon become anemic. Later, he will lack other nutrients, and finally he will become gravely ill.

I have had to handle and deal with some pretty off-the-wall behavioral patterns in the ministry. For reasons unknown to me, one of the most disgusting to me is the image of a five year old child tugging at his mother's skirt until he finally dragged her off into a side room where he she would allow him to nurse for a while. When I encounter something like that, the question arises in my mind, which one has the worse problem? Does this mother have unaddressed emotional needs which drive her to this? Is she aware of what she is doing to that child? In addition, whatever is wrong with this child?

One may opine that this is an inappropriate thing to discuss in a church service or on paper. In churches throughout the Christian community we have spiritual five year olds nursing off mothers who get some kind of spiritual kick out of feeding their congregations crackers and milk every Sunday in order keep them coming back. The only unresolved question has to do with who is most at fault, the congregation or the pastor?

What about you? Is your pastor the sole source of your spiritual food? If he is, you are both carnal and you are no different than these Corinthians who needed mother's milk.

Carnality is an eating disorder. Secondly,

B. Carnality is a behavioral disorder. Vs. 3

1 Corinthians 3:3

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

KJV

That little baby just learning to walk is still very much under the impression that this whole world revolves around him. He thinks he is the queen bee. He thinks that God created mother just for him. He thinks he has a right to every toy in that

nursery whether he is playing with it or not. He envies what the other child has, mainly because the other child has it.

This baby strives for what he wants and sees no logic, rhyme, nor reason as to why he should share anything. That is the way a baby is going to behave. That is also the way babes in Christ behave. I read someone who in quoting someone else said,

"A baby is a digestive apparatus with a loud noise on one end and no responsibility at the other!"

That certainly is true of spiritual babies. Only the mind of Christ can cure this. Only the believer who assumes the role of His master as servant of all, can overcome this spirit of envy. When you are under the control of the Holy Spirit and I am under the control of the Holy Spirit the contest takes a different form. The issue becomes, who can help the other one the most? Who can elevate the other one? Who can build him up?

What do you do most with your life, tear down or build up? If you are a builder and a healer, you are spiritual. If you are a complainer and a critic, you are carnal. I don't see any middle ground, do you? It simply is not there.

Finally, we learn that:

C. Carnality is an emotional disorder. Vs. 4

1 Corinthians 3:4

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

KJV

That's baby talk. Babies still have to be attached to their mothers, the ones who fed them! Cut the cord! Untie the apron strings! Paul and Apollos have done their work! Stop following them around like little children!

I used to get a bang out of Bible school graduates. For the first five or ten years after they were out of school, their alma mater (soul mother) could do no wrong! Their loyalties ran so deep they would go back to every activity, and mimic the mantras of their respective schools.

Thank the Lord; most graduates finally get it out of their system! Their alma mater should always be loved and supported, but their school was not their mother! Christian friend, loyalty to schools, loyalty to fellowships and associations, loyalties to churches, and loyalties to great teachers can very easily become disloyalty to Jesus Christ. He alone deserves your allegiance.

It was said of Roosevelt he was so attached to his mother that he could hardly stand to be away on his honeymoon. When he got home, mom had purchased

two homes that were attached to each other, and put doors in the walls between them. He was a mamma's boy and his fear of her was so unnatural that it could have cost him his marriage. But I tell you with great sadness, that Roosevelt is not alone in Christian circles. In the short course of my ministry I have encountered a mass emotional invalids who cannot stand on their own two spiritual feet. They latch on like parasites to teachers, organizations, and movements. why do we have so many of them? It is because they have never learned to feed themselves with solid food.

Christian, your pastor is not your mommy and should never want to be your mommy. He should want you to grow to the point in the study of God's Word that you make up your own mind based on what the Bible says, and even if you end up disagreeing with him. Then, he will know you have grown up!

Party spirit is an emotional disorder. It is a childish fetish. Now, let's do some soul searching and let's answer the relevant question which arises. What makes a Christian carnal? Am I carnal?

Is a Christian carnal because he is *envious*? *No!* That is not true at all. A Christian becomes envious *when* he is carnal. His envy only proves he is carnal. Envy is only one of many things that Paul could have listed.

Is a Christian carnal when he causes strife? *No!* A Christian causes strife *because* he is carnal! His strife only proves he is carnal. Strife is only one of many things that Paul could have listed.

Then what makes a Christian carnal? What makes him *flesh* oriented? The answer is in verses 1 and 2. A Christian is carnal because of his diet. He feeds on mothers' milk instead of meat. Am I carnal? Are you carnal?

You are what you eat. Do you read the scriptures daily? If not, you are probably *carnal*. Do you love the truths and doctrines of God's Word? If not, you are probably *carnal*. Do you love to sit in on a good Bible study or a sermon full of scripture? If you do not, you are probably *carnal*.

Is your whole experience with the Word of God comprised of what you hear once a week on Sunday mornings? If so, you are a babe. You *are* carnal. *Someone who loves you* needs to tell you!

Does a pastor stop feeding the carnal believers? Than would be nonsensical. Does he polarize them and preach at them until they either get mad or get out of the church? Only a carnal pastor would do such a thing. A spiritual pastor feeds the babes with milk and nudges them with meat. He cajoles them and hugs them, but he warns them, and he pursues their growth relentlessly.

Is the study of God's Word difficult for you? Talk with your pastor and let him help you get started in a disciplined plan geared to your needs. Let him show you ways to help you grow. Make a commitment to go to Sunday School and the Evening Service of your church. The Word of God will begin to open up to you. Consider this possibility. If I could ask you to work on your problem with envy, that would be a good thing. However, you may still struggle with lust. I could ask you to work on strife today, but you may still have a problem with greed. The list could go on.

But if I can get you to make just one commitment, a commitment to God that you will take some kind of active step to increase your time in the Word of God and taking instruction from God's word, I will have taken a strike at envy, lust, strife, and greed all at once. The starting point for victory relates to your feeding habits.

Roy Laurin tells a beautiful story about a little girl. He says:

In an Italian city stands a statue of a Grecian maiden of beautiful face, graceful figure, and noble expression. There is a story of a ragged, unkempt, slovenly girl who came face to face with the statue. She stood and stared, and then went home to wash her face and comb her hair. The next day she came again to stand before the statue, and then to return home. This time she mended her tattered clothing. So day by day she changed, her form grew graceful, her face more refined..."

You need not stare at the face of some cold statue, but I promise, if you will work on letting the Word of God come alive in your life, you will change. If you will make this a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path, and if you will feed on the meat of this book, you will have found the secret, the secret of avoiding carnality in all its forms!

This dynamic works because Jesus Christ is the center of this book. When we study this book, we study Christ. When we surrender to this book, we are slowly changed into His image. That discussion will soon follow.

On Being Your Own Contractor

Intro: We are going to chew on some beef jerky in this chapter. I hope that we'll raise a controversial thought or two, challenge you to rethink your view of a few verses, and, most of all, challenge you, as a servant of Christ, to your greatest *ministry* priority.

The subject at hand is the matter of division over party spirit. We introduced it several lessons ago when we studied 1 Corinthians 1:12.

1 Corinthians 1:12
12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.
KJV

We have already talked about the background of the ancients and understood how it would be perfectly acceptable and *natural*, in light of the times, for men to follow great philosopher/teachers. Nevertheless, we saw how perfectly *spiritual* it is for men to surrender, instead, to God's wisdom.

The dynamics of worldly wisdom are far from the dynamics of God's wisdom. God's wisdom begins with the *foolishness of the preaching of the cross*. It transcends human wisdom because of its source: It is provided to us directly by the Holy Spirit of God who enables believers to receive those things that come from above. Paul regrets that these believers are acting in *carnal* and baby like ways that are hindering the working of the Spirit of God among them.

Now, by noticing verses four and five, we see that Paul has not yet laid down his weapons. He is still on the same theme, the theme of party loyalties. He is moving back from the discussion of carnality to the main issue at hand. Paul says:

1 Corinthians 3:4-5
4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?
5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?
KJV

We might say that, by participating in party loyalties, the first mistake these Corinthian believers made was that they were confusing worldly wisdom with godly wisdom.

We see that they were also making another mistake. They were also confusing worldly economics and worldly values with God's value system.

In the world, we *value* people, based upon the size of the *ripple* they can make in the water. We gain our identities by climbing corporate ladders, social ladders, and political ladders. In the barnyard, we call it *pecking orders*. Our formula for success is simple: We gather whatever resources we can, our time, our talents, our money, our connections, and focus them on our stated objective.

Christianity marches to the proverbial beat of a different drummer, *or so it is supposed to!*

Paul illustrates this fact using two metaphors or figures of speech. First, he uses *farming*. Then he uses *temple building*. He will underscore a different emphasis in each.

I. The Servant of Christ is a Farmer

1 Corinthians 3:5-8

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

KJV

These verses teach us:

A. These servants all came for the same purpose.

All of the Pauls and Apolloss and Cephass of this world are God's *ministers*. A minister is, by nature, a servant and not a king. That is what a minister does. A minister is a deacon, a *deakonos*. Ideally, a servant is one who makes his master's will his will. These Corinthians had missed the whole point that Paul, Apollos, and Peter had not come to *climb up the ladder* they had come to *climb down the ladder*. They came *be the servants*.

Worldly wisdom *inverts this pyramid*. In the world, we strive to master. In Christ, our goal is to serve. The world's machinery is ego driven. The Lord Jesus taught us the opposite:

Luke 22:24-27

24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.
27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.
KJV

When we begin assuming party loyalties in our churches, what are we doing? We are *inverting the pyramid*. Only in Christianity do we truly find the fact that *our greatest leaders are our greatest servants*.

B. These servants all came from the same source.

These servants are God's personal gifts to us. They are ministers by whom we believed *even as the Lord gave to every man*. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4 that God *gave* apostles, and prophets, and evangelists and pastors who are teachers to us. They are gifts given to us by God. One Giver has given all of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers who ever lived. They all came from the same source.

C. While their tasks, vary, their success all depends on God.

One plants, one waters, but God gives the increase. The farmer follows the rules. He plants, he waters, he cultivates, and he harvests, but God grows the crops.

We have seen what God has *rejected* in his economic system. He does not value men on the basis of what job they have. They may be the president, they may be the janitor; the *job* is irrelevant.

The question arises, what *is* the basis of God's economic system? Let's talk about the pay scale. I think a good way to say it is this: God is neither a communist nor a capitalist.

The communist believes that *equality* drives the market. He believes that all men should be cared for by the state. Because he is a materialist at heart, he refuses to recognize the sinful and lazy nature of man. In theory, he rejects the pecking order, but in truth, he has never been able to establish a socialist state that did not have one.

The capitalist believes that demand drives the market. If the need is for motorcycle windshields and you are the only one in America making windshields, you have the right to charge whatever you will. After all, you were the entrepreneur, you invested your cash, you took the risk, and now, you reap the rewards. Because of capitalists, our elderly pay hundreds of dollars per month for drugs that cost our pharmaceutical firms pennies a month to produce. Teachers and police officers are poorly paid while beer distributors thrive. Demand drives the market.

What drives God's economy? How then, does God value men? What drives His pay scale? The answer is in the last portion of verse 8, "...every man shall receive his own reward according to his labor."

And please notice one other beautiful thing. Notice that God works right alongside us in the field. That astounds me! Verse 9 says, "*For we are laborers together with God.*" We are *sunergos*, we are fellow laborers *with* God. The God of the universe works right alongside of you when you do His work.

We move to the second metaphor which is not really a metaphor, but a reality.

II. The Servant of Christ is Like a Temple Builder.

Paul changes figures in verse 9, "*ye are God's cultivated field, ye are God's building.*" He continues in verse 10:

1 Corinthians 3:10
10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.
KJV

Sort out the key elements in this and the following verses. We have a building, a builder, a foundation, building materials, and a building inspection.

A. The Building. It is important that we understand *what* the building is. The building Paul is describing is God's temple. You are God's temple. I am God's temple. Each one of us who know Christ as Savior represent a single stone in God's temple.

God dwells in each of us *individually*, but He also dwells in us corporately. 1 Peter 2:5 tells us that we are all *living stones, a spiritual house*, built up unto God. In verse 16 Paul continues:

1 Corinthians 3:16
16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?
KJV

What do we make of this? Every time we lead someone to Christ; Every time we open God's word to teach a believer; Every time we stand up on front of men and women, we are building on God's temple. Is this serious business? Be assured that it is! Verse 17 declares:

1 Corinthians 3:17
17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Some folks have read our church's doctrinal statement and drawn back in holy horror! "Why are you folks so, dogmatic?" they ask. "Why aren't you a little more tolerant?" We might well respond, why don't you ask the fellow who builds your home those same questions? Why are you so picky about the way your house is built and so careless about the way God's house is built? The *building* is God's temple.

B. The Builders. Apollos was a builder. Cephas was a builder. Paul was a builder. Anyone who opens up this Bible and introduces other folks to Christ is a builder. Every Sunday School teacher is a builder. Every father and mother is a builder. Every Christian schoolteacher is a builder.

Paul was a builder *by the grace of God*. God calls us and places us in the vineyard or on the building crew. A man does not just decide to become a pastor, for example, because he thinks he is equipped for the profession. God calls him and thrusts him into the position. However, every person who ministers the Word of God does so by the *grace* of God. Those five words alone are what put me in the ministry and what keeps me in the ministry, "*by the grace of God.*"

C. The Masterbuilder. In verse 10, Paul said that, according to the grace of God given to him as a *wise masterbuilder*, he laid the foundation. The Greek word for master builder is *architeckton*. It is the word from which we get *architect* but that is not really the thought. The word does not picture the *designer*, it best pictures the *general contractor*, the man responsible for bringing the plans into reality.

The emphasis for us, however, is on the word *wise*. Building a house, much less a temple, is no small task. Some of us have lived in homes at one time or another that were not *wisely* built, and we have lived with the consequences of an irresponsible builder. When we talk about building Christ's temple and we talk about the way we shape human lives and attitudes and futures, the seriousness of our task begins to weigh heavily upon us!

One may be tempted to say, I am just a lowly Sunday School teacher or Bible school teacher, but it would be unwise to do so. Ours is the highest privilege on earth. Though clichéd, the story of the two masons who were cutting stones on the construction site is apropos. One was asked what he was doing and he said, "*I am cutting stones.*" The other was asked what he was doing and he said, "*I am building a cathedral.*"

Any time you open God's Word with someone else -- anytime you pray with someone. Any time you counsel and encourage someone according to God's Word, you, my friend *are building a cathedral*. Your calling and place in life is far higher than being the chairman of the board of Chrysler. That is just busy work.

D. What is the Foundation? Paul said, 11. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* You cannot be a part of God's temple if you have not come to God through Jesus Christ. He is the cornerstone that the builders disallowed and He is now the head of the corner.

Some builders have tried to substitute ethics and morals for Jesus Christ, and their buildings have fallen. Some have tried to make it denominational loyalty, or liturgy, or church tradition, or positive thinking. It never works. Jesus Christ alone is sufficient. If you have not done business personally with Jesus Christ, you are lost and on your way to the Lake of Fire.

E. The Materials. The materials are now listed specifically for us.

1 Corinthians 3:12

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;
KJV

We should not be surprised that gold, silver, and even precious stones *were* used in temple building. It should also be noted that we are talking about the structure itself, and those materials that will cause this building to stand the test of time. We can also tell by the way that Paul is listing these that they are representative materials because temples were made up of more than gold, silver, and jewels.

What was Paul's intent by listing these materials? Clearly, they fall into two groups. Group one includes gold, silver, and jewels. Group two includes wood, hay, and stubble. There are clearly two categories which help us see the difference between these listings

a. The first is availability. Gold, silver, and jewels must be sought out with diligence, dug out of the ground, refined, or polished and cut. Wood, hay, and stubble, on the other hand are readily available.

Some pastors think they are building God's temple because they stand in their pulpits on Sunday. They have not sought out the souls and lives of those to whom they minister. They have not *invested themselves in them*. They have not exhorted, cajoled, consoled, and nudged their sheep along. They have no involvement in the lives of their sheep. They have paid no price! There has been no refining going on! They have not, with diligence, dug and refined the ore. They have simply fulfilled their professional duty by regurgitating something they studied during the week.

That is wood, hay, and stubble. If you, as a servant of Christ, are not affecting the lives of others -- if you are not paying a price in order to *build lives for Christ* - you probably aren't *changing lives*.

And that brings us to the second word which separates these two listings of material...

b. The second is durability. Gold, silver, and precious stones are *durable goods*. Wood, grass, and stubble, are *consumable*. One may build a great edifice, and have thousands come through his doors on Sunday morning and they may all have a fine worship experience. But if we do not change that life, if we do not change the way folks live, if we do not build believers up in the truth of Christ, and in the Word of God, the *wolf* himself, will *inevitably come along and he'll huff and puff and he'll blow your house down!* You may be certain.

Gold, and silver, and stones must be sought out at great price and sacrifice, but they are durable. Wood, hay and stubble are available everywhere, but they will not stand the test of time. And that, does, after all, bring us exactly to the point Paul is now making:

F. The goal of the builder. The ultimate goal of the builder is to pass building inspection.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

KJV

1. There *will* be an inspection day! There *will* be a test. There *will* be a result.
2. Every man's work *will* be tested. Not just Paul's, and not just Apollos', but every man's work will be tested.
3. *If* our work *abides*, we will receive a reward. If it does not, we will still be saved, but we will bring nothing with us. Remember, we are not talking salvation here, we are talking about ministry. Will there be reward in eternity? How, can you be sure you are sending something on ahead? An honest answer to that question requires that we examine ourselves and ask, am I building on Christ's temple? Am I actually building up others in Jesus Christ? Am I using the right materials, or is it all fluff?

This is serious business. Some of us have gone ten and twenty and thirty and forty years in Christ and can count on one hand anyone we have truly impacted in any way for Christ. We have been good parents, and good workers in the workplace and good neighbors in the community, but we have not been building Christ's temple!

In a healthy church there ought to be competition for teaching positions in Sunday School classes! In a healthy church, everyone should want to participate in real ministry for Christ, in one form or another. Are you building lives for Christ? Are you investing yourself in ministry to others, using *this* book and *this* Christ as your sure foundation? If you are, you are prepared for that day when the secrets of all men's hearts will be revealed. God kept you around after he saved you because He has a task for you to do. He has given *you* the tools. He has given *you* a spiritual gift. He has given you opportunity to minister.

What have you given Him? Wood, hay, and stubble cost very little. The only thing that we can really do for Christ is to build His temple, to minister to others. Paul said:

Galatians 2:2

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

KJV

Paul did not want to run *in vain*. I do not want to run *in vain*. I do not want you to run *in vain*. I want your life to amount to something in eternity. I want you to be a *wise builder*. I want you to invest yourselves in *building Christ in others*.

A Christian brother came over to my home one time to talk about financial planning, to talk about the future. I don't like to talk about financial planning. I don't like to talk about the future, but I know that man was sincerely wanting to do what is best for folks by having them face the facts. I mean no more than that today for you. I do not want you to remember me as kind and loving. I want you to remember me as the man who made you face the facts while you still have time to change your future. I want you to remember me as the person who made you invest in eternity, when you were preoccupied with the cares of time.

How can I change? How can I walk away from this study different than when I began? I can do so by making these promises to myself. First, that I will always put Christ's work of temple building. Secondly, I will determine to find a ministry where I am affecting others for Jesus Christ each week. I do not want a smattering of results left over for eternity.

If without Christ, you must take no hope from those words in verse 15, "*..he himself shall be saved, yet as by fire.*" For when you walk away from Jesus Christ you can only walk in one direction and that is towards the Lake of Fire. The only question of the moment for you is whether you are a part of God's temple yourself. The Lord Jesus, Himself, is ready to save you. The Holy Spirit Himself, is ready to indwell you. God's people stand ready to welcome you, but you must open the door!

On Evaluating Your Teachers

We have been working with the issue of Christian leadership. 1 Corinthians 1:10 opened the whole discussion of party spirit and divided loyalties which plagued the Corinthian Church. In chapter three, Paul began instructing us with metaphors.

First, there was the metaphor of the farmers, beginning in verse 5. One sows, waters, but God gives the increase and rewards every man *according to his own labor*.

Then, in verse 9, Paul introduces the second metaphor, temple building. We saw the building, the builder, its foundation, the building materials, and the building inspection. Once again we are reminding ourselves of the central theme, God rewards us according to our labor. *Are you building on God's temple, am I building on God's temple?* With those thoughts in mind, we are ready for the current study.

First, the overall theme is a warning against forming party prejudices and favorites. Following the worldly way of the Greeks, these Christians were selecting their own *philosopher teachers* and they were willing to go to battle with each other over who was best. *"My father can whip your father,"* kind of thing.

Secondly, the Corinthians' loyalties were not based on the labor of these great men, Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but rather on their supposed wisdom. So, Paul makes one final summarizing statement concerning this important issue. He leaves us with a great plea that jumps off the page at us. We read verses 17-20:

1 Corinthians 3:17-20

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

KJV

What is Paul's plea? Paul's great plea is that we would, finally understand the difference between the world's wisdom and God's wisdom.

Burn this paradox into your mind. If you would be wise in this *age* (*aion*) you must become a fool (the equivalent of our word for *moron*) in order to become wise.

Make that decision for all time, resisting and resenting the intrusion of this world's wisdom into Christianity. Let this serve as an admonition to our evangelical friends to stop integrating the theological works of unbelievers such as Kant, Neichie, and Kierkegaard into their systems. Let this serve as an admonition to our Christian psychologists to trash the works of Freud, Rogers, and all the rest of them when they *intrude* into the biblical doctrine of man. Let this serve as an admonition to our evangelists to stop, once and for all, using worldly marketing techniques for bringing lost souls to Christ. Let this serve as an admonition to our Christian booksellers to stop mixing and matching worldly ways and biblical ways with every other feel good book they offer which blends new age thinking with pseudo biblical truisms.

Decide to participate in the *great divorce*. One cannot be a fool for Christ and one of the sages of this world at the same time.

A. Notice that the servant of Christ must have a Proper View of *Himself*.

"Let no man deceive himself..." Do not get caught up in the world's wisdom system. The little Bible institute is raised up in a community in order to prepare men for service for Christ, and as God blesses, it is soon converted to a Bible college. As the years go on, the Bible college changes its name to a Christian liberal arts college. The day finally comes when it is Christian in name only. This is no isolated incident; this is the endless story of Christianity. Are we opposed to Christian colleges? We are not. Are we opposed to Bible colleges? We are not! Then what do we oppose? We are opposed to the leaven of the world's wisdom slowly replacing the sure and proven truths of this book. This leaven is insipid, insidious, and almost unstoppable.

This is so because there is a virus more easily caught on the educational campus than anywhere else. It is the *W.W. Virus*, The *worldly wisdom virus*.

The servant must have a proper view of himself. We must each know that we are vulnerable to worldly wisdom. *"Let no man deceive himself."* Don't hitch your wagon to a fading star. God will take the wise in their own craftiness. He has done it repeatedly.

B. The Servant must also have a proper View of Others. Vs. 21-23

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

21 Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;

22 *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;*
23 *And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*
KJV

Notice how Paul approaches this. He says “*Therefore, let no man glory in men, and then, he begins with the reasons: For all things are yours;*”

If I have a Porsche and you have a Lamborghini, we might be tempted to compete with each other. I might be tempted to boast and you might be tempted to look down your nose at me. But consider this: If you and I are partners and we both own the Porsche and Lamborghini *together*, neither of us have a reason to boast anymore. We would be bragging to each other over what we both own.

This little idea, by the way, has been transforming American businesses. Demming's highly successful quality program teaches the same basics. Demming holds that when two competing companies share and own the same resources. Both companies benefit!

Nevertheless, Paul had the idea first. The root issue behind *party loyalties* is ownership. If we share ownership, we all win.

In a former pastorate, we lost a few children on one of our routes to another evangelistic church. The church was better equipped to handle the kids. When the kids told me they were going to Pastor D____'s church, you could tell they *expected me to be disappointed*. They thought we were competitors. But you see, I am happy that they *went* over there. Those children *own* both Pastor D____ and Pastor Steel. We were not in competition.

Paul says that's just the beginning. All things are yours! All of us share all of Christ's leaders, all that pertains to this world, all that pertains to life and death and things present and things to come! We do not just own the Porsche and Lamborghini together, we own everything together! This makes party spirit look foolish.

Have you ever worked in a company where each department competed against the other one, where you could hardly get information passed along from one to the other? It is a foolish way to do business! A house divided cannot stand!

Christian friend, your little assembly may not have a lot of contact yet with other churches of like faith and practice, but please do not ever get the impression that yours is the only game in town. We need all of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are standing true to the Word of God. We all own each other anyway!

We now turn the mattress over and look at the other side. We have seen how *not* to view our teachers and leaders. It is time to ask the question, how *should* we view them?

There are three things we must understand about any servant of Christ.

First, they are *common laborers* for Christ. Secondly, they are *careful administrators* of His truth. Finally, they are *commended by God alone*. When we keep these three thoughts in our minds, we will be able to view God's servants in a healthy, proper way. Remove any of these elements, and we become biased.

First,

1. God's servants are common laborers for Christ. Vs. 4:1

1 Corinthians 4:1

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

KJV

This verse is placed here for our humbling, not for our pride.

When a man is ordained, he is confronted with dilemma. He receives the title "Reverend." We are fast moving into the day when "quick ordinations" are as common as quick marriages. However, it was not always this way. Ordination was a severe, rigorous process that took many months to complete. It was a high and worthy aspiration. The title is given to give honor and respect to men of God who submitted to the authority of their teachers and leaders.

Even so, I only use the title for purposes of identifying myself as an ordained minister, because there is something that makes me uncomfortable about it.

But, the word we have in this passage before is a far better word. The Greek word for *minister* in this verse is the word that designated a slave, the lowest of slaves. Even slaves had their pecking order, and the lowest, cheapest, dirtiest slaves of all, were the common *galley rowers*. These men rowed the oars in the lower part of the boat, usually while in chains. Galley rowers were low and humble, *and galley rowers* were equally ranked.

I think that our pastors would do well to be endowed with the title *galley rower of Christ* in preference to *reverend*. For the eternal lesson all of God's leaders have to learn, repeatedly is not only that to be wise we must become fools, but also, that to become great we must become slaves.

How, then, should we view the servant of Christ? We should view all servants of Christ as common galley rowers for Christ. By the way, there is a seat right here, next to me, which will fit you perfectly!

Secondly, God's servants are

2. God's servants should be careful stewards of His truth.

We do well to note this as it helps explain much of the obnoxious behavior of pastors and Sunday school teachers. Again, Paul instructs:

1 Corinthians 4:1
1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
KJV

While making every effort not to denigrate our mother tongue, we must confess that the Greek language is richer in areas such as this. You may be assured that these Corinthian believers knew *instantly* what Paul meant by the term, stewards of the mysteries of God.

The steward to whom Paul refers, was the household slave who was in charge of all of his master's household affairs. He likely managed the budget, saw too it that the family was properly fed, clothed, and educated. In the pecking order of slavery, He was at the opposite end from the galley slave. This was a position of great *respect* because it was a position of *great responsibility*.

Just as the *steward* had the awesome task of administering the affairs of the house, so Paul says the servant of Christ has an awesome task because he must *manage the mysteries of God*. He must administer the truths of God's Word, giving out what is appropriate to whom it is appropriate.

Please do not become confused by the word *mysteries* here. This was a common phrase that Paul used to refer to the whole body of God's truth that has now been revealed. A mystery is an unrevealed secret. There are two senses in which the truths of God are mysteries.

First, God's truths are mysteries to the unsaved. You already understand this if you have been following our study of Corinthians. They are mysteries because if you are without Christ, you are missing a gear, (no offense intended). You are not capable of properly interpreting or understanding God's Word. This is what the Bible means when it says that no scripture is of any *private* interpretation. All of scripture is under the domain of the Holy Spirit, and until you receive Christ as Savior, you do not yet possess the Holy Spirit and you will not be able to piece together the truths of God consistently.

Talk to any believer who truly confesses Christ as Savior, and learn how the *scales fell off his eyes, and how his whole worldview changed when once he met Christ Himself at the cross*.

Paul was speaking of the mysteries of God in another sense as well. Before Paul's day, many of these truths were *mysteries* to the Old Testament saints. In fact, Peter said in chapter 1:

1 Peter 1:10-12

10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

KJV

The whole concept of how Messiah would come, how the roles of a servant messiah, a suffering messiah, and a reigning messiah would come together was a mystery. It was a mystery as to how our salvation would *actually play out*, how God would be able to justify men. These questions were the stuff of long prayerful hours of search for men of old, men before Paul's day.

When we look closer at the mysteries of God, we find that the NT enumerates at least *seven* things that were a mystery to Old Testament believers: Scofield Bible users will benefit greatly from the notes under Matthew 13:11 where these mysteries are listed. The reader is urged to examine them at this time.

Now, you can take your own spiritual temperature at this point. Did you bother to look through that list? Is your interest in the mysteries of God piqued in any way? Do you long to know the deep truths of God and His Word? Do these things light the fires in your heart, or are you disinterested? This book is a treasure house of mysteries ready to be unveiled to our hearts.

For reasons unknown to me, God has given me the wonderful privilege of administering the mysteries of His Word, just as he has so many other servants of Christ.

This explains some, otherwise, unexplainable behavior. It explains how teachers can be so *outspoken* at times, so *direct*. It explains why we take this book so seriously and get defensive when *even one word is changed or misapplied*. We are the *stewards* of God's truth. Just as it was necessary for that slave to command authority in order for him to accomplish his task, you must understand that Christ's servants must speak with *authority* when dispensing the truths of God.

On a personal note, I know that, as a pastor, I confuse some folks, because they see two sides of me. On the one side, they see me stand and roar like a lion in the pulpit. On the other side, they see me as an ordinary person, almost too ordinary, when I am out of the pulpit. This is because I fill two servant roles. One

role is the steward who commands authority and respect in order to do his task. The other, is the galley slave who is equal in every way to his counterparts.

We are not finished molding our mental image of the servant of Christ. We have seen that servants of Christ are common galley rowers for Christ and careful stewards of His truth. However, if we omit the third trait, our mental image of the servant will still fail. Picture that household steward once again, and ask the question, to whom is he answerable? Is he answerable to the community? Is he answerable to the children under his care? The answer is “no” (though we see many parents today who *think* they are answerable to their children.)

To whom then is the steward answerable? The steward is answerable only to the householder himself. So too, the servants of Christ are:

3. God's stewards are commended by God alone. Vs. 2-5

1 Corinthians 4:2-5

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

KJV

Now, if we lose the imagery of the steward, we miss the whole point of what Paul is saying.

a. The steward is *not* accountable to man's judgment. Is Paul suggesting that he does not care about the opinions of others? Is Paul suggesting that pastors should not listen to the advice of their people? The answers are “no.” When Paul says that it is a *very small thing* that he be judged by others, he meant that you will not stand and judge him some day. Therefore, while your opinion may matter, it is a very small concern for him in comparison to his need to obey God. He knows that, in the final analysis only the householder matters.

b. Nor is the steward accountable to his own judgment. *Even his own opinion of his own ministry* is not what matters. He does not judge his own self and knows nothing by himself. He is judged by the Lord.

Paul knew what every servant of Christ knows; he could not even trust his own nature and conscience. There have been many times when my wisdom has told me to go one way but this Book told me to go another way. There have been many times when I would have preferred to overlook what this Book says and life would have been a whole lot easier. There have been times when many of those to whom I minister did not share my opinion, but I have not dared to rely on

their opinions or on my own opinion. Why? Because I am looking forward to that day when God reveals the dark things, the hidden counsels of the heart, and I have the praise of God.

Read verses 3-5 again and try to sense the flavor of these words.

1 Corinthians 4:3-5

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

KJV

Notice the *legal* flavor, the courtroom flavor of these verses. Paul says that it is a small thing for him to be judged *of you or of man's judgment*. Literally, that is, *man's day*. Some translations render it "*man's court*." Paul was saying, "I am not in your jurisdiction." Not only is man's court in the wrong jurisdiction, but Paul says, it is too early to try the case! He says, "*Therefore, judge nothing before the time.*"

We ask, when will the time arrive? It will be the right time when we are in the right court, heaven's court. That will be the time when we have the right Judge, the only capable judge, the Lord Himself. That will be the time when we have the right evidence, when all the facts are revealed.

Until that time, we do not need to make conclusions about the motives of others. This is so personal and close to home for the servant of Christ that some pastors have to skip over it for fear of embarrassing someone around them. Most complaints about servants of Christ today are complaints that would be better left untried for heaven's courts. If you are holding something against a servant of Christ, you would do well to drop your case and remand things to a higher court.

What have we learned and how may we apply it? We have learned how to view the servant of Christ properly.

To begin, we saw that it was a balanced view. The servant is, on the one hand, our equal in every way as a common galley slave of Christ serving along side of us. On the other hand, his position as the household slave means he is a servant of the highest order, and must command respect as he administers the truths and mysteries of God. In that sense, he should be counted worthy of *double honor*, Paul teaches elsewhere, if he does well ministering the Word of God.

We saw also that the time for judging the servant's ministry has not come. Not all of the evidence is yet in. All of the hidden motives of our hearts have not yet been revealed. Even the servant himself cannot trust his own motives. His task

is to align himself with the truths of this Book regardless of how a given situation countermands that dictum.

Finally, we ask ourselves, do we want to know these mysteries of God? Do we love His Word and truth or are we satisfied with a church that entertains, warms, and soothes? Do we really want to know the God of this book and the Book of this God?

Dangerous Delusions

Intro: We are concluding the first leg in our journey through the study of Corinthians. We will include some final remarks on the theme The Church and Her Leaders and will be moving into our second major theme, The Church and Her Disobedience in our next study.

We have up with verses 1-5 of chapter four. We were talking about the matter of judging leadership. Our concluding thoughts were that: The steward is *not* accountable to man's judgment. The steward is *not* accountable, even to his own judgment, but rather, the steward *is* accountable to God's judgment.

Therefore, verse 5 says,

1 Corinthians 4:5-7

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

KJV

Paul says effectively, "I used a figure for your sakes, and this was my purpose: that that ye might learn in us not to think [of men] above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another."

Regretfully, the tendency to puff ourselves up is a trait common to all of mankind and much of nature itself. We all inflate rather easily. It is an easy trait to observe in others, but a difficult one to see in ourselves.

When we understand, and that is the key, that we all possess each other and we all possess all things, we are less likely to inflate ourselves. When we understand that any talents or gifts which God may have given to us are gifts given from God, we are less likely to inflate ourselves, and we are less likely to be critical of others. We must each learn how not to think of others and how not to think of ourselves. Kipling expressed his words about this theme with the following poem...

Could, we but draw back the curtains
That surround each other's lives,

See the naked heart and spirit,
Know what spur the action gives;

Often we should find it better,
Purer than we judge we should;
We should love each other better,
If we only understood.

Could we judge all deeds by motives
See the good and bad within,
Often we should love the sinner
All the while we loathe the sin;

Could we know the powers working
To over throw integrity,
We should love each other's errors
With more patient charity.

If we knew the cares and trials,
Knew the efforts all in vain,
And the bitter disappointment,
Understood the loss and gain --

Would the grim eternal roughness
Seem--I wonder--just the same?
Should we help where now we hinder,
Should we pity, where now we blame.

Ah! we judge each other harshly.
Knowing not life's hidden force;
Knowing not the found of action
Is less turbid at its source--

Seeing not amid the evil
All the golden grain of good;
And we would love each other better
If we only understood.

Paul has finished with his arguments about division in the body. He has finished with their heads so to speak, but Paul is not yet finished with the hearts of these Corinthians. We continue reading verses 8-14.

1 Corinthians 4:8-14

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

KJV

We could treat these verses from a literary point of view and analyze Paul's masterful use of yet another literary tool, irony. Another approach would be to take the verses apart, one phrase at a time. However, in doing all of that, we must not lose a grip of what Paul is doing.

These Corinthians who wanted to make a philosopher/teacher out of Paul, are instead, getting a galley slave and a steward. In addition to this, instead of speaking as a teacher, Paul is approaching them as their father.

He is warning them as sons. Commentaries often begin discussing Paul and his skills as a father around verse 14. But, I want you to see what Paul has done. In these verses that we have just read, Paul is disciplining his children right before our eyes. He is applying a powerful parenting technique.

These Corinthians had been acting like spoiled adolescents, like typical Jr. High and High School. What are some of the grand delusions that adolescents nurse? How do they view the world? We all know they view it with perfect objectivity. Here are some of the things adolescents know:

Adolescents know that they never want to be seen in the mall with their parents! They know that they never want to be seen dressing or acting like their parents! They know that only certain labels pass muster. They know more socially than their backward parents could ever dream of knowing. They know how to criticize others. And they all know that they are going to be driving Porsche's before they are 25 and retire before they are 50. Those are simple basic facts that every adolescent instinctively knows. If you will forgive the pun, "it's in their genes." This is the stuff that makes up an adolescent.

These average adolescents do not know some things. They do not know that everything they have and are they owe to those embarrassing parents. They do not know that they lack both the social and vocational skills to survive in the real world. In short they have little or no conception of what the real stuff and issues of life are about.

But that's OK, after all, that's adolescence. As parents, we remember those painful days when our own parents embarrassed us. We're not offended when our children won't walk with us in the mall or sing with us around the camp fire.

We're not offended because we know what they are going through. We're not offended because we went through those years. We're not offended because we love them as parents. We remember when we used to be as smart as they are. But, even though we love them, sometimes things get out of hand, and we have to sit them down and help them make a reality adjustment.

These adolescent Corinthians were enjoying all the benefits and blessings of the home. They were designer label Christians who had not yet come to appreciate the price their spiritual parents were paying for them. While they were enjoying the presents under the Christmas tree (so to speak), it hadn't yet occurred to them that their parents had given up their own gifts in order to give them theirs. While they were putting their feet under the spiritual table and complaining about the menu and the cooking, they had no conception of the sacrifice it took to clothe and feed them spiritually. Have you ever noticed that believers who are not soul winners, and church planters themselves, have all kinds of reasons why they could improve on the ministries of others?

The Apostle Paul, more than anyone else, was the ultimate nerdy parent to many of these Corinthians.

So, with tongue in cheek, Paul says, in verse 8, *"Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you."* Perhaps another way Paul could have said it would have been "I wish we could enjoy the luxury of your adolescence in Christ, but, God has appointed another destiny for us. While you are dawdling around about who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, we are sharing the suffering and sorrow of Christ. While you are debating about the effectiveness of the weaponry, we are dying on the front lines.

The contrast is dramatic. In verse 9 Paul uses the most vivid imagery of the day when he notes: *"For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men"*.

Paul was talking about marching in the triumphal procession of the Roman victor. However, he was not talking about parading about as victors (as these Corinthians were), he was talking about being paraded as the ones who had been conquered. The conquered came last in the parade. They were the spectacle on the way to the theater to become gladiators, sacrificed to the lions.

We are the spectacles! We are appointed to death! We are the fools! There are countless counterparts to this same adolescent syndrome in our day! As an example, if one attends a typical Bible college or seminary he will get a good dose of what *fools* those fighting fundamentalists were. They took their stands, took their lumps, and forsook their pensions, honor, and self-respect so that you and I could even be here. You will soon see how few of our modern Bible teach-

ers would be seen walking down the same spiritual malls with them. But *those fundamentalist fools* laid the foundations for the very salvation of these critical professors when they rescued their parents from the clutches of modernism. We announce with sadness that we have so many adolescent Christians in designer churches in our time, it is hard for us to find truly apostolic ministries.

Paul says, "*We are weak, but you are strong.*" These believers knew exactly what Paul was saying. They were only a few years away from their own conversions. They knew that they were still riding on the coattails of the apostles. They were spiritual neophytes who had presumed the luxury of criticizing folks who were so far beyond them they could never hope to catch up. Even that was not the worst of it. They had missed the important point of: they could not have been more off target. They had missed the baseline of Christian ministry. They weren't just *one brick* shy of the proverbial load, they had lost the whole load of bricks!

We ask, what did they miss? They missed the whole concept of what Christian ministry is about. The warp and woof of Christian ministry can be summed up in these words: *The cross always precedes the crown.* Suffering always comes before glory. Suffering and glory are two sides of the same coin.

This would be a good time to set these notes aside and take a walk down through the New Testament scriptures in order to notice how many times the concepts of suffering and glory are treated together. We were taught that by example in the life of the One who came to suffer first, and reign later, and absolutely *nothing* has changed. This is the hour of the cross. The hour of the crown comes later.

In conclusion, God has embedded these same principles all around us, so that we can see what God is asking of us. The farmer bears his seed weeping. The man with the talents invests. The athlete runs with patience the race. As our opportunities to suffer for Christ slip through our fingers and fall on the floor of eternity, we must be willing to ask whether we are nurturing the fantasies of spiritual adolescents, or joining in with Christ and accepting the role of suffering servants.

Father Paul

Intro.: Previously, we studied the adolescent delusions of these Corinthians who were enjoying the luxuries of being critics and partisans while their teachers and leaders were paying the true price of sacrifice for their faith.

We saw in Paul the mark of the true teacher. He was one who taught, not just by word and doctrine, but also by example. He had become a fool for Christ and was pouring himself out on the altar, not for his sake, but for their sake. Paul was more than a teacher. Paul was a parent. He was a father.

We need to look at verses 14 through 21:

1 Corinthians 4:14-21

14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

KJV

We must understand that Paul was not suggesting that his *title* was father, or than anyone at Corinth should call him father. Historically and biblically, there is no evidence or hint that God would have us call any spiritual leader our father. In fact, the Lord Jesus himself warned us about such a practice. He said:

Matthew 23:9

9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

KJV

Paul would not rob our Heavenly Father of his rightful glory by accepting such a title. Rather, he was using a teaching tool; he was using a metaphor. He was teaching by analogy, one of Paul's favorite methods. We are no strangers to this teaching method in Corinthians, for already, in our study, we have seen Paul use a number of metaphors (or figures of speech). We saw the farmer in 3:5, God's

fellow-worker in 3:6, the master builder and builder in 3:10, the galley rower in 4:1 and the household steward in 4:1.

Now, we see Paul as a Father. The first thing we see about a good father is this:

I. A Good Father is Willing to Admonish His Children. Vs. 4:14

Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 4:14
14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.
KJV

We can all point to fathers who are overbearing and who have a lecture for their children every time they move their little fingers. We have all seen that extreme. Hollywood loves to portray fathers in this light. When the truth comes into the light, however, that is not the problem with most fathers.

The problem with most fathers is that they are *not* willing to admonish their children. Many fathers (and mothers) somehow feel that by being permissive and tolerant with their children, they will be more readily accepted by their children. That fact *is* true. The permissive parent *is* accepted by his child. He is accepted as an equal, with no more authority or influence than any other peer.

Good parents admonish their children.

Now, very often, when we read the word admonish in our English Bibles it refers back to the Greek word παρακαλεο . *Parakaleo* means to beseech, to come alongside as an equal, as a peer. However, that is not the thought at all behind the word which is used here. This is a much stronger word. It is the Greek word *noutheteo* and it carries with it the idea of admonishing with authority.

A number of years ago Jay Adams wrote a book entitled Competent to Counsel. It sent shock waves through the Christian world of counseling and psychology. In it, Adams had the nerve to declare that modern counselors called of God to be “nouthetic” counselors. They are called to admonish and rebuke when they counsel others. What a clever thought! What a biblical thought!

Dad, a good father is willing to admonish with authority. He does not need the immediate acceptance of his child. He is willing to withhold immediate approval for the sake of gaining future approval. Keep in mind, with all of these thoughts, that it is the father's duty to admonish.

Paul told the Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 2:10-12...

1 *Thessalonians 2:10-12*

10 *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:*

11 *As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,*

12 *That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*

KJV

A second glimpse at the verse reveals another trait of great fatherhood:

II. A Good Father Loves His Children

Paul said, "I write these things to admonish you as my beloved children."

Why are so many fathers incapable of expressing love to their little ones? Is it because the father must be the one who is tough and aggressive in society? Is he the macho man? Is it because it is somehow seen as feminine for a man to be loving, and affectionate, and to kiss his little ones?

If you have nursed any of those ideas, please do not think you find that kind of a model for fatherhood in God's Word. We see only examples of the opposite. Gentleness and kindness is a trait which belongs as much to true manhood as it does true womanhood. Paul once wrote:

1 *Thessalonians 2:7-8*

7 *But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:*

8 *So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

KJV

This man had no problem with his identity and his self-image. Paul was as willing to picture himself as a gentle nurse as he was a defender of the faith. Paul had the mix which every father needs in order to succeed. We need the ability to admonish, and to admonish with love and gentleness.

How could Paul speak so tenderly to these Corinthians who were such a bunch of losers? He could be gentle with them because he first saw them as his little ones, his children. Do you see, in verse 14, where Paul says that he warns them as sons? That is not really the ideal English choice for a word. The Greek word is *teknon*. It is one of John's favorite words. It means born ones, or little ones. When the Scottish speak of their wee ones as bair'ns they are conveying the exact meaning of this word. "*No matter how big you get,*" a mother tenderly tells her child, "*you will always be my baby. You will always be my little one, my child.*" This, it would be better to render this *little ones*.

The third thought is encapsulated in verse 15:

1 Corinthians 4:15

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

KJV

III. A Good Father Takes advantage of His Position. Vs. 15

A child may have many teachers, but he only has one father. There are certain “gears” which God builds into everyone. One of those, for example, is an innate belief in God. If you choose not to believe in God, you must root that idea out of your thinking. Another thing that God has placed into everyone is a conscience. They may be twisted, ignored, seared, and perverted, but all men have them. All men have a conscience that sits in judgment over their actions.

Now, here is a third thing that all men have: They have an inborn instinct to need the approval of their parents, especially their fathers. That is a fact. You do not have to be taught to want your father's approval the desire is there. Your father may be meaner than a junkyard dog, and the father who adopted you may be a perfect, loving Dad, but you are still likely to have a struggle to overcome your natural instincts.

When two parents divorce and remarry, they put their children in a state of confusion. Every surrogate parent, at one time or another, hears those words expressed in anger "*I don't have to obey you! You're not my real father!*" And, in that very act of rebellion, that child is admitting a cardinal fact of life. He knows in his instincts that he is supposed to obey his father.

Paul knew this applied spiritually as well. He was not afraid to leverage his parental authority. Paul was pulling rank.

Dad, when you're in the heat of a disciplinary issue in your home and the pressure is really on, do your best to do two things. First, for *your sake*, keep viewing your child as your little one, your child. Secondly, remember your child needs *your* approval far more than you need *his* approval. God made him that way so that you would be able to discipline him. He needs your approval. You are the one who begot him.

Oh, and please notice, only incidentally, that since the days when Babylonianism infiltrated the church, we have reversed the natural order in our culture. We glorify motherhood over fatherhood. Look at the verse here and see what I mean. In scripture, the word for beget applies equally to men and women. Each has a role in conception, and each has a role in child training. If either parent defaults, the child suffers. However, historically, the first word in parenting is the father, not the mother:

Genesis 2:24

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

KJV

Exodus 20:12

12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

KJV

Exodus 21:17

17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

KJV

The fact is, that out of all the references in scriptures to fathers and mothers I only know of *one* case where the mother is mentioned ahead of the father.

Keep our point in mind. A good father takes advantage of his position. Spiritual leaders have a right to do this too. When you have led someone to Christ, do you love him or her as a parent? Do you assume that they will be spiritually accountable to you? Paul led these folks to Christ and he expected a child-parent accountability. Now, notice the fourth trait of a good father.

IV. A Good Father Sets the Example for His Children to Follow Vs. 16

1 Corinthians 4:16

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

KJV

The media reported recently that in a previous twenty-five year period we have virtually destroyed the American home, and that this was particularly true among low-income families. They pointed the finger to our welfare system as being a major contributor to this destruction of the home. They argued that, in our efforts to provide aid to women and children who need welfare, we have demanded that no men live in the home, and that the result has exposed a whole generation of children to growing up without the influence and the example of dads.

You and I know that that is only part of the picture. The problems run far deeper because we have a nation who has turned her back on God and cast Him and His morality out of their lives. We have been disobedient to God as a people and we have only just begun to reap the consequences in our nation. In spite of the shower of rhetoric that would fall if we opened up this discussion, we *are* raising a generation of children who have never had a father who could say, "Son, follow me. Follow my example."

Christian friend, there is another tragedy which looms deeply in our churches today. In our pastoral efforts to remove the supposed separation between clergy

and laity; in our efforts as pastors to be accepted by our congregations, and in our efforts to make our deacons and elders boards and teams instead of figures in our church, we have begotten a nation full of fatherless churches. We have churches everywhere where no one assumes the figure of spiritual father and leader. Senior pastors, administrative pastors, and CEO types have replaced this figure. Few can say from our pulpits anymore *"Be ye imitators of me as I follow Christ."* There may be very few who love us enough to admonish us individually, and instruct us on a personal basis. Good pastors, are like good fathers. They are not always appreciated by their congregations while they are growing up. Sometimes they are not appreciated until years later when young believers move into spiritual adulthood. They stay true to their calling regardless.

When I was a child I had the dubious honor of being invited to become a patrol boy or a crossing guard near our grade school. Most crossing guards did not last too long. Crossing guards had to arrive earlier, and leave school a little later. They had to put up with disobedience now and then. They had to endure a little heat, cold, and weather. Worst of all, they missed the preschool playtime in the playground. The day finally came when crossing guards in our town were replaced by adults.

I think we have turned our churches into playground societies, and there is a shortage of crossing guards. After all, who wants to put up with someone else's disobedience? It's more fun to be one of the gang. Is it the fault of the children? The answer is no. It is because we no longer have men in our congregations who can speak with the authority of fathers. We need men who can expect accountability because they themselves are examples that can be imitated. We need men who set the example, who stay the course, who are rock solid and men who do not compromise.

V. A Good Father Assures His Children That He Is There for Them. Vs. 17

1 Corinthians 4:17

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

KJV

Though Paul could not be in Corinth physically to nurture his converts personally, he cared enough about them to "send the very best." A father provides for his own. Notice how careful Paul was in his speech about Timothy. He wanted these believers to know that Timothy was qualified in character and integrity and that Timothy would *teach* them the proper things. They would be treated just like the other churches were treated.

When I first looked at this verse, I saw *provision*. Paul was quick to provide Timothy to help meet their growing spiritual needs. I looked again, and I saw *teaching*, after all, Timothy was being sent to teach them. Then, I looked again and I saw *consistency*. Paul said that Timothy would teach them the same things that Paul taught. He would be an extension of Paul's ministry. He would not compete with Paul, but would complement Paul. I looked again and I saw *impartiality* and *fairness*. Paul said that Timothy would teach them the *same* things which Paul taught *everywhere*. They would not be ignored while Paul played favorites with other converts. Finally, as I struggled with this verse, the one thing I saw more than anything else was *assurance*.

I believe what Paul was really doing was assuring the Corinthians that he was in their camp. They must know that he is in their ballpark. They must know and understand that he loves them as dear children. They must know that he will gladly spend and be spent for them and that he is committed in every way. Paul is not just committed to "get the job done," but he is committed to them, personally.

They needed that because they still had some deep water to go through with Paul. Their relationship was going to become more strained before it would become more precious. That leads us to the last illustration in this sequence:

VI. A Good father is Willing to Discipline When the Situation Calls for It. Vs. 18-21

1 Corinthians 4:18-21

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

KJV

This is entirely different from our first assertion. In our first point we said that a good father is willing to admonish his children. However, admonition is not enough, sometimes. Sometimes we have to say to our children, "If things don't change, this is what I'm going to do! Right now, you still have control of the situation and you can resolve this problem. But, if you choose not to, I *will* resolve the matter!" Then, every father must become a golfer and learn to follow through with his swing.

Paul was graciously giving these Corinthians the opportunity to settle their problems in advance of the discipline. That is exactly how God deals with us. This is one purpose for serving the Lord's Table. Before we ever come to the Lord's table we should have examined ourselves. Paul says that God disciplines those

who abuse the Lord's Table, and he notes, "*...for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*"

A wise parent allows a child the opportunity to discipline himself first. Our loving God has done the same for us. He gives us a chance to deal with our sin, beginning with the matter of salvation. Do you want to be a good parent? Start with yourself. Begin by accepting God's admonitions, God's love and acceptance of you. Accept God's provisions and assurances, and God's discipline for you, for the man who walks with God is the man who can look his own son in the eyes and say "Imitate me." And those are best parenting words in our entire vocabulary. Can you say, "Imitate me?"

Sin in the Camp

A deacon and I were knocking on a few doors one evening and we happened upon a man who was visiting our area from a distant town. He told us that he was a recent convert and that he was very happy with the church he was attending. He was especially pleased with them because these folks minded their own business. In his words "They don't care what you do outside of the church. What you do outside of church is your business."

Now, I really don't think that this new convert to Christ fully understood the implications of what he was saying, and certainly I don't think he was right about his church. My guess is that the Baptist church where he attends cares very much about how folks behave when they are not in church. Regardless, this one fact I do know, when it comes to the subject of church discipline, many Christians and churches seem to go to extremes. Either we ignore the problem (as the Corinthian church did) or we abuse church discipline and use it for our own ends and purposes.

We are now examining a classic, textbook passage on church discipline.

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

KJV

Even a cursory reading of the passage raises some significant questions. The passage reminds me of those words of Peter when he reminded us that Paul did write about some things which are hard to be understood. Because of this, some teachers have chosen to pass over the passage lightly, and others ignore it

completely. My guess is that very few Christians have heard a full message on these verses.

We are going to take a different approach and divide our study into two areas. First, I would like to deal with Questions Which I Cannot Answer about this passage. I want you to see some of the things we all struggle with when we look closely at these verses. Then I want you to see Answers Which I Cannot Question, truths which we cannot ignore.

I. Questions Which I Cannot Answer

Let's struggle for a few minutes with questions that no one has resolved perfectly. The first question is:

A. What was the actual sin being committed? Vs. 5:1

Paul notes:

1 Corinthians 5:1

1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

KJV

There is little debate about the word fornication. It is the Greek word πορνειο (porneo), from which we construct the word pornography. To graph something is to write it. Pornography is graphed or written fornication. By now, you should also know that fornication refers to any sexual misconduct, inside or outside of the marriage bonds. One commits adultery any time he violates the marriage union (his own or someone else's), but one commits fornication any time he commits sexual sin, whether or not marriage is involved in it.

While many folks in our society still resist adultery, largely, most of our society permits and approves of fornication at some level, especially if it occurs discretely between unmarried persons. God, on the other hand, hates it and warns us that it destroys the bodies of the fornicators themselves (as we will see in chapter 6) and it destroys Christ's church.

The problem in this verse is not with the word fornication. As an aside, I do not think that Paul meant to imply that this one man's fornication was the only fornication occurring in Corinth. It is a grammatical matter, but I am convinced that Paul was saying, in effect, that fornication was occurring, and it was so bad that even this vile deed was being commonly reported.

What is our question? The question is this: What did Paul mean when he said that this man was "...having his father's wife?" I do not have the answer for sure.

Some say this means he was cohabiting with his stepmother. They argue that, most likely, the father had one or more wives (or concubines), and that this man was living with one of them. They also refer to a few obscure Jewish writings at the time that refer to a man's father's wife as his stepmother.

I tend to follow another line. I believe that Paul was actually referring to a man who was cohabiting with his own birth mother, and that Paul used the term, father's wife for a good reason, for therein was the horrendous nature of the sin. This man was defrauding his father of what was rightfully his. In terms of accountability and headship, a daughter belongs to her father who is charged with protecting her purity until he gives her away, ("You mess with my daughter and you will curse the day you did!") A wife belongs to her husband (just as a husband belongs to his wife.) To take sexual pleasure from either of those is not only fornication it is theft and fraud. I believe that what Paul is arguing here is not only a case of outrageous fornication, but also a case of fraud.

Of course, the real point of verse 1 stands regardless of whether the woman was the man's mother or his stepmother. While it is true that some pagan societies in existence allowed this practice (including the Indians, the Moors, the Bactrians, the Ethiopians, Medes, Persians, and some Arabians) it was also true that both by Jewish law and by Roman law, this offense was punishable by death, though not always enforced. Some historians say that the liberal Jews of Paul's day were actually backwatering on the issue and had devised a clever way of excusing Jewish proselytes from this obligation, though they were admonished not to sin in this manner.

But, here is an even more difficult question:

B. What Does it Mean to be Delivered Over to Satan?

In verse 5 we see they were instructed to deliver such an one over to Satan for the destruction of the body that the spirit could be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Here we see that, in general, there are two groups of folks. There are folks who take the passive approach to this action and there are folks who take an active approach to this passage

a. Folks who take a **passive approach** to this passage believe that the disobedient Christian is disciplined simply by removing the sanctifying influences of the Church from him. That is, to turn someone over to Satan is to simply push them out into the world, and remove the godly influence of God's people from them.

The "passivists" further believe that such a person who continues in sin will be disciplined by God, and will ultimately die in his sins. A good argument in their favor can be found in 1 Corinthians 11 where Paul warns those who abuse the

Lord's table by not dealing with their sin. He reminds them "*For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*" (11:30). When we persist in sin, God will even remove us from this earth, if needs be. According to 1 Corinthians 11 we must either chasten ourselves or be chastened by God. Otherwise, we would be condemned with the world.

In summary, those who approach this passage *passively* say that this is what occurs. By turning the disobedient believer back into the world, we will accelerate the forces that will discipline him and, either his restoration or his death will be effected much more quickly.

b. Then, there are those who view this passage **actively**. They believe that these believers actually turned this believer over to Satan himself, and gave Satan permission that he otherwise does not have to buffet this person. We know, for example, according to the book of Job, that God once gave such permission to Satan to buffet Job. We know, for instance that Paul himself, was buffeted by a messenger from Satan and that God allowed it for Paul's own good. (2 Cor 12:7)

The "activist" folks argue that Satan would gladly buffet and destroy anyone turned over to him but that he cannot do so without permission. That God protects us from any temptation or testing which is greater than we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).

Where does this teacher stand? Is he an "activist" or a "passivist?" Personally, he believes the second. I believe that God was actually using Satan's persecution of this man for the man's own good. The Bible says that God uses the wrath of men to please Him and I do not doubt that God even uses Satan for His own purposes. However, I cannot give you an absolute answer. It is a question I cannot answer for sure. There is one more question that I cannot answer:

C. Did Paul intend churches in general should practice turning fornicators over to Satan?

Was Paul laying down instructions for all succeeding churches to follow, or was Paul exercising his own apostolic authority in this respect?

I tend to believe that these are *not* instructions given to the local church and that Paul was exercising his apostolic authority here. I believe it because of the wording of the passage. Paul says "I...have judged as though I were present..." and then he commands them to do this not only in the name of Jesus Christ, but with the acknowledging of his own spirit in the matter. You may also remember that Paul, not the church, delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan in 1 Timothy 1:20 for their own personal benefit. Gill has written:

... Nor is this a form of excommunication; nor was this phrase ever used in excommunicating persons by the primitive churches; nor

ought it ever to be used; it is what no man, or set of men, have power to do now, since the ceasing of the extraordinary gifts of the spirit, which the apostles were endowed with; who, as they had a power over Satan to dispossess him from the bodies of men, so to deliver up the bodies of men into his hands, as the apostle did this man's: "for the destruction of the flesh"; that is, that his body might be shook, buffeted, afflicted, and tortured in a terrible manner; that by this means he might be brought to a sense of his sin, to repentance for it, and make an humble acknowledgment of it:

So, you ask, "Would you deliver a fornicating sinner over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit might be saved? My first response might be: "Don't test me. Do not try me. Don't fornicate." Nothing in the Bible prohibits God's people from doing this. In fact, consider these words found in Matthew 18:18:

Matthew 18:18-20

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

KJV

So, do not test your pastor or your church. You may be surprised how God leads. In truth, however, based on my present understanding of the scriptures, I probably would not do it. I would rely on other principles that I already know to be in effect, such as those recorded in chapter eleven.

Now, let's look at:

II. Answers Which I Cannot Question.

We must not look at these questions and their difficulties as an excuse for disobedience. Instead of looking for ways to get around this passage, let us notice ways to benefit from it. Let us notice what godly churches *will* do. I want you to see that:

A. Godly churches mourn over willful sin.

Paul notes in verse 2: "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned ..."

I see many churches that are willing to discipline, but they are not willing to *mourn*. In fact, I know some pastors who regularly sort and sift through their congregations, looking as though they almost hope they will find a cause for dis-

cipline. To be found disciplining a believer is seemingly a badge of courage for them. It gives them an “authority rush” as powerful as the “adrenaline rush.” It sets them off as true to the Word.

Did you notice that the *first response* Paul expected was an emotional response, not a legal response? When you see someone sin is your first response indignation or is it sorrow? I want to tell you that I believe there would be a lot less need for discipline in churches today, if more godly sorrow over sin were expressed in advance.

Why do we mourn? The world cannot understand Christians. They think that we have no business sticking our nose into each other’s lives. They cannot understand why one Christian would mourn over the behavior of another believer. We mourn because we see that the offending party refuses to see. We see the consequences. We can look down the road and see the results of his sin.

- *We mourn when someone gets caught up in fornication...we mourn because sin hurts. It hurts the church, it hurts the partner, and it hurts the offender himself.*
- *We mourn when we see our young people circling like moths around the flame because we know they are likely to be burned. We do not wish to rob them of joy and pleasure. We would only steal from them the impending heartache.*
- *We mourn when we see folks lose their self esteem and self respect and then become even more vulnerable to further temptation. And, we mourn for the diminution and loss of future ministries and service for Christ.*
- *We mourn because we see in advance the tears that will stream down lonely faces in the dark hours of the night when no one else sees.*
- *We mourn because we know how the cancer of fornication spreads from one person to the next, and how that, each time a sin is committed, the person has less resistance for the next temptation.*
- *We mourn because we know this roaring lion is never satisfied and will always seek for more.*
- *We mourn because we know how someone can be a part of our intimate fellowship year after year and then simply not show up one Sunday because he or she lost the battle.*

- *We mourn for those who spend whole lifetimes secretly knowing they are not married to God's perfect mate for them, but that they had locked themselves into their futures because they could not deal with fornication and get help and forgiveness when they needed it.*
- *We mourn because we know history is very likely to repeat itself in another fifteen years or so in the children of those who give way. And for some of us, we mourn because we have lived long enough to see the ugly cycle repeat itself, even in the grand children.*
- *We mourn because WE failed to help the offenders, to prepare and protect them. We mourn because fornication destroys all of us.*
- *We also mourn because we see how sin hurts our congregation.*

Please notice especially where this sorrow, this mourning, was to be directed. Paul said, "...and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." Did you catch that? Paul did *not* say that their desire should be that the *person* be removed, (though that would be necessary). They should have mourned that the *deed* would be removed, the sin.

Nothing hurts a congregation more than sin in the camp. I believe that the level of sin tolerated among believers in a local church directly affects the power and purity of the whole church! Your secret sins hurt all of us. You hurt the body. You hinder God's work. You hinder yourself, yes, but no man lives unto himself. You hurt all of God's people when you sin.

This is one answer I cannot question: Godly churches mourn over sin in their midst. Notice also:

B. Godly Churches Deal With Sin in their Midst.

They do not excuse themselves of their obligation.

I have referred on occasion to a farmer friend of mine who attended one of the churches I pastored. On Sundays this dairy farmer would get all cleaned up and wear his best Sunday clothes to church. However, he had one interesting quality. He would insist on wearing his favorite hat. It was the one he wore in the barn when he leaned his head up against those cows at milking time. Not only was he proud of that hat, but the strange part was, that he was proud of what was caked on that hat. Somehow, that cow manure was a badge of identity, a

badge of courage, for him. He wore it with great pride right along with his Sunday suit. My former friend had become *too accustomed to manure*. He did not realize that it was an offense to others.

He does not seem so strange to me anymore. For since those days I have met too many folks, and too many churches, who wear that same badge of manure. They are proud of the fact that their church is not judgmental and legalistic. The manure on their spiritual hats is their badge of courage. They are puffed up and proud because love is the important thing, not obedience. These folks have become so accustomed to the manure of the world that they cannot even smell the sin anymore. They drink and carouse with the world. They watch and read the world's filth. They speak like the world and they behave like the world. It is their badge, their badge of courage, their badge of liberty, and their badge of tolerance! After all, how can you win the lost if you separate yourself from them?

You do not need to wear manure on your hat in order to get milk from a cow. It makes no difference to the cow. If you truly want power in your life and witness, clean up your life.

I want you to ask yourself the question. Are you still offended by sin? Or, have you tramped around in it so much that you can't even smell it? Are you pure? Are there any deeds in your life that we should be mourning about? Do you want deliverance, forgiveness, and healing?

Now, if you are *without Christ* you have been listening in, so to speak, on a family conversation. We would no more think of disciplining you than we would think of disciplining our neighbors' children.

However, the consequences, the consequences of sin, will still be experienced in your life. This same apostle Paul also taught, "The wages of sin is death...." When a Christian sins, he knows that God is on his side. He knows that God will deal with Him. He knows that God loves him so much that He will do whatever it takes to salvage that Christian. When we do not Christ, we have none of those privileges. We bear the consequences for our own sins not only in this life, but also in the life to come. We suffer eternal damnation and eternal loss. Do God's people mourn for you? We certainly do. Do we pray for you? We certainly do. Do we plead for you? We certainly do. Today is the day of salvation!

Leaven in the Lump

Intro: When I was in Bible School, I had the interesting experience, one evening, of seeing a group of guys pick up a rock and hurl it through the plate glass door of the school. It was instinctive for me to chase them (though the girl I was with at that time has never forgiven me for it). We ran a few blocks into a busy thoroughfare where I saw a police cruiser. I waved at the officer, and he, in turn detained the youths. We returned to the scene and in a polite and unexcited way I explained to the officer what had been done. Much to my surprise, the officer responded with great anger and arrogance. He asked me "Do *you* attend that school?" I replied, yes. He then said, "Do they teach any Bible in that school?" Again, I replied that they did. He then said, "Well, doesn't it say in the Bible, let he who is without sin cast the first stone?" I maintained my silence in disgust. I was later vindicated.

The man whose duty it was to uphold the law was defending the lawbreaker instead. And he is not alone. Alongside him is a long train of lawyers and judges whose sole purpose in life is to protect the guilty. They make the work of good officers, lawyers, and judges a nightmare.

But we must not stop with our legal system. For, if anyone has abused those words "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone" it has been Christ's church. It is in our natures to avoid confrontation, or at the least, to let someone else take the stand.

Now, if the Lord tarries, the day will come when someone in your local fellowship will persist in the kind of sin which requires the kind of response that Paul commands in 1 Corinthians 5. Problems come, as we will learn later in this very book, so that those who are approved may be manifest among us. The hour will come. We must be prepared for that hour. We must be prepared so that we do not act in an untimely or inappropriate manner, and we must act in a way that will benefit both the offender and the body. We must act in love and obedience, and we must not be influenced by the silly notions of the world. If we will take to heart the things about which Paul speaks, we will be better equipped for our hour of testing.

As we look over these verses one more time, I want you to see the Adverbs of Discipline Notice first,

I. The *Why* of Church Discipline Vs. 2-6

1 Corinthians 5:2-6

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

KJV

A. We do this for the benefit of the body. Vs. 2-6

We do it so that the grace of God will not be exploited (vs. 2,6). We do this to stop the spread of the cancer of sin in our assemblies.

B. We also exercise discipline for the benefit of the offender.

We do it to educate him concerning the seriousness of his sin. We do it heal him, "...that his spirit may be saved (healed/made whole) in the day of Christ." He may be quarantined, but the goal is still to heal him. He may respond in anger, but he must never sense or feel that we have done this to him in anger, any more than a doctor removes a growth in anger.

II. The *What* of Church Discipline Vs. 7

1 Corinthians 5:7

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

KJV

Someone has said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but here are 27 words that paint a thousand pictures.

A. There is a lesson in the words, "purge out the leaven."

Leaven is the Bible's illustration of sin and its contagious nature. Cleanliness is not contagious. The filthiness of sin is.

Haggai 2:11-13

11 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,
12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

13 Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

KJV

B. There is a lesson in the words purge out the OLD leaven.

With that word old that Paul paints his picture drawing our minds back to the children of Israel. Just as surely as the Hebrew housewife purged her home of every speck of leaven before Passover, we must aggressively purge the sin which we have come to tolerate in our own lives and bodies.

C. There is a lesson in the words "...that ye may be a new lump"

This is a message of hope for those of us who have been soiled and defiled with sin. It is a message of hope for our dead and stale congregations which have, for too long, tolerated disobedience. The words of Paul to Timothy come to our minds,

2 Timothy 2:21

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

KJV

We have a great Savior who is ready to renew us and use us again!

D. There is a lesson in the words "...For even *Christ*, our passover is sacrificed for us..."

The key is Christ. David Brainard had the distinct pleasure of bringing American Indians to Christ and building them up in the faith. He said,

I never got away from Jesus, and Him crucified, and I found that when my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and Him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality. I found that one followed as the sure and inevitable fruit of the other...I find my Indians begin to put on the garments of holiness and their common life begins to be sanctified even in small matters when they are possessed by the doctrine of Christ and him crucified.

Sunday School teacher and parents, do you want the real root of the discipline issue settled in your class and in your home? Make the crucified Christ come alive! Keep the focus on the cross.

III. The *When* and *How* of Church Discipline

Church discipline should *not* be practiced simply by the pastor and church board.

1 Corinthians 5:4-5

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

KJV

Paul instructed, "...when ye are gathered together" Confrontations should first be person to person, and then escalated to the church, but in the final analysis is something we all participate in as God's people. In this pastor's personal opinion, *the best time* to come together for discipline is at the Lord's Table. Notice verse 8:

1 Corinthians 5:8

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

KJV

What feast are we talking about? We are speaking of the Lord's Table. When should the presence of Christ be most felt in a church? It should be felt at the Lord's Table

When are we least likely to do something fleshly? It is at this time. Only here do I feel the real kind of freedom I need to judge a brother in the name of Christ.

We should ask each member to set aside a time for personal examination and confession before we even bring the offender's name up. We then remind ourselves of the simple instructions given in scripture, our love for the offending party and the gravity of the situation that is upon us.

When we do these things we help remove from Satan the opportunity to bring confusion and misunderstanding among us through lack of knowledge. Such an event may be painful, but it will demonstrate to our sinful brother that the whole body is united for his discipline and benefit.

Church discipline, properly exercised among the brethren around the Lord's table can serve to bind us together in a sweet bond of holy determination and strike fear in our own hearts concerning the gravity of our sin. The offending brother is made to see that he is harming the testimony of Christ's sacrifice and he has introduced impurity into the feast and disharmony in the body.

1 Corinthians 5:8

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

KJV

IV. To What Extent do We Practice Discipline?

A. We practice discipline on believers who consider themselves a part of our body.

We do not extend the privilege of being disciplined to unbelievers. We do not welcome these brethren in our assembly or sit at fellowship with them at a table.

We do not company with them. Wuest renders this: that we are "not to be mingling in a close and habitual intimacy with them." Some believers teach that even family members should not eat together. Most Bible teachers and most of the Christian church do not believe that Paul intended that a Christian should not sit at the same table in his home with another offending family member. We must each act on what we feel the Holy Spirit is teaching us regarding this.

B. We do not discipline the world. Vs. 9-13

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

KJV

Should we avoid mingling in a close and habitual intimacy with unbelievers who are fornicators, covetous, idolaters, and extortionists? Should we avoid mingling in a close and habitual intimacy with them? The answer is yes, but we should not avoid them altogether. [Note: The NASV is incorrect here.] We should not avoid them altogether, first, because it cannot be done, and secondly, because we cannot win unbelievers to Christ with whom we have no contact!

So, what is the goal? The goal is to remember that our exposure to sin always puts us at risk and that cleansing is always proper and in order.

Years ago, the Saturday Evening Post inserted an interesting comment about Coach Lou Holtz of Notre Dame who had become legendary in his adherence to discipline.

"When it comes to discipline here," Holtz says, "We ask three questions: Will it make him a better man? A better student? A better athlete? If the answer is yes, we make him do it. The next step is

up to him. An individual has a choice when you discipline him: either to become bitter or better." Judging by his squad's record, Lou Holtz's charges have become better men. -- The Saturday Evening Post, September 1989

Bitter or better – that is always the consequence of discipline. It happens to every one of us when the challenge of discipline is placed in front of us. We either accept the rebuke and grow, or we never grow again.

The good news is that while no one may be able to prove it, every evidence indicates that this Corinthian man's pride and rebellion were broken. He repented with a broken heart, and he was restored.

My prayer is that I will always have the kind of people around me who love me enough to rebuke me, people who will mourn over my waywardness long before this kind of discipline is warranted.

Children and young people, the greatest blessing you can have is to have parents who are willing to correct you. Church member, the greatest thing you can have is elders and leaders among you who care enough about you to take you aside and admonish you. Let us each pray that when we are admonished we will become better and not bitter.

Sound Legal Advice

Intro: The relatively small size of the passage that we have in front of us belies the tremendous importance of the role that it places in our lives. It sets the course for how we deal with each other when difficulties come in to our lives as brethren.

I would like to make a two statements right up front at the beginning of this study.

1. It is not easy to understand that all of our responsibilities are based up on this passage. While Paul is outlining basic principles that always apply, Paul does not speak to every situation. For example, when a believing couple divorces, does the innocent party have a right to use the courts to protect him or herself (or the children in question) from the offending party? Should Christian schools and businesses use collection agencies or file liens on other Christian individuals or organizations? Have patience with other folks who struggle with these passages who truly want to obey God, but be sure to have your own mind made up ahead of your own day of testing in these matters.

2. Secondly, I have seen very few occasions where problems have arisen, where the full intent and instructions of Paul were carried out. Most of us only see what we want to see in this passage.

The best time for a pastor to treat a passage such as this is in the early development of the church. We must work at knowing exactly what God's Word teaches so that we will know how to respond when this kind of stress comes into our respective assemblies. First, let's examine,

I. The Actual Offense Vs. 6:1

1 Corinthians 6:1

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

KJV

The problem is not difficult to identify and the reason why Paul is bringing it up at this point in his letter is not hard to understand.

Paul has been talking about the matter of judging in chapter five. He has reminded us that we do not judge those who are on the outside, (chapter 5, verse 12), but we are responsible to judge those who are on the inside.

It is only logical that if we do not judge those who are on the outside, (those who do not know Christ,) we should not be so naive and ignorant as to want *them* to judge us in private matters.

Please notice how *firm* Paul is in this respect. He says, “*Dare* any of you...go to the law before the unjust?” The idea of going to court with a fellow believer is unthinkable, preposterous, and out of character.

The *admonition* applies to all Christians. None of us is excepted. Churches may *not* go to secular courts with other churches, missions may *not* go to secular courts with other missions, and individual Christians may *not* go to secular courts with other individual Christians. Yet you and I both know it happens all the time.

Before we talk about why it should not happen, let's take some time to talk about why it does happen and how we can avoid having it happen.

A. Why do Christians go to court with each other?

1. Some Christians do not even know this passage exists. That is one good reason.

2. Other Christians believe that it is a cultural issue. They point out that American law is much different than Roman law was. And, they are correct, our systems of laws are different. However, we are not all that different, and it does help us to understand what the times were like in those days.

First, you need to know that litigation had gotten out of hand. Court cases were stacking up. People were lawsuit crazy. If you would like to read some background on this, pick up John MacArthur's commentary on 1 Corinthians and learn how “litigation crazy” the Athenians had become. It was a legal zoo. They had a truism that said, “Every man in Athens is a lawyer.” We might just as well say it of most cities and even rural areas in our day. So, what is the point? First, the spread of litigation like wildfire in any country is always a precursor of its downfall, a harbinger of its doom. America's legal machine is as top-heavy as her economic machine. It is only a matter of time until it all collapses. But, that is not the point. The point is that we don't have to sue just because it is in style to do so. So what if your neighbor sues you because you don't move your garbage can until Friday? Don't get caught up in the world of litigation.

If we are going to look back on ancient times, we must also look at the Jews because the Christians would more likely adopt their attitudes from the Jews than Rome. The Jews in Bible times were allowed by the Romans to conduct their own courts. And they had a very well-oiled legal system that flowed from the synagogues right up to the temple. Every synagogue had two three-man courts, a higher court and a lower court.

The Mishnah clearly and emphatically taught that it was an outrageous offense for any Jew to use the judges of the Gentiles for the judgment of Israelites. In fact, it was tantamount to blasphemy against the Law of Moses for them to do so. They would have no part of it.

So, when I say to you that some Christians say this is a cultural issue we can understand where they are coming from. The Roman government empowered the Jewish people to govern themselves in most (not all) cases. Some students, by the way, believe that that same power was initially extended to Christian churches as well. In our time, the United States Government does not empower us with the legal authority that the Jews enjoyed.

However, you see, that still does not make this a cultural issue, because when Paul gives us his arguments for not going to court with believers you will see that they are spiritual arguments, not cultural arguments.

3. The local church and its duty. Now, there is a third reason why Christians see each other in court. Not only are some of them ignorant of the Bible, and not only are some of them convinced that this passage does not apply, but I believe a great contributing reason is because the church itself will not assume its duty to arbitrate the problems which believers have. How many cases can you think of, where issues between believers were solved by a local assembly? I do not excuse Christians who go to court, but I believe that, by our unwillingness to exercise our responsibilities and freedoms, we have lost many of them.

4. Finally, there are some Christians who go to court because they don't really care what God wants. They want justice and they cannot wait for God's timetable. They simply cannot believe that God will do right by them. They insist on taking matters in their own hands. Such Christians usually excuse themselves by saying "My opponent couldn't possibly be a Christian or he wouldn't act this way."

The *actual offense*, then was that Christians were going to court with Christians.

We will reverse our order of discussion. First, we will determine *how* the problem should have been avoided, and then we will determine *why* the problem should have been avoided.

II. How the Problem Should Have Been Avoided.

Problems will arise as sure as the sun rises. Legitimate (and illegitimate) differences between God's people arise in every assembly. So, it presses us to ask ourselves, "What should these believers have done?" And, more importantly "What will *we do* when we have differences." Here is some good advice:

A. First, a godly person will discipline *himself* before he does anything.

Now, that instruction is not found in this passage, but it is implicit everywhere in the New Testament. We all know that problems are rarely a simple case of black and white. They involve personalities, emotions, and communication problems. They involve false assumptions of the facts, and sometimes, the willingness to believe the worst about the other person. And Christian friend, you're just barking at the moon if you think that that you cannot be deceived by your own heart and your own emotions. Talk to your Heavenly Father about this problem before it goes anywhere else, and carry a big dose of forgiveness with you. Sometimes this means, you will have to discipline yourself in order to make a matter right.

B. Secondly, try settling it man to man. Go to the person whom you feel has defrauded you. When you approach him, be conciliatory, not confrontational.

C. If you still have a problem, consider one of two other options. First, consider looking for another godly (but disinterested) person to help settle your dispute. Notice verse 5:

1 Corinthians 6:5

5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

KJV

Incidentally, you will want to notice the irony in Paul's tone. "Is there not a *sophos*, a wise man among you?" This church supposedly prized itself on its wisdom!

Your first option is to ask quietly for assistance from someone you mutually respect. As I consider my previous congregations, I picture many godly men whom I would far rather trust with the results of my case than I would a court of law.

Now, there is one caveat. If you were to choose this option and you came to me to be your judge, here is what you would expect. You can be sure that I would listen and that I would research out the facts in as much detail as would be available. I would pray about the facts. I would seek the advice of experts if I could find them, and then I would make my decision. Then, I would expect you to abide by my decision, right or wrong, without further recourse.

Your other option is found in verse 4, though you will definitely not see it in the Scofield Bible. Let me read it to you directly from the King James version.

1 Corinthians 6:4

4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

KJV

The verse, as it reads, sounds confusing. Paul has been talking about how unworthy, how unesteemed, how unqualified unbelievers are in judging our problems. Then, it almost appears as though he is contradicting himself in verse 4.

Why would Paul tell us to set those who are *least esteemed* in the church as judges over our matters. I would think we would want the most esteemed persons, not the least.

This has been such a problem, that many translators have taken great liberty with the passage. Ironside solves the problem by changing the punctuation. The New Scofield simply turns it into a question by adding the words “/do ye set/”. Even the new King James, which is remarkably accurate, changes this statement into a question.

But there simply is no justification for changing the verse because we can't understand it.

So, is there anything that can help us understand what Paul is saying? I think yes. I think that if we go back to the days during which Paul wrote, we would see he was using the vocabulary and terminology of his day, not our day.

I have already indicated that the Jews had a sophisticated internal judicial system, but I did not tell you how sophisticated it really was.

Lightfoot explains that the Sanhedrin was comprised of 71 figures. There were then, mini-Sanhedrins in 23 major cities. Each synagogue had a triumvirate of 3 and two types of benches. One was called the “bench of authorized persons.” These were considered the experienced and approved in the assembly. The second bench was called the “bench of idiots.” These were the unauthorized who did not take their authority from the higher courts but, having been judged proper persons, were chosen by the people to arbitrate matters between themselves. In other words, this was the bench of their peers. Lightfoot says, “and these are the men the apostle means, at least alludes to, before whom he would have the cause brought.”

So what is the point? Not only is it obvious that the Corinthian church would *not* have an approved bench (for they were not ruled by the Sanhedrin), but more importantly, Paul is saying that even the lower bench, the common court of God's uneducated people, are a *higher court* than the world's educated people. That is exactly the argument.

So, what does that mean to us? It certainly means that we have the option of establishing a bench, a bench of ordinary people who will deliberate and arbitrate these matters in our respective assemblies.

Personally, I believe it is the right and option of any believers to ask for such a bench. **There is, however, one caveat.** Should you ask for such a bench, and should the board of your fellowship appoint such men, you need to be well apprised that there is no higher recourse. Their decision is final, regardless of your opinion of their wisdom.

There is, however, one more thing you can do. You can do it at any point in time, and you may do it with God's blessing.

D. You may choose to drop the issue completely. Vs. 7

1 Corinthians 6:7

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

KJV

Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather [suffer yourselves to] be defrauded?

Before a Christian would ever take such matters to court with unbelievers, they need to know they have this option, the option of turning the matter over to the Lord and leaving it in the hands of God. This is certainly the best solution. It will provide the greatest return on your investment and the greatest reward.

There is, however, one caveat. If you remand the issue to the Lord (and I have had to do this on more than one occasion where injustices were placed on me) and you decide you will suffer yourself to be defrauded, you must release YOUR right to future litigation. You must release that person *in your heart* from his obligation. You must write off the bad debt, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. You must treat and respect that person as though the issue never occurred.

Now, let me quit teaching and go to meddling for a minute. Let me tell you what my biggest problem in the ministry has been regarding these issues.

I have never, even once, had someone come to me and ask me to help him resolve his problem. I have surely never had two differing brethren come to me or my church and submit themselves to our decision regarding their differences. But I will tell you what I *have* encountered among God's people. In every town where I have pastored, there are people who will not go to the church I was pastoring because "so and so" attended there. At least from their perspectives, these people have been defrauded. They live with that anger year after year. They will not ask for an arbitrator, or a bench. They are too "humble" for that, but they are not too humble to carry their little grudges around in their hearts.

And so, the cholesterol keeps building up in the veins of local assemblies and the unity of the body seeps away. It is not dishonorable to ask someone to help you

solve your problem. It is dishonorable for you to brew, stew, and limit your fellowship and service for Christ, based upon an unresolved difference.

My wife about book she had read, written by a woman who, after enduring the loss of two of her family members discovered that her other son was a homosexual. He so hated her and the family that he even changed his name so as not to be identified with them. The whole tragedy was more than this woman could take and it almost drove her to suicide. Then the day came when she actually got out a box, a box which symbolized that wayward son, and wrapped it with wrapping paper, and literally gave it to the Lord. She released him, she released herself, and gave it all over to the Lord.

The best solution to your problem with your brother is to release it to Christ. Release him to Christ.

Now, we have seen: What the problem was: Christians were going to court. We have seen how the problem can be avoided. We have one more matter which adds weight to everything else which has been said. We now see the reason,

III. Why the Problem Should Be Avoided.

When believers go before an unbelieving court, we demean three things:

A. We demean ourselves before our inferiors. Vs. 2-3

Paul says:

1 Corinthians 6:2-3

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

KJV

Don't see how foolish we look? Don't you see how foolish we are? Why, it's like two first grade teachers asking their students so solve their differences.

When will we judge the world? It will probably be during the reign of Christ. When will be judge angels? We are not sure. It is a lot of fun to speculate on these things. Each question leads to ten more and each of the ten lead to others.

However, we do not want to lose the force of the argument. We demean ourselves when we go to the unrighteous to resolve our problems. We make Christianity the laughingstock of the world. The world looks on and says, "See, there's

nothing to that Christianity stuff..." Christians are unforgiving and angry just like everyone else.

We not only demean ourselves,

B. We demean our brother or sister in Christ. Vs. 6-7

Paul says:

1 Corinthians 6:6-7

6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

KJV

Brother with brother, and sometimes, brother with sister going to law. When Christians get divorced, they do so before unbelieving courts. Brother and sister in Christ demean one another for the entire world to see. How unthinkable!

But, most important, when we do go to court with a brother.

C. We Demean the Name of Christ. Vs. 11

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

KJV

Why can't we be satisfied? Has not Christ done enough for us? The Lord washed us, He sanctified us, He justified us and did all of this in the name of Jesus Christ. Is our little squabble so important that we would demean the name of this One who took us up from the world, washed us, sanctified us, justified us? It that all His testimony means to us?

Dr. Ironside tells the story of one time when he was a boy. He was one of those little pitchers, to use his words, when a great dispute was going on between two men. He was stunned that two men whom he has respected could talk to each other in such a way. He said:

"...I can remember one man springing to his feet and with clenched fists saying, 'I will put up with a good deal, but one thing I will not put up with, I will not allow you to put anything over on me; I will have my rights!' An old Scotch brother who was rather hard of

hearing leaned forward holding his ear and said, 'What was that, brother? I did not get that!' "I say, I will have my rights," said the man, "But you did not mean that; did you? Your rights? If ye had your rights you would be in hell; wouldn't you? And you are forgetting -- aren't you? -- that Jesus did not come to get his rights, He came to get His wrongs, and He got them." I can still see that man standing there for a moment like one transfixed, and then the tears broke from his eyes and he said, "Brethren, I have been all wrong. Handle the case as you think best." and he sad down and put his face in his hands and sobbed before the Lord, and everything was settled in three minutes."

Unsaved friend, you need to consider verses 9 and 10 of this passage. You may be saying, "I'm not good enough to become a Christian." Let me ask, can you find your name in this list of offenders?

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

KJV

Are you a fornicator? an idolater? an adulterer? a homosexual? a thief? a covetous person? an extortioner? Then, you qualify! You are bad enough to be saved. When Paul said "Of such were some of you..." he reminds all of us where we came from, how far we can go, and how far God will go to redeem us. Never insult the grace of God by telling Him that you are too bad, too hard to be saved.

Moreover, never insult the grace of God by telling Him that you are too good to be saved! My problem, you see, is with folks who think they are too good to be saved. Folks who think they have as good a chance as the next guy. And they don't. Where do you stand in terms of the grace of God today? And, if you have accepted God's forgiveness, would you consider extending it to an offending brother?

I Will Not!

Intro:

The story is told about a young minister who was being escorted through a coalmine. At the entrance of one of the dim passageways, he spied a beautiful white flower growing out of the black earth. "How can it blossom in such purity and radiance in this dirty mine?" the preacher asked. "Throw some coal dust on it and see for yourself," his guide replied. When he did, he was surprised that the fine, sooty particles slid right off the snowy petals, leaving the plant just as lovely and unstained as before. Its surface was so smooth that the grit and grime could not adhere to it.

Our hearts should have the same characteristic. Just as that flower could not control its habitat, so we cannot help it that we have to live in a world filled with evil. However, God's grace can keep us so clean and unspotted that though we touch every side, it will not cling to us.

The problem of moral purity confronts every one of us. None of us has escaped the influences of this world. All of us need to be cleansed and we need to be fortified. We want to be like that little white flower standing outside of the mine. We know we should stand true and we want to stand true. When I feel like my body is fighting off an illness, the first thing I do is eat a garden salad and look for some juice to drink. I want to fortify my body.

I want to help fortify you. I want to help you with the matter of personal moral purity, not just purity with respect to intimate relationships, but purity with respect to all areas of our lives.

When we consider the subject of purity from God's perspective as recorded by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6, we can identify five facts about purity. These facts will greatly assist us in our struggle to remain righteous, if we take them to heart, and review this passage often. So, open your Bible with me and consider these five vital matters. To begin, consider:

I. The Matter of Position. Vs. 9-11

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.
KJV

Any time we encounter the term "...know ye not" in the writings of Paul we can understand them to be in the form of a mild rebuke. The phrase that first becomes noticeable in the writings of the Talmud before Paul's day is no problem for us to understand in our time, because we use it to this very day. Many a parent has said to a child "Don't you know you aren't supposed to do that?"

What are these Corinthians forgetting? They are forgetting the essential differences between believers and unbelievers and they are forgetting what their salvation was supposed to have done for them.

The *unrighteous* can be expected to act like unsaved people. God does not permit it, but we can still expect it. As surely as ducks quack, we can expect the unrighteous to behave unrighteously. They will be fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, (a word which means "soft" and was used historically of men and women who are obsessed with self-stimulation,) homosexuals, thieves, covetous, alcoholics, revilers (those who destroy others with their tongues) and swindlers. These characters are commonly found among unbelievers.

While the Bible says that evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, we need to understand that the basic behavioral traits of unregenerate mankind have always been bestial, at best. Homosexuality, for example is no new problem. It was out of control centuries before Paul came on the scene. Socrates and Plato were homosexual. Barclay says that 14 of the 15 Roman Emperors were homosexual. We don't even want to discuss how bad Nero was.

These were the very kinds of deeds from which the Corinthians had been saved. Paul says, "And such were some of you..." Do not be so naive. Do not be so shocked! Every one of us was born with the capability to commit every one of these sins. It has only been the grace of God that has spared any of us.

When God saved us, He really did a number on us. Paul said, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

When I was a child, I was passed around a little bit during the time when I went without a mother. In particular, I remember how vigorous one aunt was when she scrubbed me. When she washed behind my ears, I was left absolutely convinced that my very ears had been scrubbed off. When that woman washed a child, he knew the meaning of being squeaky clean. When you let the Lord Jesus wash you, you will come out whiter than snow. There is an old gospel song, long since removed from our contemporary worship which went:

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing pow'r?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?
Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?

Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin,
Are you washed in the blood of the lamb,
There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,
O be washed in the blood of the lamb!

When the Lord Jesus washes a person, he is clean all over. When the Lord Jesus sanctifies a woman, He makes her pure all over. When the Lord Jesus justifies you and me, He gives us His righteousness! This has to do with our position in Christ!

It may take a man a while to forgive himself for what he did without Christ, but God has forgiven him already and accepts him as though he had never sinned.

It may take unforgiving Christians a while before they can accept a former alcoholic, a convict, or a homosexual, but that is their problem. God says we are squeaky clean. In God's eyes, we are cleaner behind the ears than our mothers were ever able to wash!

Now, do we see what Paul is saying? When we realize your position in Christ, how could we ever begin behaving again as unbelievers behave? Why would we want to? It is interesting to note that in every letter of Paul, he uses this same principle. He begins by explaining to us who we are in Christ and what we are in Christ and then he says, *based on who you are in Christ*, this is how you ought to behave!

So, when it comes to purity, we see there is the matter of *position*. Now, notice secondly, there is:

II. The Matter of Power. Vs. 12-14

1 Corinthians 6:12-14

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

KJV

What did Paul mean when he said, "...all things are lawful unto me?" It may have been a common phrase in Corinth, a town that was noted for its emphasis

on personal freedoms. We should understand, that when any society begins down the road to moral corruption, the emphasis will always be on our liberties and on our rights.

For example, our forefathers probably did not dream that encapsulated in that Bill of Rights, attached to our own U.S. Constitution, was the cyanide of our own death as a nation. For those very rights that were drafted in order to protect us from the oppression of others have been the rights that have made us vulnerable to destroying ourselves. Starting with every playground child who thinks that he has the right to do what he wants because "it's a free country" and extending to the darkened rooms of the pornographic peep shows, the same message rings out: we have our rights!

There is some misunderstanding here. Because the world declares something to be lawful does not mean that it is right. This pastor does not believe that God has ever given us the right, for example, to sin. He never gave us an option. He told Adam *not* to eat of that tree. He did not say he had the right to choose. He only had the right to choose right.

Because we are free from the Law of Moses does not give us freedom to sin. The Corinthian believers were not entirely ignorant of the Old Testament. They were not all Greeks. And, wherever this gospel was heralded, it was also heralded as the message of freedom, freedom and liberty from the Law of Moses. In no way, however, does that freedom give us permission to sin.

These Corinthians were surely as confused as many of our brothers and sisters in Christ who somehow manage to confuse the doctrine of saving grace. Grace does not save us so that that we can be free to sin. Grace saves us so that we can be free from sin.

Notice those strange sounding words in verse 13,

1 Corinthians 6:13

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

KJV

When Paul uses the words "meats for the belly and the belly for meats" Paul could have been quoting a common truism heard on the streets of Corinth. In ancient times, it was taught that flesh was evil anyway and that only what a man did with his spirit was pure, so it did not matter what a man did with his flesh. This would serve well as the by-word of those whom we now call the Antinomian Gnostics.

When a man is hungry, he eats. That is the only purpose hunger serves. When a man is hungry for fleshly encounters, he satisfies his needs. After all, the body is going to wear out anyway. It is no more sinful to satisfy one's fleshly desires than it is to satisfy one's desire for food. It is *natural* to behave in this manner. This is exactly how the world argues today. However, worldlings miss the point.

When Paul says, "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of any," Paul is stripping the issue down to the essentials:

Herein lies the essential issue, the issue of *power*. This is the very mistake that folks make when they talk about their freedoms and their rights! When a man exercises his freedom to sin, he is really exercising his freedom to become a *slave* to sin. Sin always brings bondage. Sin always puts us under its power. Religion is not the opiate of the people; *sin* is the opiate of the people. Sin always brings bondage and enslavement while creating the illusion of freedom.

As one listens to 2 Peter 2:17-19 he cannot help but think of afternoon and late-night talk shows:

2 Peter 2:17-19

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

KJV

My friend, of whom a man is *overcome*, of the same is he brought in bondage. Our nation is in bondage to its "freedoms." It is in bondage to its sin. Christian, do not be deceived. You too can become entangled, all the while thinking that you can stop your dipping into sin anytime you choose.

Sin creates the illusion of freedom but it is wrapped in the chains of bondage. Media host Art Linkletter lost his daughter when she plunged out the window to her death under the influence of a hallucinogen. She *thought* she was flying. When the homosexual breaks the laws of nature, he *thinks* he is free! He *thinks* he is flying!

I read a study done on homosexuals who had been court marshaled in the military during a four-year period. The Washington press reported, "80% of gays that were court-martialed in the U.S. Army for sexual misconduct during the past four years had engaged in assaults against their victims. Nearly half involved child molestation." And, "the top six U.S. male killers were all homosexuals, including John Wayne Gacy and Jeffery Dahmer." Do all homosexuals become child molesters? They do not, but all are in bondage to their sin.

It is now a common practice for television viewers to see lesbian women kissing each other on television. Don't you buy the lie. These women are disobedient to God, and an evil influence in society. Sin brings bondage and it brings destruction.

Paul says, "I will not!" "I will not!" Do we see what Paul is saying? You, who have been saved by grace, why would you want to be controlled by alcohol, by thievery, by covetousness, or by sexual sin? Why would a freed slave go back into bondage under a slave master who was bent on his destruction!

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the spirit free,
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me!
- So proclaimed Wesley!*

Why do you want to see those chains re-forged? Why do you want your spirit enslaved? Why do you want your clean heart and mind fouled again? Why would you contaminate what Christ's blood has purified? We will never taste the power of Christ while we are teasing our flesh.

When we speak of the matter of purity, we see that it is a matter of Position, and it is a matter of Power. Please notice thirdly,

III. It is a Matter of Participation. Vs. 15-17

1 Corinthians 6:15-17

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

KJV

"Know ye not? What? Know ye not?" Don't you have the slightest idea what happened when you received Christ as Savior? Do you understand the dynamics, the miracle of salvation? When you received Christ as Savior the Bible says that two things occurred. Jesus Christ came to live in you, that's one thing! But, you also became an actual part of Jesus Christ! You became part of each other. You became one with Christ. This is a very beautiful doctrine. Because you were *in Christ* at the cross, Romans 6 argues you have power over the penalty of sin. And because Jesus Christ is in *you*, you have power over sin.

However, this is also a delicate doctrine. If I was handcuffed with you and you choose to rob a convenience store, I would be forced to participate in that rob-

bery with you. I may not be guilty but *I would* be a participant. Paul says, it is even worse, when we talk about sexual sin or fornication. The Bible says that when a man and a woman come together, they become *one flesh*. A man and a woman do not become one flesh when they are married. They become one flesh when they come together in fleshly union. Young person, if you have come together with someone else, you have become one flesh with that person. You did not just become one physically with such a person; you became one emotionally, and psychologically. Your participation in that sin will make your future marriage more difficult because it adds the element of *confusion* into your marriage.

It gets worse. When a believer, who is one with Christ, joins his flesh with a harlot, he makes Jesus Christ a participant. He makes Christ one with that harlot. It would be offensive to ask someone to fantasize and imagine Jesus Christ committing sensual sin with a harlot. Yet, when we fantasize about a harlot, we are doing that very thing. Our members not only belong to our mates, they belong to Jesus Christ.

I do not want to stand in front of Him some day knowing that I made Him participate this kind of disobedience. I do not want to do this to my holy, spotless, sinless Savior! If that does not deter me from such activity, no other argument ever will. My resolve, "I *will* not make my precious Savior a member of an harlot."

We would do well to turn off those suggestive TV programs before they lead us down an even darker path of disobedience. Consider also,

IV. The Matter of Preservation. Vs. 18

1 Corinthians 6:18

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

KJV

Flee fornication. There is an uncomplicated way of escape, just run! If it is on your mind, change your mind. If it is on your way to work, change your route. Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof. If it is at work, quit your job. If it is on your TV, turn it off or throw it away. If it approaches through your internet connection, sever it! Flee! Do not even lie down next to Potipher's wife. Run from her.

Notice the severity of this warning and ask yourself why it is there, "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."

Are there sins worse than sexual sin? I think, yes. However, sexual sin is in a class by itself because of its destructive nature. It destroys the person who participates in it. The Bible does not tell us *how* this occurs; it just tells us that we will experience the consequence of sexual sinning in our own bodies.

I have some personal opinions. I believe that it hurts us physically and actually injures our health and well-being. I believe it affects us mentally, emotionally, and psychologically. I believe it affects our overall stability. But, in the final analysis, we just need to know that if we would preserve and protect ourselves we will *flee* as far as we can from fornication.

God does not lie to us. The Bible says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption..."

When Karen Carpenter struggled with bulimia, she used Ipecac in order to purge herself. She did not know she was harming her body. She did not know that every dose of Ipecac was eating away at the muscle of her heart. She had no idea. I promise you, that while you may not sense it or feel it, God will hold you responsible for your fornication.

God is not some ogre who does not want us to have pleasure. On the contrary, He wants to protect us so that we may have it, and enjoy it with enthusiasm and celebration.

In verses 19 and 20 we find,

V. The Matter of Possession Vs. 19-20

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

KJV

I once lived in a dormitory with some friends. One, in particular, had a Hi-Fi that we all used and enjoyed, (Remember when we called them Hi Fi's?) Paul would go away; however, he would always lock his Hi-Fi in a cabinet. One time when he was gone, the silence was just too much for us, so we simply took the hinges off the cabinet and played his Hi-Fi. That little act almost cost me a good friendship. I had taken and used what did not belong to me.

When I was a child, I used to attend Sunday School in a church called the Gospel Lighthouse. It was the perfect title for this little church that sat on the shore of a lake. When you worshipped in that building you soon discovered that the building was not originally built to be a church. It had originally been a bar. Someone bought that building and converted it into a lovely church. I used to sit

in that church and try to imagine what it was like when it was a bar, but it was almost impossible to tell. And, nor would I ever know, because the old owners no longer had the *power* to return to that building and sell their libations.

Now, you have been bought with a price, and your body has been converted to a temple. The Holy Spirit of God freely dwells in this temple. You are not your own. You were bought with a price, a very high price, the precious blood of Jesus Christ. You simply cannot, you simply may not, return the use of your temple back to Satan and your old ways.

If I asked for your wallet so that I could dip into it for a few dollars, I do not think you would be pleased. If I drove your car away without your permission, I do not think it would please you. If I moved my furniture into your house and told you that I was going to live with you awhile, I doubt whether you would welcome me warmly. I do not have the right to do those things because I do not have *the right of possession*.

We pastors may have created the wrong impression at times. We may have conveyed the idea that you have the option of giving whatever part of your life you want to the Lord. By praising you for every little concession you make, we may infer that you are in control of what belongs to the Lord. In truth, it all belongs to Him, and what I have not surrendered, I have taken illegally. I belong to Jesus Christ.

Purity is a matter of position. I am washed, sanctified and justified. Why would I go back?

Purity is a matter of power. I have been freed from the slave market of sin. Why would I toy with bondage again?

Purity is a matter of participation. Christ is one with me. Why would I dare to make Him a participant in my disobedience?

Purity is a matter of preservation. Fornication will destroy my body.

Purity is a matter of possession. I belong to Jesus Christ. I *can* be the white flower at the side of the coalmine.

A Primer on Divorce

Intro: On one of my visits to Bob Jones University I had occasion to eat a meal with a university professor. He told me the story of a young man who came to school and began eating in the cafeteria. Shortly thereafter, he was asked if he liked the food and he replied that he really did not think it was very good. Therefore, the story goes that the school "shipped" him for complaining. The next year he was allowed to come back, and before long, he was again asked if he liked the food in the cafeteria. He replied, "Of course, the food is just fine." This time, the university shipped him for lying. The third year the student returned and, before long, was again asked how he liked the food. This time he replied, "I can take it or leave it." And so, the university shipped him for compromise.

The story is particularly funny to me because I heard it at Bob Jones. It is always good when we can look at *ourselves* and laugh at *ourselves*. At the same time, I feel a bit like that student. I know that when I treat the subject of divorce and remarriage, I cannot win. There is no way that a typical pastor or teacher can address the issue without being misunderstood by the typical listener.

Divorce is an emotionally charged issue. Those who speak out on it are usually doves or hawks. The doves write the whole thing off in the name of love and ignore the clear teachings of God's Word for the sake of not offending those who have been caught up in the problem.

The hawks, on the other hand, are notoriously unloving, unforgiving, and self righteous. They love to appear to be basing their arguments on scripture, but it soon becomes clear that they are emotionally charged and venomous.

Our prayerful desire is to avoid any of those traps and simply to deal with those scriptures that touch upon this subject. I am not doing so because I have a hidden agenda. When I looked at 1 Corinthians 7, I realized that we could never truly understand what Paul is saying here, unless we take the time to draw back and get the big picture first. Therefore, in preparation for our study in 1 Corinthians 7, I want to provide you with a short primer on divorce and remarriage.

If you are a hawk or you are a dove, you need to know that my desire is not to offend you and that I love you, but, you are not really the source of my concern. My real concern is with any who might be studying this who have experienced divorce, as either a guilty or an innocent party. I know that you have no personal need or desire to relive the issues that have brought you to where you are today. Our honesty and openness in dealing with these issues are for your help and your healing, not to bring additional pain which you do not need into your life.

We begin by recognizing the most fundamental point in the discussion.

I. God intended marriage to be a lifetime contract that should never be broken.

Genesis 2:23-24

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

KJV

The Bible teaches that God Himself participates in the birth and development of every baby in the womb. The Bible also teaches that God Himself participates in every marriage, however flippant the parties may be who join themselves together. Jesus said,

Matthew 19:5-6

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

KJV

Man does not have the option to reverse or abrogate what God has done. It is not within his rights or privileges to put asunder a marriage. Even when God does not approve of our choice of a mate, He still makes us one flesh with our marriage partners.

My first statement is that God intends marriage to be a permanent, lifetime contract. My second statement expands this.

II. God never approves of divorce.

Notice my emphasis on the word *approves*. I know of no passage in scripture where God ever suggests or recommends a divorce. Jesus said, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

The Bible teaches us that marriages are binding until death as we will see 1 Corinthians 7. There is no expiration date on your marriage license. Divorce is not an option.

However, even to talk about marriage in those terms sounds so legal. Marriage is such a beautiful thing. In both the Old and New Testaments God uses it to speak of the relationship between Himself and His people. In the New Testa-

ment, the Church is seen as the bride of Christ, this wonderful Groom who gave Himself for His church.

If you know Christ as Savior, and *only* if you know Christ as Savior, you are a part of His bride. You must not assume you belong to Him because you acquiesce to Christianity in a general sort of way. You must have a living relationship with this Christ.

In the Old Testament, God also used marriage as an indicator of His relationship to His people, though in a much less personal way. In Old Testament times, God used marriage to illustrate His relationship to the nation of Israel as a whole (not as individuals, but to the nation as a whole.) The time came, when Israel, who was the wife of Jehovah, was so disobedient and adulterous that God finally had to grant her a symbolic bill of divorcement, though He will later restore her. You may wish to read Jeremiah 3 and Isaiah 50 in this respect.

Now, the plot begins to thicken. We have said that God intends marriages to endure. We have also said that God never approves of divorce.

The next two issues are twin issues. Does God ever allow divorce and does God ever recognize divorce? They will be treated in reverse order. Fact number three:

III. God recognizes divorce when it occurs.

Some pastors teach that God does not recognize divorce. They teach that because you became one flesh with your partner your *marriage* is for all time. That is not supportable in the Word of God.

If being one flesh means that we are *married*, then the Christian who visits the harlot described in 1 Corinthians 6 would be required to marry her. One is not married to someone because he committed fornication or adultery with her.

Jesus said, "What God, therefore, hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Implicit in that statement is the fact that man *can* put asunder what God *has* joined, or else Jesus would not have made the command.

When the Lord Jesus ministered to the woman at the well in John 4 we read:

John 4:16-18

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

KJV

Jesus said she had *had* five husbands, and the one she was living with was not her husband. Jesus did not say, "You already *have* five husbands," and he did not say, "The man with whom you are living is your *sixth* husband." No one ever has the right to break a second marriage because he or she was "not married in the eyes of God."

Rehearsing these facts in their proper order:

1. God intended marriage to be a lifetime contract that should never be broken.
2. God never approves of divorce.
3. God recognizes divorce.

Here is the difficult question: Even though God never approves of divorce, does God allow divorce? This one is not easy to unravel. Great men of God have grappled with this. Historically, the majority of God's people have argued that God tacitly allows divorce for one or two possible causes:

1.) Most of God's people have allowed that God permits the offended party to divorce a mate if the mate has committed fornication. Men of great theological stature and testimony have held this position. Included in a long list would be men such as Charles Hodge and A.T. Robertson, men who know more scripture and Greek than the average. Dr. Ironside and many other greats in the past held this. Very few Bible scholars, in comparison, have held the opposite. Boyer is a good example.

Now I can anticipate what some may think. They may think that I am only using those names and historical arguments to buttress my own position. I have not yet indicated my personal position. I *am* saying that one is not a heretic, or even outside of the mainstream of fundamental Protestantism if he believes that God *does* allow divorce, in the case of fornication. Do not let anyone intimidate you with loud rhetoric.

Let me provide personal response to this question, and offer my biblical support.

IV. God does not *allow* divorce. Not even for fornication.

When this subject surfaces, two biblical issues surface. The first is found in the Old Testament. We will look specifically at Deuteronomy 24:1

Deuteronomy 24:1

1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

KJV

Notice the circumstances. The man marries the woman and immediately discovers that she has misrepresented herself. That would be biologically evident on their wedding night. She has been guilty of fraud. In that case, and *at that time only*, he can back out of the marriage. In our language today, we would say that he could have the marriage annulled. The liberal Jews took this passage and went crazy with it. They taught that if a woman burnt her husband's food he could call it uncleanness and divorce her. That is not what the text argues. I do not believe it was God's intent that this passage ever be viewed as permission to divorce in the traditional sense.

However, even here, a New Testament pattern overshadows and helps us interpret this text. In Matthew 19:3-12 Jesus had just forbidden divorce. The Pharisees continued:

Matthew 19:7-8

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorce-ment, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

KJV

Moses was both lawgiver and judge of his people. I do not believe that as lawgiver Moses allowed for divorce. As judge, Moses *allowed* the legal activity to occur. To allow for anything less would have been to allow for sure mayhem in Israel. However, Moses, never for one minute, approved of divorce. Even though he was accused of approving divorce, he did not.

Some folks look to verse 9 as their proof that Jesus made an exception and allowed divorce. Jesus did not say that He made any exceptions. He said:

Matthew 19:9

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

KJV

Jesus was not giving tacit permission to divorce if one's mate commits fornication. Jesus was saying that the man who divorces and remarries is the same as an adulterer, unless he divorced his wife for fornication. What fornication is indicated? The fornication is that which the man discovered on his wedding day.

This view is true to the context. The issue is *Moses*. When did Moses allow for this? Moses allowed it in only one case, when the man and woman came together and she was found to be unclean. Then, *and only then*, could the man discharge her, and *even then*, Moses allowed it because of the hardness (the unforgiving spirit) of the man's heart. The Old Testament law was very clear. If it was discovered that she had been an harlot, she was to be destroyed. But, if it

was discovered that she had fallen into sin at one time or another prior to marriage, the marriage could be annulled *at its inception*.

So far, I have argued for four things:

1. God intended marriage to be a lifetime contract that should never be broken.
2. God never approves of divorce.
3. God recognizes divorce.
4. God does not allow divorce; not even for fornication.

People still do get divorced. People do not go to hell because they get divorced, (or for any other sin) but you can be sure they will go through hell. Their whole lives become more complicated and difficult. The children pay a price. Everyone suffers. Life begins to become a balancing act. One unraveled thread leads to another. The next question rises as inevitably as the tide; what about remarriage? That question is not easy to answer.

A. Remarriage in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, remarriage was neither advocated by God nor forbidden, but it was regulated in two instances.

- 1.) The same passage in Deuteronomy that allowed the man to put his wife away on their wedding day allows both parties to remarry. Deuteronomy 24: 2 says:

Deuteronomy 24:2

*2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.
KJV*

Parties, sinning or innocent, were allowed to remarry. Only one thing was forbidden. If the woman remarried and her new husband died, she was not allowed to return and remarry her original husband. This was an abomination to God. Jeremiah 3:1 says that no man was to return to a former wife who had been remarried.

- 2.) Secondly, The only other thing that I know of in the Old Testament regarding remarriage relates to the priests. Priests were governed differently for ceremonial reasons. The high priest, for example, could not marry a harlot, any widow, or a divorced person. You may read about this regulation in Ezekiel 44:22 and in Leviticus 21:14.

In general, remarriage was allowed in the Old Testament and no evidence can be given anywhere that it was restricted to the innocent party.

B. Remarriage in the New Testament.

In the New Testament remarriage was *regulated* in at least two instances:

1). We have already noted the first in Matthew 19:9

Matthew 19:9

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

KJV

The Bible does not talk about what our motives are. The Bible does not talk about a waiting period. The Bible simply says if you divorce someone and marry someone else, you commit adultery. In addition, if your first wife remarries, she commits adultery. She may be innocent. She may be guilty. The Lord Jesus did not specify.

Please keep in mind that if you have done this you are *not* living in a “state of adultery.” That is a man-made term. It is not biblical. You cannot live in adultery.

Why does Jesus call it adultery? He does so because the act is an offense against marriage itself. It is held for good reason that the man who remarries can no longer restore his original marriage, and that is why it is adultery. The woman who remarries, even though innocent, has closed off forever, remarriage to her God intended mate, and that is why it is adultery. God originally intended us to be married to one mate.

If that is not why Jesus calls it adultery, then we have no other choice but to agree that Jesus *is* redefining the term adultery, and that, according to Jesus, adultery is not merely marital infidelity, it is also remarriage in any form. That, of course, is not reasonable because remarriage is allowed elsewhere in the Word.

2. The second area where restrictions on remarriage are involved is found in 1 Corinthians 7. We will deal with that in more detail when we get into the passage.

1 Corinthians 7:9-11

9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

KJV

Why would the woman in this case remain unmarried? The reason is implicit: so that she can be reconciled to her husband.

So, we have seen two areas where remarriage is restricted. Both seem to be saying the same thing. By remarrying, divorced persons close off the opportunity for reconciliation.

In summary.

1. God intended marriage to be a lifetime contract which should never be broken.
2. God never approves of divorce.
3. God recognizes divorce.
4. God does not allow divorce as we know it. Not even for fornication.
5. In the Old Testament, remarriage was neither advocated by God nor forbidden. However, it was regulated in two instances. The bride who was rejected for impurity was not to remarry the one who rejected her after marrying another, and priests were generally required to marry virgins for ceremonial and blood line purposes.
6. In the New Testament, remarriage is regulated in at least two instances: The man who divorces his wife for reasons other than fornication and remarries commits adultery. By that statement, we may assume that God does not permit it, at the very least, while reconciliation is possible. The same applies to the mate who has been divorced by an unbeliever.

We have a remaining question.

7. Does God expressly allow for remarriage anywhere in the New Testament?

You will have to wait for that answer when we get into 1 Corinthians 7 in our next study. We end with an important lesson.

I want you to see how complicated things get and how quickly things can get out of hand. Once we step out of God's will in one area of our lives the less information becomes available to us, and the more difficult it is to determine God's will in other areas. Additionally, when we step out of God's will other innocent parties are always hurt.

For example, if God has called me to pastor in Oregon and I turn down the call and stay in my present ministry, imagine how much more difficult it is going to be for me to decide God's leading in my present ministry. One problem leads to another.

One person asks, does that mean that the divorced woman can *never* be remarried, or does it mean she can remarry if her husband dies, or does it mean she

can remarry if he remarries? It just gets muddier and muddier because there is not enough biblical information to guide us. Sin complicates matters.

The deeper the questions go, the more trouble the local church pastor gets into. Moreover, if the pastor does not answer every question in the exact way that is expected of him, he is viewed to be either a legalist or a liberal by someone in the crowd. During my years as a *pastor*, I would never recommend divorce or knowingly marry someone who had been divorced, because I was not only representing my own views, but my ministry was in the name of the church that I served. However, if you are asking me to condemn everyone who is remarried based on your opinions of what this Bible says then you know of some Bible verses that I have not yet found.

What is the real point of the message? The point is this: Any step of disobedience always leads to other *conflicts of obedience*. Any step of disobedience always ends up hurting others.

Both divorce and remarriage bring their own sets of problems with them, and no one is hurt more than the children who are involved. Of course, God forgives divorce. Of course, God can make even the disobedience in our loves work together for our good according to His purposes. Of course, our family, friends, and church still love us, whether we are the guilty or the innocent party in a divorce.

However, this is not the time to argue that point. This is the time to lovingly urge every believer to consider the consequences: consider the children who never recover from the economic disaster that always ensues, the public disgrace of divorce, the shameful reproach it brings on your church, and especially on the name of Christ.

All of our little justifications, "I'm not really married before God," or "We're not really married anyway, we just existed together," or "What sense does it make for two incompatible people to live together?" are available. All sound so rational at the time but they are hollow, empty arguments. A year after folks are divorced they will have only begun counting the cost.

We need to understand one final thing. There is a fate far worse than divorce. There is a price to pay which is far more consequential than the price to pay for getting a divorce. That is the cost for rejecting our Lord. He is the one who will not only heal your marriage. He will heal your soul. He will heal your heart. And, if you allow Him, He will heal your home.

Bloom Where You're Planted

Intro: Walking into 1 Corinthians 7 is like walking into a room in the middle of a conversation. I say this for two reasons. The first relates to the manner in which Paul begins the chapter:

1 Corinthians 7:1

1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

KJV

Paul is responding to a letter that he received from the Corinthians, a letter that we do not have, so we do not have the actual questions that were posited. It pleased the Holy Spirit of God only to supply the responses so we must take great care not to create the questions for Him.

Secondly, we do not know the admixture of Jews and Gentiles in this assembly, though we assume both were present. Besides the typical Jewish marriages, there were four other kinds of Gentile marriages which existed in Paul's day, and only a small percentage of early Gentile Christians were married in weddings with which we can identify, where both families participated in the ceremony, there were wedding cakes, bridal bouquets, and so forth. Those weddings were reserved for the noble. More commonly, weddings were tent weddings for slaves (which broke up when the master moved a slave), they were common law marriages, or they were marriages resulting from the sale of the daughter by her father to the groom. For these reasons, we cannot fully understand what Paul was addressing specifically.

Even so, this church is full of sinners saved by grace, but it included sinners who were not yet acting like Christians in all areas of their lives. Paul responds, now, to honest questions about honest problems.

This study falls into three areas, which are as follows:

- I. Principles that the Passage Teaches.
- II. Problems Relating to the Passage.
- III. My Personal Position Relating to Those Problems.

I. Principles that the Passage Teaches

The first principle occurs in verses 1-9. The second principle actually extends to the end of the chapter.

A. The Principle of Continence Vs. 7:1-9

The principle of continence is the principle of containment or self-control. In these verses, we are talking about controlling our romantic behavior. Our first instruction occurs in verse 1:

1 Corinthians 7:1
1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.
KJV

1. Intimacy outside of marriage is forbidden.

Paul is not arguing against marriage here. He is arguing against intimacy outside of the marriage bonds. The word *touch* in this respect is very clear with respect to its definition and use. It is in reference to intimate touching, the kind of touching which leads to romantic arousal. Unmarried people should not participate in it, because it leads to temptation and the risk of fornication. Do not do it. Flee also youthful lusts, (2 Tim. 2:22).

In our own history in the United States, this kind of behavior began to be generally acceptable in the 1950's, and prepared the way for the sexual revolution of the late 1960's. It has contributed to our own social breakdown. The "Fonze" of the Happy Days TV series may have been funny, but he was funny in a deadly sort of way.

We could speak extensively about the dangers of this kind of conduct, the psychological impact it has on future marriages, or a hundred other things. The important thing to remember is this: Paul say's do not do it, because it can lead to fornication. You can lose your self-control. You will do things you do not approve of. You will sin.

When we read verse 2 it poses a small question, but it still makes a clear point.

1 Corinthians 7:2
2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.
KJV

2. Marriage is preferable to disobedience.

We ask ourselves, did Paul mean, by this verse, that the only reason why men and women should marry is to avoid fornication? The answer is no. However, Paul *is* saying the answer to removing the temptation is marriage. It is a solution to a present problem. Marriage is to be monogamous. Every man has his own wife and vice versa. One does not possess the other as chattel. Both possess the other. Why should one consider marriage? It should be considered for the

purpose of continence, the purpose of self-control. Paul is talking about self-control.

We then view verses 3-5 as a group and we read:

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

KJV

3. To be married is to be obligated to meet your partner's needs.

This is not an option, it is a clear instruction from the Word of God. The logic is so clear and forthright that anyone can understand it.

We must mutually submit to the advances of our partners. When we do not do this, we defraud them - we take what is rightfully theirs. When we use romantic favors as bargaining tools in order to get our way, we disobey God. When one person selfishly takes, but does not give with all benevolence to the other, he or she defrauds the other. One must not carry emotional problems into this relationship or even marital problems. The biblical policy is the open door policy.

I know of some folks who teach that romance is solely for the purpose of child bearing. When they teach that, they disobey God, starting with this very passage. I know of some folks who teach that a trucker can go on the road and return home every six months to a happy wife. When they teach that, they disobey God. They have made the exceptions. God did not.

The only exception the scriptures make in this respect is found right in this context. Two people may agree to abstain for purposes of prayer. Even then, they are to come together again. So, do not come to the church and ask us to pray for God to heal your marriage when you are secretly disobeying Him in this area.

Why did God command this? Paul says "...that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." It is for the purpose of self-control.

Finally, we read these words in verses 6-9:

1 Corinthians 7:6-9

6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

*9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.
KJV*

Some have misunderstood verse six to imply that Paul was not claiming inspiration when he gave the foregoing advice. The context does not allow this. What Paul is effectively declaring, nowhere in the Bible does God command men and women to marry. The Bible does command men and women to be fruitful and multiply when they are married, *but* the Bible does not command that every man and woman get married in the first place.

Now, Paul has permission from the Lord to expand on that, and Paul is now telling us that *when the potential for fornication exists*, men and women should get married. Marriage is now obligatory. In that regard, Paul has permission to command marriage.

How do we know that this is what Paul meant? Paul explains himself. He says he wishes that all men were as he was, *able to remain unmarried*. What advantage would that serve? They could better serve Christ. However, Paul knows this can never be because not all men have this gift from God. The gift is the ability to serve Christ undistracted by one's own reproductive drive.

It is very important to see the perfect balance Paul is maintaining in the marriage discussion and the beautiful service he is rendering to us by teaching us these things. We also need to know that in the last days, the demons will spread the spirit of antagonism toward marriage and sexual purity. They hate marriage. They hate all of the institutions of God. Paul explained to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4

1 Timothy 4:1-4

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

KJV

We are living to see these times when the demon world advocates the abolishment of marriage (along with other special dietary restrictions). Do not be confused. Paul is not against marriage.

Therefore, we see that what Paul has been arguing all along is continence or self control, so that Satan will not get an advantage over us.

The rest of the chapter devotes itself to the second principle:

B. The Principle of Continuation. Vs. 10

When people receive Christ as Savior, everything in their lives begins to change. True conversions often lead to true changes in living. True conversions lead to housecleaning. It may be that we have a group of Christians here who want to know how new salvation in Christ should affect their old marriages. Paul begins in verse 10:

1 Corinthians 7:10
10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:
KJV

Here is the first command, a command that appears to be toward believing couples. Just because someone comes to know Christ as Savior does not mean that he or she should leave his or her mate. Rather, we should continue in the state we were in when we were saved. Salvation does not alter the marriage rules or open the doors for new marriage beginnings. However, some folks have misunderstood verse 11:

1 Corinthians 7:11
11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.
KJV

Paul is not saying that he *prefers* such a woman to remain married, but if she departs, that is OK, she should just avoid remarriage. The words "if she depart" are in the aorist passive imperative in the Greek. This imperative implies she has been commanded to leave. In ancient times, the woman rarely divorced her husband. She could not do so and earn a living easily. If the Christian woman was required to leave her husband, she was expected to remain unmarried. A man, in that situation is not to divorce his wife. Once again, Paul is expanding on what the Lord Jesus has taught. The principle is continuation.

The second expands on the first and deals with mixed marriages or "the rest," beginning in verse 12.

The instructions are plain. If the unbelieving choose to stay let them stay and in so doing, the believing will sanctify them. A believing mate will create the conditions of holiness conducive to their spiritual good. In our words, remaining with a mate will provide opportunity for exposure to the gospel. They may be saved if they stay with you.

If the unbelieving choose to depart, according to verse 15, let them depart. In such a case a brother or sister (in other words the believing Christians) are not "in bondage."

Now, notice the words in verse 16:

1 Corinthians 7:16

16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

KJV

This verse strikes a verse to household salvation, the doctrine which holds that a believer may claim the salvation of his unsaved family as a promise based upon Acts 16:31. Paul does not say the unbelieving mate *will* be saved; he says he *may* be saved. The goal is to help effect the salvation decision by one's godly life.

II. The Problems of the Chapter.

The problems are clearly summarized in one question: What does this chapter teach about remarriage after divorce? Two verses come to our attention, and both are hotly debated.

A. Our first problem passage. Vs. 11

1 Corinthians 7:11

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

KJV

We have already established the fact that we are probably talking about believing couples here, else the words "to the rest" would not occur in verse 12.

The offended mate is to remain unmarried, *or* she is to be reconciled to her husband. Did Paul intend by this that this woman was to remain unmarried for all the rest of her life, or was she only to remain unmarried *for the purposes of reconciliation* to her husband?

Those in favor of the former argue:

1. The Bible does not place any time limit or exceptions on the command. She is simply to remain unmarried. If the Holy Spirit intended to say more, He would have said more.

2. Matthew 19:9, (*And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except [it be] for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*) applies.

The Lord Jesus did not talk about motives, intent, time limits, or anything else. He simply said, if a man divorces his wife and marries another, he commits adultery. In addition, man who remarries this wife commits adultery.

3. We have no right to take privileges with God's Word and reason our way around passages that do not set well with us. We must obey God.

Pastors and teachers who believe that the Bible allows for remarriage usually believe it is possible when the divorced party was the *innocent party* and her mate (or his mate) has remarried, ending all hope for reconciliation. They also know these verses are in the Bible, and they too, sincerely desire to obey God. Here is how they would answer their friends.

1. With respect to 1 Corinthians 7:11, Paul clearly showed his *intent* in the passage. Paul was simply stating that they should not remarry because that would preclude reconciliation. There is no *biblical advantage* for remaining unmarried. There would be no other biblical reason why one should remain unmarried. It is not likely that Paul would make such a wide sweeping command without providing some kind of explanation or support.

2. Matthew 19:9 should be viewed in the same manner. The Savior's intent was very clear; such a remarriage would constitute adultery because the divorce was clearly for the *purpose of remarriage*. Wife swapping may be legal, but it is still adultery in God's eyes.

3. Again, remarriage was both common and expected in Jewish circles. Paul himself, in this very passage, has advocated marriage in order to avoid fornication. It is only logical and sensible that he would also advocate remarriage for the same purpose; to avoid fornication.

That is our first problem passage.

B. Our second problem passage. Vs.15

1 Corinthians 7:15

15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

KJV

The problem is this, what does it mean to be under bondage.

Those who believe that remarriage is approved of God use this passage for their support. They believe that Paul is clearly telling us that these innocent folks are free to remarry and that they are no longer *in bondage* to their former marriages. According to them, to be bound is to be obligated to the laws of marriage, and to be loosed is to be free from those laws. Verse 27 represents an example where this terminology is used:

1 Corinthians 7:27

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

KJV

Please keep in mind Paul was arguing that a present circumstance argued special behavior at Corinth and we will deal with that in our next study, but don't miss the point. Paul associates the condition of being *bound* to being married. He associates being loosed with being free from marital obligations.

Therefore, these folks look at verse 15 and say that the innocent believing mate is now free. They further strengthen their argument with Romans 7:2-4 where the same terms bound, and loosed, are used in the same context, the context of marriage.

Those who disagree with these people look at 1 Corinthians 11:7 and say that God simply does not hold the innocent victim *accountable* and that nothing more is intended.

III. The Author's Personal *Opinion* Relating to this Matter.

1. I do not believe there is enough biblical information to argue either position (remarriage or non-remarriage) unequivocally. If there were, this issue would have been settled long ago. I do believe good exegesis requires us to understand that the terms *bound* and *loose* are in reference to marriage.
2. Because I am conservative, I believe that when an issue like this occurs, the safe side is the conservative side. In other words, if you can at all possibly avoid it, do not remarry. I did not say you are out of God's will if you remarry. I said I would never advise it.
3. As a *pastor of a church*, my policy has remained the same from the earliest days of my ministry. I do not recommend remarriage and I do not conduct marriages where either party has been divorced. I have never *advocated* divorce or remarriage.
4. While *no* Christian should ever remarry whose mate can still be remarried to him or her, I will not oppose those who, before God, believe they are in obedience to His Word.
5. I also believe that, regardless of one's past sins, they are covered by the blood of Christ and that I will never call *unclean* what Christ has called *clean*. God forgives divorce and he forgives remarriage, though we receive in our bodies the results of our disobedience. I do not accept the "blemish" theory or the theory that because the Church is the bride of Christ that higher biblical standards which preclude remarriage are imposed than in the Old Testament. The standards are high in both Testaments.

I have offended folks in both camps because of my stand, some because of my refusal to marry divorced persons or let them be deacons. Others, have been offended because I still allow such folks to serve Christ and exercise their spiritual gifts. I wish I could say with Paul "I have the mind of Christ" in this matter. I truly *believe* I am being obedient. I believe that this Savior took publicans and sinners and turned them into Apostles. The enemies of the gospel do not care which side you take. If churches limit divorced persons, they accuse them of being unloving and self-righteous. If a church uses them, they accuse it of compromise.

A wise church and pastor will establish guidelines before these issues arise.

1. As pastor, I would not ever advocate divorce or remarriage.
2. As pastor, I would not perform the ceremony for someone who had this history though I would feel free to attend such a wedding and do not begrudge them the right to remarry if they have searched the scriptures and feel they are in God's will.

However, even if one believes in remarriage he needs to see that there is no way that *the church* can ever assume the role of deciding who is right and wrong and who should or shouldn't be remarried. For testimony sake, church is wisest to stay out of the business of advocating remarriages, though some may be just.

3. A church family should *generally* consider avoiding the use of divorced persons as pastors or deacons because of standards set in God's word that require such men to be able to rule their homes. This also helps the world to see that we do not approve of breaking up marriages. There *may* be exceptions when the whole body of believers in a given context is convinced that Christ would be glorified by the use of such individuals who show testimony to the great grace of Christ. Such men would rise to the surface by virtue of how God is using them. They should never be placed in office to prove a point.

4. A church *should* use divorced or remarried persons in every other ministry of the Church and thank God for the opportunity to do so. This tells the world that we love and forgive sinners and recognize innocent parties in a divorce.

We all see "through a glass darkly" and we all want to obey God. Sometimes, we just cannot solve all of our problems and we need the balm of the Holy Spirit to help smooth out the rough spots.

It is time to be about our Father's business; to be about the business of helping, healing, weeping, and sharing with all of our brothers and sisters in Christ who know that they can share their hurts and their sins with us and find acceptance in Christ, regardless of the nature of their sin.

We must be about the business of winning the lost to Christ. For believe me when I say, the time is short and it could very well be that the hour is coming upon us when it will not matter whether we are married or single or separated or divorced.

Timely Truths for Troublesome Times

Intro: We are seeing the Apostle Paul adjust his teaching style, right before our eyes. There is a time for the servant of God to lay down forthright commands; dictums and absolutes that cannot be altered. For example, it is never right for anyone (believer or unbeliever) to have his neighbor's wife. There are no exceptions. It is an inviolable absolute.

There are other times, however, when it is more important for us to learn *the principles* that should govern our lives than it is for us to learn a set of rules to which we can refer. Paul is not finished laying down commandments in 1 Corinthians, but, a wise reader will see that Paul has begun to shift his emphasis from being command oriented to being principle oriented.

This can be upsetting to those who are still children in their walk with Christ. Children love rules. They love the security of knowing exactly what is expected of them - and they love the challenge of trying to get around those rules. If you say, "Don't chew gum" to a child, he is as likely as not to try to chew beef jerky. When he is reprimanded, he will respond "But, you only said that I shouldn't chew gum." The problem with rules is that God could never write enough of them to meet every situation.

Legalistic Christians like to treat the New Testament as the Jews treated the Old Testament. They like to codify it. They like to treat it like a rulebook. In so doing, they abuse the Word of God just as the ancient Jews did.

When we give a man a rule, we feed him a fish. When we give a man a principle, we teach him how to fish. When we give a man a rule, we help him to obey God in a single instance in a single culture. When we give a man a principle, we know that it will apply in all cultures and all times. When we give a man a rule we bind his conscience and rob him of the freedom to decide when conflicts of choice arise. When we give a man a principle, we teach him how to choose the highest priority when there is a conflict of obedience.

So, we see that Paul has begun teaching us principles in chapter 7. We will see even more of it in the rest of the book. He begins by letting us down easy. In verse 10, for example, he says this is a commandment! In verse 25, however, he says I have no commandment, only my judgment. What is he saying to these folks? He is effectively saying, learn how to apply the principles.

So far, we have seen two very important principles, the principle of continence or self-control (Vs. 1-9) and the principle of continuation, from verse 10 to the end of the chapter.

We are going to expand on that second principle, the principle of continuation as we examine verses 17 - 40. Paul has been helping us to see that the gospel applies to all lifestyles and that we should not think that God requires major life changes just because we have accepted Christ. I have grouped these verses into short paragraphs and assigned key words to them in order to help us get a handle on what I believe was Paul's intent.

In verses 17 - 20 we see that we are expected to:

I. Abide in our Calling Vs. 17-20

1 Corinthians 7:17-20

17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

KJV

Notice how God often snuggles great truths into incidental statements that are almost irrelevant to the subject at hand.

Here we read seven words: "*But as God hath distributed to every man,*" that open up a whole discussion on the sovereignty and direction of God. What does Paul intend by those words? He wants us to know that we did not get to where we are on our own. We didn't get our jobs on our own or find our place in the social pecking order on our own. God manages every man's place in life, slave or king, shopkeeper or accountant, God has placed us where we are. Therefore, we must not think that our conversion to Christ necessitates a change in any of these.

Let us be careful not to abuse this truth. This is not to suggest that all occupations glorify God. They do not. I can name more than one man I know who has not accepted Christ because he knows the implications of that decision will cost him his job. Paul is not suggesting disobedience. He is only reminding us of the guiding principle - continuation.

Verse 18 is sometimes seen as a curious verse. The answer to the question in our minds is yes. Yes, men could become uncircumcised. There is historical evidence that this surgery was widely practiced in Roman times. In fact, the very word uncircumcised as it is written here is the Greek word that was used to describe the surgery. Men would choose this surgery in order to avoid the religious and social stigma of circumcision.

The first key word is *abide*. Abide in your calling. Verses 21 -24 provide the second example:

II. Accept Your Past Vs. 21-24

1 Corinthians 7:21-24

21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

KJV

Status is everything with us and it is absolutely nothing in the kingdom of God. In Bible times, a slave was seen as inferior. There is a touch of irony to this, because, very often, slaves were better educated and more highly skilled than freemen were. However, they were seen as inferior.

We are just as cruel today. If a man earns minimum wage, we view him as suspect. Every year someone goes off half-cocked with a gun because he did not get his promotion. Every mother wants to say, "My son, the doctor, or my son, the lawyer."

Instinctively, we know what Paul is saying. We should strive to be our best but we should never assign the kind of value to our position in life that men assign.

Christians gain their identity because of who they are in Christ. In the world's eyes, one may be a slave. In God's eyes, he is God's freeman and he has been freed to be His slave. Everything is the mirror image reverse of what we perceive it to be. The world's rich are very often God's poor. The poor are, very often, God's rich. The world's wise are God's fools. God's wise are the world's fools. God is the great equalizer.

Again, we must avoid abusing this. Paul is not suggesting that a Christian should not do his best, or be his best for Christ. Paul is explaining that no Christian should ever take his identity from his *position* in life. There is no such thing as an ordinary housewife or an ordinary factory worker, in God's eyes.

Please notice this reminder offered for those who are in a position of advantage from the world's point of view. Paul says, if you *can* be free, take advantage of it and use it for God's glory. Just do not let it change the way you see yourself. Accept your past.

By the way, Christian friends who believe we have a cultural mandate to change the world in order to prepare for the return of Christ need to see that these be-

lievers were not instructed to change the world. They were instructed to endure the injustices of their day. When we win the lost to Christ we change the world, but when we make our goal the changing of the world we fail at both. Where true, soul winning, Christianity goes, slavery in all its forms goes away. Verses 25 - 27 help us with another important concept:

III. Adapt to the Present. Vs. 25-27

1 Corinthians 7:25-27

25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

KJV

The key to understanding these verses is obviously found in the words, "for the present distress..."

We do not know what the present distress was. Educated guesses remind us that we are only ten short years away from Nero's horrific persecution of the church. It may be that Paul saw this coming, and wanted to spare these believers from the heart wrenching loses he saw coming. In his mind, he may have seen it as happening sooner. Remember, he is giving his opinions and judgments here. He is teaching us how to *apply* biblical principles.

We will now leave the clear instruction of these verses with one reminder and one observation. The reminder is that while we are *free* in Christ to remain married or single we must also be willing to *adjust* to present circumstances. Sometimes, this means we withhold privileges from ourselves for the sake of Christ.

Again, has this been abused? Yes, every generation has had its prophets of doom who have suggested that Christians stop marrying and bearing children. That is not biblical. Paul is speaking only of a short-term situation, a present circumstance.

Here is the promised observation. Please notice that Paul says a great deal about marriage, but nothing about child bearing. In the world of logic we call this an argument from silence. Arguments from silence are not airtight and they are not conclusive. They can only add circumstantial weight to a position. But I want to do just that. Please notice that Paul says *nothing* about birth control. Neither does any other passage in God's Word. (The sin of Onan was not that he practiced birth control; it was that he defied God.) Christian friend, nowhere in the Bible do we see *one word* which suggests that we should practice it. This passage would have provided the perfect location for that instruction.

Be assured that Corinthian believers did know how to practice it. The decision that the Bible *does* call us to make is the decision about whether or not to marry in troubled times. For example, the young man going off to war would be wiser not to marry. The decision that the Bible *never* calls us to make is birth control.

Now, that is what we call an argument from silence. It is circumstantial not conclusive. However, friend, if you choose to practice birth control, you need to be convinced in your heart that it is the will of God, because while you may not find a scriptural command against it, you will be hard pressed to argue that the Bible supports it. Make sure you are in the will of God, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

So we see that we are to adapt to the present. Now notice the argument of verses 29-31:

IV. Anticipate the Future Vs. 29-31

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

KJV

Some do not separate these verses from the ones we read earlier. They think that Paul is still talking about the present distress. I do not believe so. I believe Paul is reminding us that we are *all* facing eternity and, from the oldest of us to the youngest, we all need to know that none of these things will matter in light of eternity. You see, "...the fashion of this world passes away."

It is all a flash in the pan. "The first hundred years are the hardest," for the Christian, but they are a smattering against the backdrop of eternity. In eternity, we will not care about whether we were left at the altar. The tears that we shed down here may even signify joy then. The things we rejoice over in this world are of no account in eternity. Earlier, we had said that God is the great equalizer. Now, Paul is reminding us that eternity is also a great equalizer. If you married some jerk, and now you are sorry, so what? If you were cheated out of marriage, so what? If you were defrauded of your life savings, so what? We are not being glib. In light of eternity, these matters will be of no more importance to us than whether or not we made class president in third grade. They are small potatoes.

Eternity is what matters. You can gain the whole world and still *lose your own soul!* You can be married to the best-looking gal in town and still take nothing with you to eternity.

I visited NASA at the same time when we were putting our first man on the moon. I learned an important lesson. The strategists who took on this impossible task started with the goal; they started with the moon. They built their PERT chart backwards! They reasoned from the future back to the present.

Every Christian needs to reason *from eternity* back to the present. Some will not spend eternity with Jesus Christ because the cares of this life choked the message. Earthly goals and careers precluded the spiritual pursuit of eternal life that can only be found in Jesus Christ. Anticipate the future. In no time at all, these things will not matter a bit. That is why the next point in our outline makes so much sense.

V. Attend, Right Now to the Lord. Vs. 31-35

1 Corinthians 7:31-35

31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

KJV

“...that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.” Is there any cryptic message or hidden agenda, too hard to understand? When it comes to being married or not being married, weigh the options. Weigh your gifts, your needs, and your opportunities. Consider the advantages and then make an intelligent, biblical decision.

Ever pastor loves it when some sixteen year old walks in and says, "Oh Pastor, I have found God's mate for my life! And we want to get married!" And you know that this person has applied as much brain power to this, as he or she has applied to their homework assignment. You know it is likely that the only subject this couple is getting any lessons in is Chemistry. They have thrown intelligence out the window, they have thrown a real look at the present out the window, they have thrown the future out the window, and they have thrown eternity out the window in their considerations, but God has led them together. The last thing on their minds is *attending to the Lord*.

Not too long ago a married woman who still was not even divorced came with her new found lover who still wasn't even divorced, as I recall, rejoicing "how God

had brought them together". Let me tell you, the last thing on their mind was attending to the Lord.

When some men or women remain unmarried, they may be subject to distractions. They may not have the gift to remain unmarried. On the other hand, when men and women become married they too may be subject to distractions. The goal is to attend unto the Lord without distraction. The goal is not to remain single or to get married. The goal is to serve without distraction. We will group verses 36-40 into one paragraph and title it:

VI. Accommodate Special Needs Vs. 36-40

Some say that verses 36- 40 all deal with the same situation. They deal with the issue of whether or not a father should allow his daughter to marry. This instructor sees two principles being articulated clearly.

A. The first instruction is given to the man who is close to a girl. Vs. 36-37

1 Corinthians 7:36-37

36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

KJV

B. The second instruction is given to the father of the girl. Vs. 38-40

1 Corinthians 7:38-40

38 So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

KJV

Consider the man who has a friendship with a girl. You will notice that I did not use the term courting because it is not a biblical word. Of course, dating is not a biblical term either. But, clearly, there is a relationship here and Paul is giving two good pieces of advice. First, if your behavior begins to be inappropriate consider marriage. Why? For the obvious purpose of self control.

Secondly, do not take advantage of the girl if you don't intend to marry her. The Jews considered the flower of a girl's age to be around age 20. It was the stage before fruit bearing.

Honesty in a relationship is clearly the intention. I have known couples who have been close friends for many years who never felt led of God to marry. That is their privilege and we should not criticize. If a man cannot control himself or if he has no intention to marry, he should not hinder the girls opportunity to date someone else, get married, and become a mom.

If we stopped reading here, we might think that the whole decision is up to the man. That is only because Paul is talking to the young man at this time. In verses 38-40, we see the other side of the formula, the girl's side. This is where the plot thickens. The important thing we see is that the girl is to be *given* in marriage.

I was ignorant about this when I began dating. It never occurred to me to ask my intended's father if I could date her, and it never occurred to me that I was supposed to ask *him* for his permission to marry her. Her folks were very gracious about this and excused my ignorance.

Clearly, the father is the take-charge person. He is the one who gives his daughter in marriage. And he does *not* do so unthinkingly. He considers what is best for her in light of the circumstances. He discharges his responsibility to his daughter, being sensitive to her needs, being sensitive to the times, and knowing that he has not sinned if he has made his choice considering these facts.

In summary, we are to *abide* in our calling, *accept* where God has placed us in the past, *adapt* to the special needs of the present, *anticipate* the future, (eternity in particular) in our planning, *attend* to the Lord without distraction, and *accommodate* the needs of others.

What does this all say? It all says the same thing, that marriage should not be entered into lightly or unadvisedly, but soberly, righteously, and in the fear of God. It says that when we consider marriage we consider all aspects. It says that *self control* and the *ability to serve Christ without distraction* are the two issues which should determine whether we choose to marry or not. Above all, we make our decision *in light of eternity!*

Christian young person - the most important issue in life is not whether or not you get married some day. The issue is this: When you plan your life, reason your way back from eternity; begin with where you want to be, not with where you are.

If you have not yet made yourself sure that you will spend eternity with Christ, please settle this matter now. We can help if there are outstanding issues or if you need more instruction from God's Word.

Chinese Fortune Cookies

Intro: We recently had a meal in a Chinese restaurant. As we picked up our fortune cookies were presented with a typical mini dilemma, a question of conscience; the question of liberty. Some folks will not even touch a fortune cookie and would certainly not read the fortune for fear of giving a wrong impression. Others pick up that cookie, read the fortune, have a good laugh over it and go on their way. Now, I want you to know that most churches and schools have no official position on the reading of Chinese fortune cookies in public or in the privacy of their own homes and that, you are free to worship with our family regardless of your conclusions on the matter. We hope this brings a smile.

The problem is, that along with the matter of fortune cookies, are hundreds, no, thousands, of other issues which confront us. They are issues that the Bible does not specifically address. One issue that seems inconsequential to me may not seem inconsequential to you. One man refuses to buy a lottery ticket, but he goes for the clearinghouse sweepstakes every time. Another man will not step in a theater but he rents home videos. Another man will not use a deck of cards, but he plays dice games on the kitchen table with his family. That is not to suggest that any of these men are compromising; it is to say that God expects us to think about the things we do, and to have good reasons for doing them.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul introduced two helpful principles, especially as they related to marriage. They were the principles of continence (or self control), and the principle of continuation. We are to bloom where we are planted and we are not to nurse the idea that because we were saved on Sunday we should quit our jobs or marriages on Monday.

The *subject* changes in chapter 8, as Paul seems to be answering another question presented to him in a letter from the Corinthians. The issue relates to whether or not Christians should eat meat that has been offered to idols, especially at banquets served at the idol temples. They were probably expecting a simple yes or no answer. I would like to imagine that the older conservatives probably were hoping for a simple definitive statement that could be included in their doctrinal statement so they could put the issue to rest. The younger free spirits were probably expecting Paul to say, "Make up your own minds! As long as you abstain from things strangled and from fornication, it does not matter. "After all", they would reason, "Christianity is not external, it is internal, and even Jesus himself said, it is not what goes in a man which defiles him, it is what comes out of a man." Those would certainly be typical responses.

However, Paul does not satisfy either group. Instead, just as the Lord Jesus did, and just as any good teacher does, he *uses the issue* to teach a *principle*. Instead of giving the legalists a rule and instead of giving the liberals free reign, he gives both groups a *principle*. We will call it *the principle of consideration*. First, he supplies us with the *information* in verses 1-8. He then follows with the *illustration* in verses 9-12. He finishes with the *application* in verse 13. Looking then, at verses 1-8, let's examine:

I. The Information

Paul says: "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. . ." Let's talk about some things which we all know to be true.

A. What we know about knowledge. Vs. 1-3

1. According to verse 1, we know that we all have knowledge. Truth is important. The way we live is always a reflection of what we truly believe, not what we say we believe.

When one studies the word knowledge in the New Testament he will discover that the Christian is *expected* to have knowledge. He is expected to have knowledge of the Word of God, of the will of God, and of the ways of God. He is expected to know God in his experience. Knowledge is part of the Christian faith. The world would like to characterize true Christians as being ignorant. We know better. We know that there is a wisdom that comes from above that transcends human wisdom. We have the answers, and furthermore, we are expected to be able to give an answer to every man for the hope that lies within us. We know that we all have knowledge. We also know:

2. Knowledge puffs up. Knowledge is risky. It can be dangerous. Even a small dose of knowledge seems to make men very proud and arrogant. We call newcomers novices, rookies, newbies, and neophytes. When we earn our stripes we sew them on our shoulders. We post diplomas on our walls. It was our *illegitimate* pursuit of knowledge that caused the fall. Knowledge is a risky commodity to own.

However, we must not misunderstand Paul, as do many Charismatics. Many love to quote this verse as an excuse for doctrinal disobedience. They love to teach that doctrine divides. That teaching is a lie from hell. Doctrine does not divide, false doctrine divides. Doctrine only separates the truth from the lie. How foolish it would be for Paul to be teaching us to ignore sound doctrine when he spent his entire ministry providing us with it.

Paul is simply warning us, that it is not within our natures to handle knowledge (or intelligence) very well. It makes us proud.

I saw a little boy in a store, proudly showing his mother how he could open a plastic combination lock. He was quite impressed with himself. His great accomplishment seemed ever so childish in the eyes of the adults around him. So, it is with God. We find ourselves able to open a combination lock or two, in scripture or in nature, and you would think we were little gods. God just smiles at us like that mother smiled at her little boy. We all have knowledge. Knowledge feeds our pride. We must also see that:

3. Knowledge is inferior to love.

a. It is inferior because of the effect it has upon us. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. In our language, we would say, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Love edifies. To edify is to build up. Remember that, you will need it later in this study.

Francis Bacon is reported to have said, "The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in love is no excess, neither can man or angels come into danger by it."

That is the power of love over both knowledge and power. There is no love in excess.

For the students among us, we must not think that knowledge and love are poles or opposites that strive against each other. God is love and God is truth. God is both in infinite amounts. Just keep in mind that *our* knowledge (as we earthlings know it) is inferior to love, because of *our* natures. See also verse 2 and notice fourthly:

b. It is inferior because of the effect that it has on God.

1 Corinthians 8:2-3

2 And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

KJV

God is not impressed by our knowledge. He is impressed by our love. There are at least two sticks of dynamite lying under that verse. The first is this, all men are *not* equal in the eyes of God. All Christians are *not* equal in the eyes of God. Every person in a given room may know Christ as Savior. Every person in that room may be trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ for his salvation, but that does not mean that every person is equal in the eyes of God. Not all of us know God equally. We may very well ask, "How well does God know me?" How much do I love Him? John was the disciple whom Jesus loved because John was the disciple who loved Jesus!

When I see a rule oriented, law oriented pastor who unbendingly rules his church with an iron fist, do you know what my first suspicion is? My first suspicion is that this man does not spend much time with the Lord. He does not *enjoy* Jesus Christ. May I also observe, that the pastor who sweeps everything under the rug, sidesteps all issues, and whose pulpit runs with honey is *also* the pastor who does not spend much time with Christ.

What applies to pastors, applies to parents, teachers, and other leaders. Only our personal, intimate walk with Christ keeps us from either extreme. The man who loves God is known of Him.

Now, I may be reading too much into these verses, but I also see something else here. When I understand that knowledge is partial, and incomplete, and that it is our love that commends us to God, not our knowledge, it helps me as a pastor and as a leader. It helps me decide difficult issues. I have learned that many of life's issues are difficult to settle. I have learned that I do not always have enough information from God's Word to make a final decision where the answer seems almost to be a flip of the coin. How, then *do I make those decisions* where my knowledge is weak and partial and fragmented? I have learned that I can often make the decision based upon love.

No, we do not compromise the Word of God, and Paul is not suggesting that for one minute. However, I believe Paul is reminding us that our knowledge has its limits. It is weak and fragmented. Love has no limits. It can be a wonderful decision maker for us! So, we have learned some things about knowledge. We all have some of it, it puffs us up, and it is inferior to love. Now:

B. What We Know About Idols Vs. 4

1 Corinthians 8:4

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

KJV

What do we know about idols? We know that idols are nothing in this world and that they exist in name only. Idols are great hoaxes perpetrated on darkened hearts by demons. There is no goddess Diana. There are only demons who would like you to think there is one.

The food in question here, the food that was offered to idols, was so offered for several purposes. It was generally believed in ancient times that evil spirits often entered individuals through the food they ate. They believed that when food was dedicated to a god, it was exorcised of any hitchhiking spirits by the god to whom it was offered. It was sanitized, so to speak. Therefore, it was not un-

common, especially when sponsoring public banquets, to purchase and eat food which was offered to idols.

Whenever men turn from the living God, they fall into the bondage of their own superstitions. Every heathen tribe has its set of superstitions, its set of black cats and ladders and Friday the 13's. One man carries the medal of a saint on his neck, another man wears temple underwear with a talisman on it, another splashes water made holy by an incantation on the face of an infant.

Christians are free from all such mythology. We *know* it is all nonsense. We know that idols mean nothing and exist in name only. Idols cannot hurt you, and they cannot help you. That is what we know about idols.

C. What We Know About God. Vs. 5-6

1 Corinthians 8:5-6

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

KJV

This is knowledge pure and simple. We may refer to gods, we may even hear men referred to as gods, but there is really only one God. Brigham Young once said, "Adam is our god and the only god with whom we have to do..." Islam tells us that Allah is their god and the only one with whom they have to do. Again, we know better. We worship the Lord God, the Father, and we approach Him through Jesus Christ. We turn our attention to verses 7 and 8:

D. What We Know About Men Vs. 7-8

1 Corinthians 8:7-8

7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

KJV

- Not all men have knowledge. That is one thing we learn.
- Some men have weak consciences. That is another thing we learn.
- Men who have weak consciences can *defile* them.

So, what is a defiled conscience? This is "temple talk." A defiled conscience is one that has been polluted. It is the perfect choice of words because the whole issue is an issue of ceremonial pollution. Heathen temples are polluted; they are defiled. Their ceremonies are polluted; they are defiled. The Christian is God's temple, the temple of the Holy Spirit. When he participates in idolatry, he pol-

lutes or defiles himself. He defiles his conscience. This is serious business. In chapter 3, verse 17 Paul said:

1 Corinthians 3:17

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

KJV

Later, in chapter 10, verse 21, Paul will remind us:

1 Corinthians 10:21

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

KJV

What is the danger here? The danger is that not even one Christian can think for even one minute that the table of Christ can have fellowship with the table of demons. We have Christians all around us who are having fellowship with the table of demons, and the unfruitful works of darkness. Now, consider, in verse 9:

E. What We Know About Liberty Vs. 9

1 Corinthians 8:9

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

KJV

1. The first thing we see is that we *do* have liberty. This word has been so abused in our day. Many Christian's do not understand what Christian liberty is about and many Christian's seem to think that liberty provides some license for us to do as we please. In due time, we will do away with all those false ideas about liberty and provide a very careful, technical definition for the term.

For this study, however, we will simply say that liberty is the privilege each believer has to decide what godly conduct is, when God's Word does not speak directly to an issue. Instead of being bound to an endless list of rules, liberty is the privilege of following the leading of the Holy Spirit as we seek guidance through prayer and the study of God's Word. Christian liberty is a birthright of our salvation. Secondly, we see that:

2. We are to take heed how we use our liberty. Liberty is no carte blanche license to do what we desire to do. Thirdly, we must understand that:

3. We can mislead others by the use of our liberty. We can become a stumbling block in their growth. In so doing we can cause them to sin.

So much for the things we *know* about knowledge, about idols, about God, about men, and about our liberty. Now, that Paul has given us the facts, he is going to help us use those facts. He does so with:

II. The Illustration Vs. 9-12

1 Corinthians 8:9-12

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

KJV

You go down to the temple to eat at a banquet. Your desire is to be a part of your community, perhaps to win friends to Christ. A weaker brother sees you go there and he gathers a very different impression. He thinks you believe in that stuff. He thinks you want your food sanitized from evil spirits. He becomes misguided. He begins mixing Christianity with paganism. In so doing, he defiles the temple of the living God.

There appears to be a little play on words found in verse 10 that can be seen in the Greek, but not in English. Where Paul says: shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened, the Greek word for emboldened is the English word *edified*. Again, it is temple talk. When we talk about edifying the body of Christ, we are talking about building up, building up His edifice, His temple.

Consciences can be edified for evil just as they can be edified for good. This is a common occurrence. The way you behave, the way you present yourself, the way you present your Christ, can result in the destruction of others.

One Christian assembly in a former community where I pastored used to bill itself as "The church where people of all faiths can worship." Do you know the message they were sending to the community? They were telling the community that there is no difference between the table of Christ and the table of demons.

Now, there is an important message in the words, "For if any man see thee..." Paul is telling us that, if the potential for misunderstanding is there we need to remove it, whether we are sinning or not. It should be a real potential for misunderstanding, not just the whim of some legalistic Christian who would all like us to line up with his personal row of ducks.

However, the argument of example is still there. Will my presence in a given place, will my participation at a given function, will my involvement in a specific activity, send the wrong message? Will it send the message of tacit approval? Will it send the message of permissiveness, or worse, will it send the message of confusion? Will I confuse the testimony of Christ and the meaning of the gospel by my participation?

A number of years ago, as a part of the area wide Sunday School convention, I was invited to attend the Key '73 introductory meeting. Key '73 was a nationwide campaign by all churches to spread the gospel. When my chance to speak came, I asked, "If we are all agreeing to spread this gospel together, can anyone in this room tell me, just what gospel we are agreeing to spread?"

The moderator quickly replied to the effect, "My friend, it doesn't matter. Whatever your church believes the gospel is, that is the gospel. He might as well have said, "Let's discuss this over dinner tonight, down at the temple."

Recently, I was invited out to eat by some Christian friends. As we sat down, we saw their pastor sitting at a table with a group of men. They pointed him out to me, indicating that he was on the local ministerial council. I asked if all of those ministers knew Christ. Their response was, not likely! So I asked, why would your pastor be on the same ministerial council with them? What fellowship does the temple of God have with the temple of idols?

What was that brother communicating? He was telling the community around him that it does not matter where you go to church or what you believe. His tacit approval implied that we are all in this together. He was polluting, defiling the consciences of weaker brethren.

What is the real issue of 1 Corinthians 8? Is it eating meat offered unto idols? No! The issue is harming our brother or sister by confusing light with darkness.

Modern Christians would have said something like this: Of course, it is OK to eat that meat! Of course, it is OK to participate in those temple rights! How else can you show the world that you love them? How else can you bring the world to Christ? Paul says if you do that you will risk defiling and polluting the consciences of weaker brethren. Finally, we see

III. The Implication Vs. 13

1 Corinthians 8:13

13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

KJV

Christian friend, the world is not going to be around forever. You are not going to live so long that you cannot give up a few of your privileges for the sake of protecting the consciences of others. Do the practices in your life confuse the gospel? Do the practices in your life allow weaker Christians to draw the wrong conclusions, the kind of conclusions that would defile them? Is the way you conduct business keeping someone else from considering Christ? Is the way you behave yourself in school keeping a friend from considering Christ? No small earthly gain is worth a grain of loss in eternity. This is our hour to sacrifice for Christ.

When It's Wrong to Be Right

Intro: When I first began taking an interest in metal detectors I asked a friend, "Is there a metal detector which will look for gold only?" He replied that you could use any good metal detector to find gold, simply by tuning it. He said that you find the gold by tuning out the other metals. As we turn to 1 Corinthians 9, I want you to do the same thing. I want you to tune out all of the other distractions which may be competing for your attention and search with me for the gold which we can find in this wonderful chapter.

In our recent studies we have discovered that the Apostle Paul has begun laying down, not just standards of conduct, but proven principles which we can apply to our lives. We *could* call them nuggets.

For example, in the first part of chapter seven we saw the principle of Continence, the importance of containing ourselves. We stressed self-control, especially with regard to moral purity. In the second half of that chapter, we saw the principle of Continuation and we learned that just because we come to know Christ as Savior does not mean that we should quit our jobs or seek to change our social status in life.

We added the third principle, the principle of Consideration (or self-limitation), when we studied the issue of eating meats offered to idols and were reminded that the exercise of our great freedom could do great harm to others who may misread our actions.

Now, when we look at chapter 9, what we really see is an extension of chapter 8. Paul made his point in chapter eight. Even though we have many freedoms in Christ we sin against a weaker brother when we act in a way which can cause him to misunderstand and be hurt. Here, in chapter nine, Paul is going to use himself as an example, an example of how we must each personally put the needs of others ahead of our own rights and privileges. So look now, at the chapter with me.

In verses 1-6 we see Paul's Privilege Stated.

In verses 7-14 we see Paul's Privilege Supported.

In verses 15-19 we see Paul's Privilege Surrendered.

Look, first then, at

I. Paul's Privilege Stated Vs. 1-6

A. Paul claims the office of an apostle. Vs. 1-3

1 Corinthians 9:1-3

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,
KJV

If any knew firsthand that Paul was truly an apostle, surely these Corinthians did. Paul was no imposter or charlatan. He had the right credentials.

They knew it because he met the *technical* requirements. Technically, in order to be an apostle, one had to have seen the Lord Jesus Christ. When Peter and the other apostles "jumped the gun" and sought to replace Judas with another apostle, they made an error in judgment. They assumed that the Lord had commissioned them to choose His apostles. However, the fact is, that the Lord has always chosen His own apostles, and the Lord had hand selected Paul. Regrettably, the selection of Mathias in Paul's place, as good a man as he was, seems to have caused no end of problems for Paul who, from that point on had to go about defending his apostleship.

Nowhere in God's Word will you find that the church or any of its leaders are ever commanded to choose Christ's apostles for Him. All who have ever claimed to be apostles are imposters.

When Paul saw Christ that day on the Damascus Road, he was in the presence of others who were struck by the glory of Christ. This was no private experience on a hillside in New York with no else around to witness the event or the glory of Christ. In addition to this, Paul demonstrated the signs of an apostle, (2 Corinthians 2:12) something which modern cultic apostles do not and cannot do. A great apostle of the Mormon Church died a while back. I am here to tell you, that, not once in his life did he ever exhibit the signs, wonders, and mighty deeds that the apostles demonstrated continually. He may have been a good man, and a well-meaning man, but he was certainly not an Apostle of Christ, whose words he flatly denied.

These Corinthians knew that Paul qualified technically as an apostle. They also knew Paul was an apostle because he qualified *personally*. He said to them, are not ye my work in the Lord? The proof of the pudding is always in the eating.

Some servants of Christ qualify technically for their positions. They have their training, they have their diplomas, and their ordination, but they do not qualify where it matters most, in the area of personal ministry. They may be safe behind

some distant pulpit for a period, but they have no spiritual involvement in the lives of the saints to whom they minister. These Corinthian saints were Paul's work in the Lord. Paul was qualified to be an apostle in every way.

B. Paul claims the privileges of an apostle. Vs. 4-6.

1 Corinthians 9:4-6

4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

KJV

The word *power* in these verses, does stress ability as much as it does right and privilege.

1. Paul had the right to eat and to drink. I believe Paul was affirming here what he taught us in chapter 8, that all believers have the right to eat and drink whatever they please. We are not under the restrictions of the law, and we are not intimidated by the foolish incantations of idolaters offering their libations to idols. That is a right. That is a given.

2. Paul had the right to lead about a sister, a wife, just as the other apostles were doing. This, of course, undermines the Catholic doctrine of clerical celibacy at its very root. Peter, Rome's supposed first pope, and all of the other apostles were married. If an apostle could be married, certainly a lowly priest could be married. Many scholars teach that even Paul was married at one time and they provide good argument for it though I do not yet see their evidences as iron clad.

The right of an apostle or any servant of Christ is the right to be married. However, if your ministry calls you to "go about" you should be prepared to "lead about" your wife as well. You have no business leaving her at home for long periods.

3. Notice, also, in verse 6 that the other apostles were all being supported, full time, in the ministry. This is the real point that Paul is driving home. This is going to be the thrust of his argument. Paul had a perfect right to be fully supported in his ministry.

So, we have seen Paul's Privilege Stated: As a rightful apostle he has the privilege of eating and drinking what he pleases, of marrying and traveling with whom he chooses, and of being supported full time in the ministry. He has the right to support. We now examine Paul's argument in defense of his position. Notice:

II. His Privilege Supported. Vs. 7-14

As Paul brings us into the courtroom, he is going to argue his case that the servant of Christ has a right to be supported in his ministry. Paul uses three, if not four, examples to argue this point:

A. Natural Law. Vs. 7.

1 Corinthians 9:7

7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

KJV

The soldier does not raise support in order to go to war. The farmer and the shepherd benefit directly from their ministry. There is a story of a Christian who once refused to pay his water bill. He argued that water is a gift from God that is free, and that he should not have to pay for it. He did not understand God or man. When you pay your water bill, you are feeding those who are quenching your thirst. You are ministering to those who minister to you

B. Moses Law. Vs. 8-10.

1 Corinthians 9:8-10

8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

KJV

Of course, God cared for the oxen. It is unthinkable and against nature itself to be cruel to animals and to starve them. However, God wants to teach us a lesson by that command. God wants us to see that it is worthy and righteous for the servants of the Lord to be supported in their ministries.

C. Spiritual Law also teaches this to us. Vs. 11.

1 Corinthians 9:11

11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

KJV

Which is higher, the heavenly or the earthly? Which is more important, the soul, or the body? The spiritual is eternal. The flesh is temporary. This is God's way. It is not man's way.

When we evaluate the occupations of men, we notice that those occupations that benefit mankind the most, are usually (not always) the most poorly paid, and

those occupations which benefit men the least are usually the most highly paid. Pastors and teachers are paid far less than Hollywood entertainers and athletes.

Even common sense teaches us that when we benefit from someone spiritually, it is a small thing to remunerate him or her materially.

D. Temple Law Taught This. Vs. 13.

1 Corinthians 9:13

13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

KJV

We may rightly call this the principle of identification. When you give to a servant of Christ, you are giving unto Christ himself. When our church sets about to support our missionaries we full know that we may be writing our checks to individuals, but we may as well be writing out our checks to Jesus Christ Himself. That is how we give to God.

School advocates run periodic campaigns to make Californians see the great damage which has been done by restricting dollars for education. Where that State was once first in the nation for educational dollars spent per child it now ranks 42nd in the nation. We know there are great spiritual problems associated with this educational system, but common sense also tells us it costs money to run schools.

Christian friend, the Lord's people give precious little to His work, overall. And the sad irony is that is the money which would have brought bring eternal dividends. What we spend on pizza is lost forever.

E. God Himself Teaches This. Vs. 14

1 Corinthians 9:14

14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

KJV

Nature teaches it, Moses taught it. Spiritual law teaches it, temple law teaches it, and God himself teaches it. Do not rob God of what is His by robbing your fellow servants in Christ of what is theirs.

Paul instructed in Galatians 6:6:

Galatians 6:6

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

He instructed in 1 Timothy 5:17.

1 Timothy 5:17

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

KJV

That word double honor means double stipend or double pay. I have heard many Christians complain to me about pastors and missionaries whom they thought were overpaid. I only wish as many had complained to me about how so many are underpaid. I wish that all churches had the spirit that my former churches have had regarding the support of the Lord's servants.

We must not silence Paul yet for he has not made his point. We have seen his privilege stated. He had a right to apostolic privileges. We saw his privilege supported by the principles we just listed.

Now, we see why Paul has noted all these things.

III. His Privilege Surrendered. Vs. 12-18

Paul voluntarily suspended his privilege to receive support from these people. He did so for several reasons. The first is seen in verse 12,

1 Corinthians 9:12

12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

KJV

A. Paul voluntarily surrendered his right for fear of hindering the gospel of Christ. Vs. 12-17

Travelers and troubadours abounded in Paul's day. Hucksters and charlatans who made their money off wild claims were common and, just as it is today, money was usually their common pursuit. So, when the apostle Paul came into town, and he would not even accept funds from those to whom he ministered so that no hint of doubt could be raised; no problem could result.

There is, of course, an important lesson here for all of us. The Lord's work should be carried on by the Lord's people and not by unbelievers. Jesus Christ never solicits the world to aid in His cause

In verses 15 -17 Paul says:

1 Corinthians 9:15-17

15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

In our words, Paul is saying, I am not asking you to pay me. I would rather die than have my service for Christ, the thing which I glory in, neutralized over an issue as inconsequential as money. This call to preach the gospel is not a profession; it is a compulsion. I have no choice in the matter. It is an irresistible compulsion.

Oh to God, that every pastor could say that. This is why old seasoned pastors will often suggest one great test to see if you belong in the ministry. Try to stay out of it. If the hand of God is on you, you *will* do it, with or without support. You simply must do it. You are driven.

Paul suspended his right to be supported to avoid having his ministry neutralized. Verse 18 sums it up so beautifully:

1 Corinthians 9:18

*18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.
KJV*

There may be a play on thoughts here. Paul's pay was in making the gospel available without charge.

Two questions rise.

1. The first, should pastors receive salaries from their congregations? The answer is, normally, yes. However, if receiving that salary could compromise the gospel, a pastor would be better not to accept it. In no circumstances, should a pastor, or a church, or an evangelistic crusade, ever seek financial support from unbelievers.

Mormons are quick to point out that they do not pay their leaders. In fact, it is a matter of LDS pride. Mormons call their local leaders bishops, but that is another issue. They clearly miss the point of this passage and misunderstand the principle that Paul is teaching. Paul says that God has ordained that those who preach the gospel should live by it. It is honorable and right. If, however, that policy is keeping folks from coming to Christ in a community it is a small thing to surrender for Jesus Christ.

In our experience, for example, I have discovered the opposite to be the case. I have served both as tentmaker and as a full time pastor. As a tentmaker who

worked, I enjoyed many benefits and privileges. I love to work. I love being among the world. I love the challenge of the workplace. God has made us to work. Work is honorable.

However, I also found that there was a silent hesitation on the part of strangers in the community for what we call being bi-vocational or tent making. What I viewed as a high calling some saw as suspect. It did not take away from the fly-by-night image. The unspoken question was, is this another fellow making a few bucks on the side after his regular job, by holding services?

In our culture, being paid is not the issue. How we raise the funds is definitely the issue. The world objects to charlatans. And as for those Mormons, keep in mind that they have not relieved their people from any financial pressures by not paying their pastors. They still demand those "tithes," and come knocking on your front door for it. Only instead of using it to support godly men, they use it for real estate, building acquisition, and financial ventures. Outside of the Catholic Church, the Mormons comprise the world's largest financial institution with many of its dollars being invested in spiritually questionable enterprises. I do not think anyone's tithe money should be used to buy stock in beverage companies, especially if that same tither thinks it is wrong to *drink* carbonated beverages, as Mormons do.

What is the real question, the application of the hour? It is simply this,

2. Are we willing to obey this principle? Are we willing to limit our own rights, just as Paul did by example? Are we willing *not* to be paid if that is what it takes to get the job done? Are we willing *not* to eat or drink if that is what it takes to get the job done? Are we willing *not* to lead about a sister, if God so calls us, in order to get the job done?

In fundamental circles, we take some rigid stands in some areas, and we make special demands of our teachers and leaders. Our purpose is not to deny folks of privileges that are rightfully theirs. Our purpose is to avoid confusing the issue of the gospel.

However, here is the challenge. While we willingly surrender many of our privileges in order to maintain a clear and unified testimony to the world we run the danger, at the same time of creating the image that we are legalists.

You are not going to die because you smoke a cigar that was given to you by a proud father. You are not going to ruin your walk with the Lord if you dance at your cousin's wedding. You have not ruined your testimony forever if you drink a glass of wine with a plate of pasta or have a beer on a hot day at the ballpark. Legalism fosters those attitudes.

Sometimes I think every Christian should be sentenced to smoke one cigar, drink one glass of wine, dance at one wedding, and to one show at the theater, just so he can stop bragging about the fact that he hasn't done those things.

Liberty, on the other hand, says, I am free to be a servant! Why would I smoke if I am sending up the wrong smoke signals? Why would I drink if my participation encourages some child to think he has not grown up until he has done so? Why would I dance if encourages even one person to compromise himself? What does my attendance at the theatre imply to children following in my steps who have little or no discernment? What about the movies I rent, the magazines I read, the clothes I wear, or the car I drive? What do these things say about me? Because, whatever these things say about me, they are saying the same thing about Jesus Christ.

The question is not, do we have our rights? The question is always, are we abusing our rights? Sometimes it is wrong to be right.

Can you explain this to your children? Can you explain the wonderful privilege we have in Christ to give something up, so that someone else can benefit?

And what about yourself? Are you exercising some privileges or rights that may be hindering your testimony? Are there some things you have perfect peace about doing, but things that may harm someone else?

If you are without Christ today, let me tell you something I know about you. I know that, if you have lived very long you have been offended by some Christian. Some Christian has ruined his testimony and been an obstacle to you. Maybe he cheated you in business or maybe he bullied you in the schoolyard, maybe they did something far worse.

The important thing to remember is God *will* deal with that disobedient Christian. But, if you insist on letting your bad experience with some preacher who stole some money, or some supposed spiritual leader who swore at you, or any other hypocrite, keep you from confronting the claims of Christ you will be the loser.

Do not let some ignorant Christian or some wannabe Christian who never really knew Christ sour you on real Christianity and on the real gospel. The whole issue of this chapter is the *gospel*. The whole issue of this *book* is the gospel. The first, the last, the only question for you is not whether some preacher has offended you, or some Christian has slighted you. The issue is, what have you done with Jesus Christ?

By All Means

Intro: In our study of 1 Corinthians, instead of feeding us fish, the Apostle Paul has been teaching us how to fish. Instead of supplying us with rules, he has been supplying us with principles. We have examined the principle of Continence (self control) and the principle of Continuation (new believers should not feel they need to make radical changes in their marriages or vocations just because they have come to Christ. Then, we learned the principle of Consideration. We have been learning how to exercise our freedoms to the advantage of the gospel.

In fact, this represents much of the tone of Chapter 9 where Paul began with those words, "Am I not an apostle, Am I not free? Even with the great freedoms and privileges that came along with apostleship, Paul chose not to receive money from the folks he was evangelizing. He willingly surrendered his privilege, as he said in verse 18, "That I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel"

As we examine verse 19 we see that Paul is about to reveal a secret to us. It is a powerful secret that we need, each one, to understand and employ in our service for Christ.

When the president of our nation hosts high personages from a neighboring country, he does not walk up to them and shake hands. First, there has to be the pomp and ceremony, the military band and the processional, so to speak. That helps us all see and understand that this is no ordinary visit, but a visit from a great leader of a great nation.

I wish I could prepare you for the message of verse 19 with the same kind of fanfare. I wish I could stage a parade, play the band, and wave the Christian flag in front of this verse to make us somehow see its power and importance! For, when we read it, the verse seems so incidental we do not notice that we are stumbling over diamonds.

*1 Corinthians 9:19
19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all,
that I might gain the more.
KJV*

Herein lies the most powerful tool you will ever find to help you in evangelism and outreach for Jesus Christ. I call this verse "The Door Which Never Closes!" The Lord Jesus told the Philadelphian church in Revelation 3:8

Revelation 3:8

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

KJV

We hear much talk today of gospel doors being open and of windows of opportunity, or doors which may soon close. We also complain much because our own freedoms for presenting the gospel have been stripped away from us. A believer has far more freedom to present Christ in the former Soviet Union, for example, than he does here. There are laws in our own towns that keep pastors from knocking on thousands of doors, and there are gates, fences, and barriers that hinder us from freely distributing the gospel.

However, there is one door that is always open. It is the door of *servanthood*. Literally, in the Greek, Paul says, ". . . I enslave myself. ." I enslave myself to all men! The most powerful tool you have in your evangelistic toolbox is not your quick wit, your education, or your deep Bible knowledge. It is your ability to enslave yourself to others in order to win them to Christ. So, we shall call this first point, upon which we have been laboring:

I. The Principle Defined

I like to call this the principle of Subordination. You see, it goes deeper than the principle of Consideration mentioned earlier. We are not only talking about what we deny ourselves in order to bring others to Christ, we are now talking about how we apply ourselves in this great contest.

When a man subordinates himself to another person, he makes himself subservient. In this context, a servant is one who does the will and meets the needs of another. May I underscore these words one more time? Servanthood is the most powerful tool in your evangelistic toolbox.

If you are fruitless in your witness for Christ, you are probably not a servant of others. You are probably a feeder and a taker not a nurturer and a giver. You are probably focused on meeting your needs and not the needs of others. If you are not bearing fruit, it is because you are not serving others. It is a simple fact, but we need to blow a trumpet ahead of it every time we announce it, so that we can remember its great importance. Now, I want you to see:

II. The Principle Illustrated. Vs. 19-23

Look at verses 19-23 as a group and try to grasp the big picture before we start squeezing the orange.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.
KJV

I see the concept. I am to enslave myself to all men. I see the *purpose* in verse 23. This I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with [you]. But what about the *method*? Exactly how do I enslave myself to others? That is the substance of verses 20-22. That is the *method*. Paul says,

- to the Jews I became as a Jew
- to those that are under the law, as under the law
- to those who are without the law, as without the law
- to those who are weak, as weak

What did Paul mean by this? Why did he select these four categories? Is there a single word that really sums up his intent? How do we put shoes on these concepts and apply them to our own lives?

Because we sometimes learn best by contrast and because this passage is so terribly abused by so many, I am going to mention what Paul is *not* teaching.

A. Let's talk about what Paul does not mean.

1. Paul is not teaching us to be deceptive. We should never be chameleons. There are many today, who spread their messages as subtly and deceitfully as that first reptile did. They are as masterful as 5th Avenue at covering the true facts.

One false cult that calls itself a church, for example, advertises a great deal on television about their love for their Heavenly Father. They like to charade as another Christian denomination. However, the god they worship is not the God we worship. Our heavenly Father is not sexually active, He does not have many wives, and He is not living on the planet Kolob giving spirit babies bodies. Jesus Christ and Lucifer are not His physical offspring.

Another false cult thrives on publishing books and holding evangelistic and prophetic campaigns under innocuous and misleading names, hiding the real identity of their cult until you are gathered in to their ranks. You never hear them say, as did their founder, that Jesus had a mean and sinful spirit. You will not learn

that all Christians who worship on Sunday are under the Mark of the Beast for doing so. They are chameleons. They do not let you in on all of their beliefs until you are well indoctrinated.

Christian, the same apostle who wrote these words also taught in 2 Corinthians 4:1

2 Corinthians 4:1

*1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;
KJV*

No, Paul is not suggesting that we should use deception, lying in spiritual ambush on folks, and disguising our identities until we have our hooks set in place. The Mormons, the Vatican, and the Adventists may use this ploy. They may use our language, sing our hymns, and share our causes, but the discerning Christian must never do the same with false teachers.

2. Secondly, Paul is not teaching us to compromise God's Word. When Paul says that he is all things to all men, he does not want us to think, for even one minute, that we have the right to make any concessions for God when we are presenting his gospel. We cannot change the terms of the offer.

When the ecumenical, charismatic Jack Hayford, founder of Promise Keepers says "Redeeming worship centers on the Lord's Table. Whether your tradition celebrates it as Communion, Eucharist, the Mass, or the Lord's Supper, we are all called to this centerpiece of Christian worship," Jack Hayford has compromised the Word of God. We do not fellowship around the same table. One is a table of Christ. One is a table of demons.

This same apostle who wrote these words in 1 Corinthians is the apostle who wrote these words in Galatians 1.

Galatians 1:6-10

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

KJV

Paul never said, "As long as a lot of good comes out of it, it's ok to compromise now and then."

Sir Robert Anderson wrote these words about 100 years ago, concerning a new religious trend in fundamental churches of his day:

"Many a one will exclaim: 'How could a movement which denounces the devil and all his works, and which promotes piety and honors Christ be Satanic?' But this ignores the solemn warning of our Divine Lord, 'They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.' A moment's thought might satisfy us that the false could never deceive the elect if it did not simulate all the characteristics of the true honor paid to Christ, a high tone of spirituality, and a beautiful code of morals."

What about you? Will you be caught up in the mood of compromise, toleration, and disobedience, or will you fight for the purity of the gospel?

The question remains, if being all things to all men does not imply deception and it does not imply compromise, *does Paul mean?*

B. Let's talk about what Paul does mean.

Paul has used four classifications to help us get the big picture. To the Jews I became as a Jew; to those that are under the law, as under the law; to those who are without the law, as without the law; and to those who are weak, as weak.

1. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew.

Inherent in all of us is the idea that if folks do not serve the Lord the way we serve the Lord, there must be something intrinsically wrong with the other guy. It is in our genes. However, it does not stop there. If he is not an American, he is a probable suspect, and if he is not a Republican, he surely is suspect. When Jewish Christians take up some practices which seem strange to us as Gentiles, we pull every verse of scripture out of the Bible we can find to argue that we are all of one blood in Christ and that there are to be no distinctions. What we *may* mean by that is that we expect Jewish converts to accept our Gentile traditions.

Years ago, when North American missionaries went to tribal lands, they were famous for building their compounds and living separately from the people. When we clothed those peoples, we clothed them with western clothing. We cared nothing for their heritage or culture, for, as far as we were concerned, it was all pagan. In effect we were saying, when you come to Christ, you must also become like an American. But what is the key idea in this passage? The key word is identification.

We say, you must become like us. The Bible says, we must become like them. Satan has gained a great foothold over us because of our disobedience in this area.

On the other hand, look at the shoe on the other foot. Are you so much of a Christian and is so much of your citizenship in heaven that you can no longer be

an American? Can you mourn with those who mourn? Have you so detached yourself from all that is evil in society that you live in a little self-fabricated monastery? Are you a part of your neighborhood, your precinct, and your community? It may have been that Paul, under other circumstances, would say, "...and unto the Americans, I have become an American." Remember, Paul the Jew is the one who still says to the Jew I became as a Jew. Patriotism and community service provide great open doors for servanthood. Servanthood opens doors for witness.

2. "...to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;" No, Paul was not suggesting a masquerade here. I read some material recently where young wives are encouraged to masquerade, to act out certain roles, in order to gain desired results from their husbands. That is not accommodation; that is deception.

What *is* Paul saying here? Again, the key word is identification. Take the time to observe how that person who is under the law thinks. Did Paul do this? He surely did. When you read Romans 2 through 4, or for that matter, all of Romans, you see the work of a skilled artisan, thinking like those who knew and loved the law, responding to the reasonable questions and doubts which anyone who loved the law would have. You see a man who is willing to take the time to see how a Jew thinks so that he can present a Messiah which makes sense to the Jews.

3. "To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law." Every people group has its own sets of values, mores and taboos. Some of those taboos are satanically inspired and must not be obeyed by the missionary. Some of those value systems are simply that. If you go to a South Seas tribe and start witnessing to the people before you have befriended the chief you may lose more than just your opportunity to witness. Everyone is under a law of some sort. The Jews try to function under Moses' Law. The Gentiles were under the laws written in their hearts and consciences. The Christian is subject to the law of Christ.

That same Christian, if he would win a Japanese friend to Christ, must not cross his legs and expose the sole of his foot in his presence. That same man, if he would win a Frenchman to Christ, must keep his hands above the table when dining. That same man, if he would win a Mexican to Christ, must not tell him how to build his home when he insists on wiring it after it has been built. If you hand a Chinese man an object with both your hands, you have given him a gift and he is obligated to accept it. You must not admire something he treasures in his home or he will be obligated to give it to you. If you would win him to Christ, you must care enough to understand him.

Did Paul approach those who are without the law differently than he approached those who had the law? Yes he did. He identified with the people to whom he ministered. Finally, Paul says,

4. "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all [men], that I might by all means save some."

Who were the weak? Some believe they were the slow of heart, or those who were slow to learn. They say they were those who needed a lot of repetition and a lot of patience in order to help them make the principles of God's Word work in their lives. That could very likely have been the case.

On the other hand, it could have been that the weak, in Paul's eyes, were those who were rule bound, tradition bound, superstition bound and ignorant of the truths which set men free from all sorts of ridiculous requirements. You see, along with every false religion comes false bondage, all the way from witchcraft in some forgotten jungle tribe where you must never take a certain path if a certain bird flies over head, to the witchcraft of new age with all its supposed celestial levels of advancement and bondage to dietary laws.

How do we reach the weak? We reach them the same way we reach the lawless. How do we reach the lawless? We reach them the same way we reach those with the law. How do we reach those with the law? We reach them the same way we reach the Jew.

We reach them by becoming all things to all men. We do it to gain them, verse 19. We do it to gain them, verse 20. We do it to gain them, verse 21. We do it to gain them, verse 22. We do it so that we may by all means, save some.

We win the lost by understanding and identifying with them. In the world of missions we speak of people groups. The Christian cannot evangelize the whole world so God has helped him break his task down into manageable proportions. Some of us are Chinese, some of us are English, and some of us are Spanish. Some of us are farmers; some of us are factory workers. Every grouping of people has its own traits and unique characteristics.

Those very things that separate us from other people groups are the very keys that God has given to us to unlock the doors of their hearts. First, become their servant, not their master. Secondly, become one of them. Do not stoop down to their level; raise yourself up to their level. Become one of them, but do so without compromise.

It is time to talk about,

III. The Principle Applied.

What about you? Christian friend? Are you influencing anyone for Jesus Christ? What are you doing in a tangible way? Let me tell you what I have learned about myself, so that you won't fall into the same trap.

- 1.** The first thing I have learned it that it is easier for me to see myself as a slave of Christ than it is to see myself as a slave of others.
- 2.** The second thing I have learned about myself is that I would rather be a slave to others indirectly than I would directly. It is easier to prepare a Sunday School lesson than it is to scrounge up a child to listen to it!
- 3.** The third thing I have learned about myself is that I would rather serve others remotely than intimately. It is easier to send a check to a missionary than it is to start a Bible class on my street.

We are farsighted by nature. Opportunities for servanthood abound. Walking a bus route on a Saturday morning, inviting a stranger over to dinner, listening to music you don't particularly enjoy so that someone else can be blessed, scootching down in the pew of life so that someone else can have a seat, picking out a young person or a child and dogging them like a bull dog on a cuff until you have finally made them your special friend - this, my friend is the stuff of servanthood..

The stuff of servanthood is not just offering your back to be flayed in preference to renouncing Christ. The stuff of servanthood is being willing to teach Sunday School classes, and to commit to VBS and to take on the task of driving kids to and from Church.

- 4.** And, I have learned that I would rather serve people who are like me than people who are not like me. It is not in my nature to expand beyond my personal comfort levels. After I have done it, I am blessed, but it goes against my instincts.
- 5.** But the worst thing I have learned about myself is how quickly I can lose the fire in my eyes and the love in my heart which compels me to reach out. I know how quickly I can retreat away from it all in my own little world of activities and responsibilities.

- Are you a feeder or a provider?
- Are you care giver or a care recipient?
- Are you focused on meeting your needs or the needs of others?

If you are not bearing fruit it is because you are not serving others. If you are not serving others, you are not serving Jesus Christ.

Or, are you the one, *who needs Christ*? It may be that someone else's lack of servanthood has kept you away from Christ and what a tragedy that would be. There is One who became a servant, the lowliest kind, and He did it just for you. He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

What you want to do today is to look beyond the failings of the preacher and the other Christians around you, perhaps that one who has offended you at work or school or at home. Get your eyes off the failed servants and listen to the words of the Father who says "Behold, *My servant!*" Behold your Savior, dying on the cross for you.

We say these things for your sake and for the gospel's sake, so that we can be partakers of the gospel with you!

"No Pain, No Gain!"

Intro: A careful student of 1 Corinthians 8 and 9 might be tempted to assign the overall theme to a discussion of Christian Liberty. These chapters do provide a healthy discussion of that very subject. When we talked about meat being offered unto idols, we were talking about restricting our freedom. The Christian who has knowledge, as Paul calls it, must not use that knowledge to his advantage causing harm to another. Or, in chapter 9, where Paul talks about how he chose not to take wages from the folks to whom he was ministering, Paul was exercising his liberty, his freedom *not* to use his privileges.

But, I think, if one goes over these verses with care he will begin to see that Christian liberty is not the *overall* theme which is under discussion. The overall theme is evangelism. Paul has been talking about Christian liberty as it relates to evangelism. Evangelism is the *first priority*. It is the underlying reason *why* we restrict our liberties.

If we have any Trekkies among us they know what the "prime directive" is for science fiction fans. The prime directive is non-interference and non-intervention. It is exactly the opposite of God's prime directive. His prime directive is interference and intervention. The first priority of every believer is the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To that end, everything must be focused. That is what we were really seeing in chapter eight. Evangelism takes priority over knowledge. A man may have knowledge, but the man who loves God will not hinder the gospel.

In chapter 9, evangelism takes priority over our rights. We willingly surrender whatever privileges it takes in order not to "hinder the gospel of Christ." according to verse 12.

The verses that we have just studied have instructed us to be all things to all men. Why is that important? It is important because of the prime directive, our first priority, the spreading of the gospel. We are Jews to the Jews so that we might gain the Jews. We are as those who are under the law so that we might gain those who are under the law. To those who are without law we are also as those without law, so that we might gain them. To the weak, we are as weak, so that we might gain them. So that, we might by all means *save some*.

As we review verses 23-27, please notice that the subject has not changed.

1 Corinthians 9:23-27

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

*24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?
So run, that ye may obtain.*

*25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now
they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

*27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means,
when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

KJV

We ask ourselves four questions: What is the Race? What are the Requirements for Winning? What is the Reward? What is the Risk?

I. What is the Race? Vs. 24

While we cannot speak with great and absolute authority, it appears to us that, if Paul were here today, he would be a great lover of athletics. There is no lack of references to sports in Paul's writings. I do not think Paul would have encouraged the willful destruction of others in sports, and we have no evidence that he devoted any time or energy to them. I personally doubt that Paul would have used the Lord's Day for athletic competition, but there are no warnings in scripture against sports, only against the abuses that are so commonly associated with them.

But look at the chapter in front of you and notice that Paul is practicing what he preaches. What was Paul telling us in verses 19-23? What was his soapbox? Paul was admonishing us to be all things to all men. Paul was admonishing us to identify with the people we are seeking to win for Christ. In verse 23, Paul says this I do for the gospel's sake.

This means that *when* he is writing to the Corinthians, he is also going to become a Corinthian. He is going to identify with them. Athletics was a big interest for Corinthians. The Greeks had two great athletic events. One was called the Olympics or the Olympian games, and the other was called the Isthmian games. The Corinthians were hosts to these great games right there on the Corinthian Isthmus. They included foot races, horse races, chariot races, boxing, and even competition in music and poetry.

When Paul began with those words, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all," he had the attention of every Corinthian man and boy and a whole lot of the women, as well. Paul was practicing what he preached. He was being all things to all men, even to these Corinthians.

However, we still have not answered the question, what is the *race*? Is the race, the race against sin? It is, but only in a general sense. That is not the race to which Paul is referring. You see, if you are struggling against a habit, or a sin, or a temptation in your life, this would be the *last* passage of scripture I would use in

my counsel with you. I would not encourage you to struggle against sin. Oh no, everything about this analogy would be wrong. We do not build up a resistance to sin by struggling against it. In fact the very opposite is true. When we struggle against sin in our lives, we will find that the law has even greater power to work havoc in our members.

If you are “struggling” against sin, do not choose 1 Corinthians 9 as your first line of defense. Rather, go quickly to the book of Romans and absorb a big dose Romans six right into your spiritual bloodstream. You must learn that power over sin comes from reckoning and yielding, not by struggling. You will experience resurrection power when you yield your members to the Holy Spirit.

That is not the race. What then is the race? The race is the gospel race. The finish line is the lost soul won to Christ. That is the prime directive. That is the high priority. Paul has not changed drums. He is still beating on the same drum. Paul will not even begin changing this emphasis until we get to the last verse of chapter 10. Our goal is that, (using Paul's words), "many might be saved." The greatest goal, the warmest prayer on the lips of believers young and old should be the same. Lord, please use me to win men to you! Let *me* be a part of your program! Please, Lord, let *me* run for you!

Paul told Timothy, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry...” Like the little boy with the oversized glove and baseball bat, everyone of us should be nurturing the same dream the dream of being in the big leagues. "Oh Lord, will you please use me to win others for you?" We not only do not dream of being in the majors, we look down on those around us who *are* winning the lost to Christ. There is just something strange about them!

What, then, is the race? It is the race to bear fruit in the gospel of Christ. We now ask,

II. What Are the Requirements? Vs. 24

1 Corinthians 9:24

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?

So run, that ye may obtain.

KJV

A. First, there must be a sense of purpose.

We must run to obtain. Every race has a winner. Every race has losers. The goal is to run so that we may obtain. We are not competing with others in this race, but rather, against ourselves and against our own flesh.

The first thing that we learn is that the difference between a winner and a loser may be a very small matter indeed. The difference between winner and loser may be measured in seconds or in fractions of a second. Success is measured in small advantages, or should we say, failure is measured in small indiscretions?

When I was a young man I worked in maintenance for a Christian conference grounds. One night we got in the mood to have a good time and we got carried away. By the time we got in it was almost daylight. We had not done anything wrong. We just stayed out late. The next day, it was my lot to work with the boss. Because I was dating his daughter, it was important for me to impress him. I would not impress him on that day, for our task was to stretch a long role of chicken wire. Every time this 50-year-old man pulled on the wire from his end, he pulled me along with the wire. I just couldn't hold it tight. He finally uttered some words of disgust and went his way. Like Sampson, I found that my strength was gone when I needed it most in order to impress a most important person! I did not fail because of a great sin, but because of an indiscretion.

Christians who bemoan powerlessness and fruitlessness in their lives do not always have to search their hearts for great sins. The difference between winners and losers are usually measured in small gains, not great strides. The author of Hebrews admonishes us in 12:1

Hebrews 12:1

*1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
KJV*

And I love the words which follow:

Hebrews 12:2

*2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
KJV*

I suggest, as you run the race that you do not look over your shoulder at the runner coming up behind you. We are not as those who measure ourselves by ourselves. Rather, keep your focus on Jesus Christ.

B. Secondly, there must be a sense of urgency. Vs. 25

1 Corinthians 9:25

*25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.
KJV*

“Every man that striveth...,” is the Greek αγωνιζομαι {ag-o-nid'-zom-ahee}, and is the word from which we get agonize. It is a word which was especially related to

the games. It speaks of fighting, contending and struggling with great difficulty and danger. It speaks of strenuous zeal.

It speaks of just about everything that is foreign to you and to me when it comes to evangelism. We think we are agonizing when we give ten dollars a month to missions. We call agonizing picking up someone else's child on Sunday mornings. We call agonizing stumbling for words and trying to get up the nerve to witness to someone.

When the Lord Jesus ran His race, He strove for the mastery. He was the One who said, "I must needs to through Samaria," "I must be about my Father's business." I must, I must, I must.

There are only two ingredients that make great men great. One is that they know their place in the march of time. The other is that all great men are gripped with a sense of urgency. Are we striving for the gospel? For the athlete who would win this race:

C. There must also be consistency Vs. 25

1 Corinthians 9:25

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

KJV

The athlete must be temperate. He may not be given to excesses in any area, not even the excesses that are otherwise permissible. The word in the Greek means the same as it does in English. It simply speaks to self-control and continence. It speaks of self-government. The Isthmian athletes abstained from unwholesome food, wine, and sexual indulgence. They started nine months before the games, and spent the final month at Corinth under the strictest supervision.

I have a note I carry around in my Bible that reads something like this:

"The young man of leadership caliber will work while others waste time, study while others sleep, and pray while others play. There will be no place for loose or slovenly habits in word or thought; in deed or dress. He will observe a soldierly discipline in diet and deportment so that he might wage a good warfare. He will, without reluctance, undertake the unpleasant task which others avoid, or the hidden duty which others evade because it evokes no applause and wins no appreciation."

- Oswald Sanders

Christian friend, we are getting too far removed from this kind of a life. We need new examples, new models, who will inspire us to run the race! During a single hour of preaching, over 1,680 people will have starved to death. By this time tomorrow 40,000 will have died, most without Christ. While we nap on a Sunday afternoon and debate about going to the Evening Service, thousands will pass

into eternity, not having heard of Christ. We are not only not in the race; we cannot even find the *racetrack*. We do not even know we are supposed to be running.

If we would win this race, there must be consistency, priority, and self-control. Please notice also:

D. There must be intelligence, direction, and application Vs. 26

1 Corinthians 9:26

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

KJV

The man who runs the race finds the shortest distance between himself and the finish line. The man who boxes places every blow. He does not waste a single spurt of energy beating the air or shadowboxing. Everything must count. Every move must be directed. Every breath of air must be metered. The word we use today is *focus*.

Every step, every investment of energy, must be directed toward the same goal, the goal of bringing the lost to Christ.

Do you have the picture? Do you really understand what the athlete does? The athlete deliberately *narrows* his interest. He knows that the Jack-of all trades is the master of none. He knows that too many good things can rob him of the only best and important thing. He is focused. The Christian athlete is focused on bringing the lost to Christ.

The New Testament church is focused on bringing the lost to Christ. It is to be deliberate, it is to be disciplined, it is to be definitive, it is to be efficient, it is to be effective, and it is to be directed. It is to be driven in its undaunted intent.

What are the requirements to run this race?

- There must be a sense of purpose. We must run to obtain.
- There must be a sense of urgency.
- There must be consistency with our priority and self control.
- There must be intelligence, direction, and application.

Thirdly, we would do well to ask ourselves:

III. What is the Reward? Vs. 25

Paul tells us that we run, but one receives the prize. What prize? He further explains in verse 25.

1 Corinthians 9:25

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

KJV

They [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. What is this incorruptible crown?

The prize is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. When those Olympic champions of our day win their race, their victory may be short-lived, but for that moment, when the flag of their nation is raised high and the anthem of their people is played, all eyes are focused on them. They enjoy the great reward of the high calling of their beloved countrymen. The tears of joy that stream down their cheeks are tears of pride for their people.

Christian friend, you and I strive for a higher calling, a greater flag, a greater anthem, and a greater hope. We say with Paul:

Philippians 3:13-14

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

KJV

And the incorruptible crown? What crown is it? I believe it is the soul winner's crown. This crown will not be forgotten with the fading of the pine wreath. It is a crown to endure for all eternity.

If you would love Christ, you would love the things Christ loves. Do you remember the words of C.T. Studd?

"Christ's call is to feed the hungry, not to the full; to save the lost, not the stiff-necked; not to call scoffers, but sinners to repentance; not to build and furnish comfortable churches at home in which to rock Christian professors to sleep by means of clever essays, stereotyped prayers and artistic musical performances, but to raise living churches of souls among the destitute, to capture men from the devil's clutches and snatch them from the very jaws of hell, to enlist and train them for Jesus."

If you want Christ's prize and you want Christ's crown, you must run the race for the prize. Finally, we ask,

IV. What is the Risk? Vs. 27

Paul delineates it in verse 27.

1 Corinthians 9:27

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

KJV

Paul says literally, "I enslave my body, lest when, after I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." The word castaway is ἀδοκιμο", {ad-ok'-ee-mos}, a reprobate, not standing the test, not approved, unfit, unproved.

We are not talking about the man who takes *second place* in the race. We are talking about the man who is disqualified from the race because he failed to pay the price.

"Must I go, and empty handed , 'Thus my dear Redeemer meet?
Not one day of service give Him, Lay no trophy at His feet?"

Not at death I shrink nor falter, For my Saviour saves me now;
But to meet Him empty-handed, Tho't of that clouds my brow.

O the years in sinning wasted, Could I but recall them now;
I would give them to my Saviour, To His will I'd gladly bow.

O ye saints, arouse, be earnest, Up and work while yet 'tis day;
Ere the night of death o'er-take thee, Strive for souls while still you may..

Must I go, and empty handed? Must I meet my Saviour so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him: Must I empty handed go?"

- Charles Luther, 1877

- It's not too late.
- It's not too late to adopt a course of self denial and sacrifice.
- It's not too late to give yourself over in service for Christ.
- It's not too late to deliberately narrow your focus and begin directing all your life actions toward winning others.
- It's not too late to go into training.
- It's not too late to go for the prize, the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.

Good Lessons from Bad Examples – Israel as a Whole

Intro: We have exciting challenges ahead of us in our study of God's Word that preclude our ability to review. I do want you, however, to draw back for a moment in order to keep our focus on the "big picture." We must keep the *context* in mind.

First keep the *issue* in mind. The issue is evangelism. It is fundamental effectiveness in ministry. We surrender our rights; we run the race according to the rules so that we may win others to Christ. We will conclude this emphasis on evangelism in verse 33 of chapter 10, but we are not there yet. We must first continue to concern ourselves with running the race, with the pitfalls which could make us *castaways* (or disapproved in service for Christ). The issue is evangelism.

Secondly, when considering the context, keep the *people* in mind, the people to whom Paul is ministering, the Corinthians. They were nursing the *wrong conception* of themselves. The Corinthians had a problem with what we will call *pseudo maturity*. They fancied themselves to be spiritually mature. This was probably due to their great success in Corinth. There was no church, for example, which could match their *use of spiritual gifts*. There is nothing like a little success under our belts to make us think that we have it all together.

The problem is that their *false sense of spiritual maturity* had resulted in some behavioral problems. Their love for philosophy and wisdom made them vulnerable to party spirit. Equally as bad, their false maturity made them *tolerant* of disobedience, tolerant of immorality and idolatry. Satan has not changed his tactics. To this very day, those churches that tolerate disobedience to God's Word see themselves as the *mature ones* while they view the ones who faithfully hold the line as the *narrow minded legalists*.

Now you have the picture, overconfident believers being warned about the possibility of disqualifying themselves in the race of service for Christ. So, even though these truths would never apply to us, you and I who really *are* the spiritually mature ones, we will allow Paul to speak to us as *wise men*, so that we too can *judge what he says*.

Paul notes in verse 1:

1 Corinthians 10:1

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

KJV

In spite of everything we have heard to the contrary, God does not place a premium on ignorance. Paul is constantly saying, I want you to know! Don't be ignorant! Know ye not?

We find this of great interest in a Christian society today that places much premium on biblical ignorance. The goal is to go to church and have a good worship experience, making sure that neither our scriptures nor our Bible versions exceed a 300-word vocabulary. Ignorance is not bliss; it is the instrument of our downfall. Do we want to *know* what Paul is about to teach?

Paul is about to teach us. He is about to teach us some good lessons. He is about to teach us some good lessons from bad examples. He wants us to consider the children of Israel. Apparently a great many of these Corinthians were converts from Judaism. The first thing we learn about them is:

I. They All Had the Same Advantages. Vs. 10:1- 4

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

KJV

These Israelites all had the same opportunity to run the race. They had been given *great advantages*.

1. They *all* were under the cloud and passed through the sea. That is *direction*. The story, of course is found in Exodus. God led the children of Israel who had been in bondage 400 years with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, (Exodus 13:21) and he led them on dry ground directly through the Red Sea. There were *no exceptions*. They all witnessed and experienced the marvelous leading and direction of God.

You must remember that Paul did not suggest by this that they were all saved. They simply all shared the same advantage. There are many unsaved folks all around us enjoying the advantages that God provides for His own. They are enjoying the benefits of someone else's relationship with Christ. You may be one of them this very hour, a child growing up in a Christian home and church, enjoying the blessings of Christianity but rejecting the Christ of Christianity!

2. They were "*all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*"

In the first phrase, they were said to pass *through* the sea. The sea was for them, the symbol of death. They did not know, as they passed through on dry

land, that God was laying down the typology for a coming day when Jesus Christ Himself would take us through the valley of the shadow of death. Those Israelites could not see the beauty of the symbolism, but these *Corinthians* could! They saw that just as Israel was *identified* with Moses going through that death, so we are baptized or identified with Christ in his death.

But what is Paul's fundamental point? Nations do not walk through seas on dry ground every day. The hand of God, the authenticity of God, *and God's unique hand on Moses' leadership* was unequivocally established. Israel not only saw God's *direction* as He led them with cloud and fire, they saw God's *protection* from Egypt as he left their enemies behind in the sea, and they saw God's *provision*, His provision of a leader.

Again, *all of these Israelites* had the same advantage. They all had eyes. They all had ears. They were all led and they were all spared, including the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the parent and the child.

However, God did not stop there, as Paul asserts:

1 Corinthians 10:3-4

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

KJV

God's *providence* continued. They all had access to the manna. They all had access to the water. But why does Paul add the words..."*spiritual food*" and "*spiritual drink*?" And, why does he add that the Rock that followed them was Christ? I believe Paul was effectively saying to these Corinthians, "We know even *more* than those Israelites did. We know that manna represented Christ! We know that the living water that Christ gives us shall be in us a well of water springing up to life. We are even more accountable than these Israelites because we have the hindsight to enjoy all the symbolism and meaning!

The Jews were great ones for embellishing their history with their myths. One commonly taught myth was that the rock that Moses struck followed the children of Israel all through their journeys. While there is not a shred of biblical evidence to support this notion, we do know there was a Rock that did follow them. Jesus Christ was right there, caring for them.

Therefore, they all had the same advantages. Notice secondly, and notice sadly:

II. They Did Not All Have the Same Success! Vs. 5

1 Corinthians 10:5

*5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.
KJV*

We may well add not just “many” but most of them missed the boat. Most were *overthrown* or strewn across the wilderness. They were castaways. Remember this rule: Great advantage always means great liability.

Unto whom much is given, so shall much be required (Luke 12:48). If you think hell will be hot for the great warriors, perverts and mass killers of this world, think again. It may be even hotter for you or your friends who have had the advantage of following the cloud and the fire, passing through the sea, eating the manna, and drinking from the Rock. Those who have heard the Word of God repeatedly and over and over and still rejected Christ have the most to fear. Great advantage *always* means great liability.

As Paul begins to list the pitfalls, he does this for our advantage so that we will not fall into the same trap:

*1 Corinthians 10:6
6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.
KJV*

The first warning is a warning against *lust*. To lust is to crave. We are not to crave after evil things.

We tend to excuse ourselves for our lusting today. We tend to blame it on our environment. How can we help it? Lusting is never a matter of what is on the outside, it is because of what is on the inside. James says that we must not blame God when we are tempted. He says in 1:14:

*James 1:14-15
14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.
15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.
KJV*

What is the problem with lust? In a word, it is this: lust does not seem *that* bad. After all, it is *not* the act; it is only the thought of the act. James says effectively, “You’re missing the boat! You need to know that lust and temptation come together in union and spawn sin.”

Even when we look at the example of Israel our first temptation is to ask was their *desire* all that bad? When did Israel so lust? To what event is Paul referring? And, how is lust different from innocent desire? When does innocent desire become evil cravings?

When we look at these verses we see a list of pitfalls, and the list could be read in one of two ways:

It may be that Paul was listing five things to avoid: 1.) lust, 2.) idolatry, 3.) fornication, 4.) testing Christ, and 5.) murmuring. Or,

It may be that Paul was warning against only one thing, lust. He then gave us *four examples of lusting*: idolatry, fornication, testing Christ, and murmuring. In other words, Paul may be saying, "I want to give you several examples of how *lust* plays itself out into a life of failure." Modern commentators tend more in this direction.

I tend to lean toward the idea that it was a simple list. Consider what Paul has been saying. Paul's last words were... "*they all ate the same spiritual food...they all drank the same spiritual drink.*" What was the very first sin that Israel committed when she came out of Egypt? She wanted water. She was angry with God for not quenching her thirst. What was the next complaint? She complained about her food. You can read about this in Exodus 15 and 16. And, this was only the beginning of a number of such occasions.

While the Lord is providing spiritual food and water for Israel all that concerns her are the flesh pots, the leeks and garlic and onions of Egypt. She had placed body ahead of soul.

Search the scriptures. Search the books of Moses in particular, and you will discover an interesting fact about the word *lust* in the Old Testament. Lust usually referred to desiring *food and water!* In fact, the only time Israel is actually *said* to have lusted is recorded in Numbers 11. Observe the words beginning with verse 4:

Numbers 11:4-7

4 And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

6 But our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.

7 And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

KJV

The Bible says that the children of Israel *loathed* this white bread. And, by the way, God gave them their request. He brought them countless quail, and He gave them so much flesh that they *loathed it* as well. We also read that He judged them in verse 33,

Numbers 11:33

33 And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.
KJV

Was God angry because Israel wanted a change in diet? I do not believe so. God dealt with them because they had no mind and heart for the true manna, the true water. They longed for the fleshpots of Egypt in preference to the manna of Christ. That is the lust we are talking about in 1 Corinthians 10. For this reason they were strewn along the wilderness.

Now, we ask, "Ok, the children of Israel lusted after water and food in spite of the fact that they ate of the manna which was Christ and drank of the rock which was Christ, but how does that apply to us today?"

Consider the possibilities:

Step 1, Consider the natural implications of food and water.

Water speaks of *refreshment*. The problem with water is that, when we are thirsty, our body gets very insistent about it. When we are thirsty, we *want* to be satisfied now.

Food speaks of *satisfaction* as well. It is in the nature of our flesh, however, to desire variety. For example, I can only eat pizza six days per week. If I eat it seven days I begin *craving* or lusting after other food. That is the nature of my flesh.

Step 2, Consider the spiritual implications of food and water.

Paul is clear that manna is Christ. In fact, it represents the doctrines of Christ, the teachings of Christ, the Word of God. Christ not only *feeds* us, He quenches our *thirst*. He refreshes us.

Step 3, Consider the conflict between the natural and the spiritual.

Manna is *not* appealing to the flesh. It may be the perfect food, but the flesh craves variety. Water must be there when we want it. Our flesh may go without food for a while but it demands water right now.

Here is the truth of it all. The Word of God is a real bore. It is a bore to the *flesh*. It is not a bore to the spirit but it is a bore to the *flesh*. Biblical teaching, on a regular consistent basis, is very hard on the flesh. It takes discipline to study the Word of God and to sit under regular thorough preaching. Your flesh does not like one-hour sermons though it has no particular objection to two-hour movies. Your flesh does not crave daily Bible reading. Your flesh does not like deep

teaching from the Word of God. We crave variety. We crave junk food. We crave custard.

And, consider that water. The Lord will never let us die of thirst in the wilderness. He knows our *souls* need refreshing too, just like our *minds* need teaching.

Are you getting the picture? We have as great a mixed multitude in our assemblies today as Israel had with her in the wilderness. We have *substituted* the fleshpots of Egypt for the manna of Christ. Like fat little babies who want their bottles, if our spirits aren't watered when we want them to be we tramp off somewhere else, "where the Spirit is moving," instead of simply waiting upon God. There is so much *lust* associated with modern teaching and worship that one can hardly find the manna!

Only one thing can satisfy your soul. That is the *manna* of this book. Christian, if you get *watered* too often you never will sink your roots down. God is not obligated to leave you feeling blessed after every church service. He is not obligated to water you every time you say "*Fill, my cup, Lord, I lift it up Lord!*"

God will satisfy you with manna and make it a delight to your heart and health. He will quench the longings of your heart. He will fill your cup *in His time*. Trust Him. However, if you start down the Charismatic trail where experience is exalted over the Word of God and worship is crafted to satisfy you instead of God, you may just find yourself strewn along the way in the wilderness. That is what *lust* is about. These Jews knew what Paul was addressing.

We ask another question, "*Wait a minute! Is that all there is to lust? Is that the only kind of lust Paul was addressing?*" The answer is yes! You see, any time we lust for anything at any time we are saying that Christ is not sufficient for us! He is not sufficient for our food and our thirst, our mind and our emotions. Whether our lust is for physical gratification or for power or for wealth, behind all of those desires is the same implication: The manna is not sufficient. God's watering schedule is not sufficient for me. There are longings in my heart that Christ cannot satisfy. Christ is not big enough for the job.

Unsaved friend, could you be one of the mixed multitude to whom Paul refers? Could you be one of those who have enjoyed the advantages of being on the sidelines, but you have never really tasted of Christ?

Do not be deceived by your flesh! Because once you have really tasted Jesus Christ; once you have drunk of the water that the Lord Jesus causes to spring up in your heart; once you have tasted of spiritual realities, you will begin to see why the *flesh* hates the things of God. Jesus said it best:

John 14:13-14

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

KJV

He is the same one who said:

John 6:35

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

KJV

Good Lessons from Bad Examples - Idolatry

Intro: In the one room schoolhouse of faith, instructor Paul has elected to present us with a history lesson. The exact content of the lesson is found in chapter ten. As you return to this passage, let me offer a word of wisdom concerning the study of history itself.

History is for our benefit. You will find that the further away men roam from God in their philosophies the more they despise history and debunk the honest attempts of men to record it. For example:

“History is bunk.” --Henry Ford

“What is history but a fable agreed upon?” --Napoleon Bonaparte

“History is nothing but a pack of tricks that we play upon the dead.” --Voltaire

The more the philosophies of men are in line with the truths of God; the more they respect and defend the accounts of history, the more they *reap its value*. In contrast to Ford, and Bonaparte, and Voltaire, for example, Abraham Lincoln said:

“Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history”. --Abraham Lincoln

Call it what you wish, a truism, a hackneyed cliché, or whatever, the fact remains: Those who do not know history are doomed to relive it. Moreover, those who do not know history are doomed to be victimized by those who rewrite it to their own advantage. The humanists which control our nation’s institutions have had a twofold agenda:

- First, they have made every effort to reduce the impact of history by making it unavailable to Americans. Our universities and high schools offer only a fraction of the history programs that were once available. Even Christian schools give it low priority.

- Secondly, The humanists have taken every advantage, in politics, in social issues and in religious issues, to rewrite *the way things were* in order to further their own anti Christian agendas. The sad part is we have begun to believe them.

The apostle Paul wants you and me to learn a lesson from history. He wants us to benefit from the failures of our fathers. Our last study was on lust - verse 6:

1 Corinthians 10:6

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

KJV

We reminded ourselves that lust, in this context, is another expression of the constant battle that goes on in each one of us, the battle between flesh and spirit. Lust is the expression of the desires of the flesh and it must always be seen in contrast to the desire of the Holy Spirit. You are *conscripted* into this battle without choice. Paul said:

Galatians 5:16-17

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

KJV

We must not think that because pastors preach so firmly and emphatically from the pulpit concerning the issues we examine that they are any freer from the temptations to lust, idolatry, fornication, murmuring, or testing Christ than any of you. The pastors' only advantage over some is that he has lived longer and has tasted more of the dregs of the wine, more of the consequences in his own life and in the life of his sheep. And a godly pastor has tasted enough of the pleasures of a walk with Christ, a life of purity and obedience, to know that only Christ satisfies. Therefore, the battle is worthwhile for a godly pastor, even if he should be a bit misunderstood at times.

Now, consider verse 7:

1 Corinthians 10:7

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

KJV

We'll confine ourselves to three basic thoughts in order to limit our discussion of idolatry to one study.

First, we will see **Idolatry As It Related to Some of the Corinthians.**

Then, we will see **Idolatry As It Relates to Some of the Israelites.**

Finally, we will see **Idolatry As It Relates to Some of Us.**

I. Idolatry As It Related to Some of the Corinthian Believers.

By now, we understand why we have every reason to believe that some of these Christians had unholy relationships with the idol temples. At the very least, they attended the idol feasts. It was probably almost a matter of survival for them because the whole business economy and social fabric revolved around these temples. And, like joining the Masons, those who participated, found great advantage and reward.

And yes, Freemasonry is a form of idolatry. While Shriners are to be commended for their wonderful efforts on behalf of children, they stand chastised before God for their idolatrous paganism, paganism so ugly that you must be led into it by stages. If you are an innocent Freemason in the Blue Lodge, ask God to deliver you and your friends from its cultic teachings. By the way, we'll show you a hundred ways to benefit both the body and soul of a child.

Continuing, these Corinthians were living precariously close to the flames of idolatry. When we live close to aberrations, one of two things usually happens. We are either offended or repulsed by what we see or we begin to make a sort of peace with evil. The Church in Jerusalem, you will remember, had learned peaceful coexistence with the Judaism. That is also, of course, why we never hear of them again. Either we stand tall and clear for Christ or we negotiate privileged sanctuaries, no man's lands and selective strike zones. All of these things are simply precursors of surrender.

Either we cast the Canaanites out of the Promised Land or we will eventually marry our daughters off to them. Corinth needed this message! Neither be ye idolaters! Robert Gromacki makes an interesting point regarding these believers. He says:

"...The Corinthian predicament was practically parallel. Some Christians thought they could attend a feast dedicated to idols in the pagan temple and eat the food that had been sacrificed to false gods without being defiled. Paul said that this attitude and this action were wrong and forbidden (cf. 8:10; 10:20-21). 'Neither be ye' literally means 'stop becoming' (ginesthe). This means that some of these Corinthians were constantly going to pagan festivals in the temple." -- Underline JPS

Stop becoming idolaters! Because *some are doing it* does not mean that you may. The truth is that usually when a young person says to Mom "*Everybody is doing it*" the real facts are that only *some* are doing it. You can stand as strong and pure in the midst of your challenges as Paul expected these Corinthians to stand in the midst of compromise right in their own church.

We come, now, to the meat of the verse.

II. Idolatry As It Relates to Some of the Israelites Vs. 7

Remember what Paul said...

1 Corinthians 10:7

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

KJV

You *may* know the story to which Paul refers, but do you know the *full implications* of the story? Do you really have a grasp on what idolatry is? The story unfolds in Exodus 32. Exodus is the second book in your Bible. It is very important for you to read Exodus 32 in your own Bible, if possible.

Moses is on the mount receiving the commandments of God and Israel has become impatient. *Long waits always unveil true heart conditions.* The long, dry times in our lives are given to us by God to test us, to prove us. The unfaithful servant says, "*My Lord delayeth his coming...*" The faithful servant goes day by day on the word of his master. That is sufficient for him. Now, read verses 1-6.

Exodus 32:1-6

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord.

6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

KJV

When we ask ourselves the question, what is idolatry, we are tempted to respond with something like, "*Idolatry is anything which comes between you and God*" That answer is sufficient enough when a generalization is necessary. But, look more closely.

Idolatry is the worship of, or worship through an idol. The word idol means *copy*. It is probably more accurate to say that the word idol refers to *an empty or valueless copy*.

An idol is a copy or a representation. Whether an idol is used to represent a false god or the true God, it is still *idolatry* in God's eyes. The Greek Orthodox Church, for example, will not use *images* in its worship because it is idolatry. Instead, it uses *icons*. The Orthodox assume because the object of worship is a *picture* instead of a *statue* that somehow, it is not idolatry. However, icons are just as idolatrous as statues when used as aids in worship because they accomplish the *same purpose*. They are copies or representations of the objects of worship. Even a cross hanging on your neck *can* be idolatrous. If it is a material worship aid, it is idolatrous.

When we first look at this passage in Exodus, we see idolatry plain and simple. Aaron made golden calves for these Israelites to worship. Why did they make molten calves? Actually, it is not just because they were representations of an Egyptian god. If you do your homework you will see that much more is represented here. Egyptian *bull worship*, not calf worship, was never the worship of images. It was always the worship of living bulls. There were some sacred bulls at Memphis and elsewhere, but to be true to history we must look further than Egypt.

When Joshua told the Israelites that they were to *put away the gods which their fathers served on the other side of the flood*, in Joshua 24 he was probably not speaking of the Red Sea. He was most likely speaking of the Euphrates. Images of calves in worship predated Egypt and were distinctively Babylonian. The Babylonian religious system that finds its birth with Nimrod and Babel adulates the calves. Nor is this the end of this kind of worship in Israel. You may read more of it in 1 Kings 12. In this teacher's opinion, Babylon is the mother of all idolatry. Israel will carry on her love affair with *Babylonian* religion until the very time when she is taken into captivity, ironically, the *Babylonian* captivity. There is irony and justice in God's use of Babylon to enslave a people who were already enslaved to her idolatrous religion.

For further consideration of these things begin with Keil and Delitzsch and go on from there to unravel the whole mystery. You will find a fascinating journey ahead of you. The Babylonian religion has been the ultimate expression of Anti-christ since before Israel was a nation and will ultimately be destroyed by God in the tribulation period. Roman Catholicism, sadly, has been deeply infiltrated by Babylonianism. This is where her basilicas rise from, where her statues come from, her worship of the mother and child, and many of her non-biblical doctrines. Would you like documentation? Read the classic long-standing work *The Two Babylons*, by Hislop, a book perpetually vilified by Rome.

But, what is our point?

1. The first thing we learn about idolatry is that it is the use of copies or empty representations in worship, either of the true God or of false gods. Another way to say it is like this: *Idolatry prefers to use the material to represent the spiritual.*

Now, look at a secret you may not have uncovered in your study of idolatry. Look at this passage again so that I can show you the second thing that is true of idolatry.

2. Idolatry is, by its nature, inclusive. It is rarely, if ever *exclusive*. Idolatry will always meet you half way. Scan these verses again.

Notice the words in the last part of verse 4 which are spoken when the molten calf is presented: *"..and they said, These [be] thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."* Now, look what Aaron does in verse 5:

Exodus 32:5

5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord.

KJV

A feast unto whom? A feast unto Jehovah! This is inclusivism. Idolatry is rarely exclusive. Idolatry loves company. The more gods the merrier! In fact, the book of Nehemiah (9:18) quotes this passage indicating that Israel literally said, *"This is thy God which brought thee up out of Egypt..."* The demons do not mind sharing some of their glory with Jehovah as long as Jehovah will share some of His with them! Does that sound fair to you?

These people thought they could use a pagan idol to worship the true God and they thought they could worship other gods at the same time in one big happy worship celebration.

That is idolatry. That is the essence of idolatry in its purest expression. Idolatry says, I will help you sell your medicine if you will allow me to sell my poison along with it. Any time one mixes the truth with the lie in worship one is an idolater.

I mentioned the Babylonian system earlier and suggested that it is at the heart of all idolatry. Babylonianism is also the mother of inclusivism. Wherever this religious system goes in its eastern expressions or its western expressions, it always says the same thing: "There is good in all religion. None of us have the full picture."

One may ask, "A moment ago you said that Catholicism was infiltrated by Babylonian religion and Catholicism doesn't teach that, does it?" The secret of Catholicism's growth is locked in that very philosophy. As a good Catholic, you may dance with the Navajo, imploring the spirits to bring you rain. Navaho Catholics do this. As a good Catholic in the Philippines, you may crucify yourself on a cross to atone for your own sins. As a good Catholic at Mardi Gras you can strip naked in the streets and get your fill of pleasure before lent. Catholicism has always absorbed the religious preferences and traditions of its converts. It has a long shady history of adopting the pagan ways of the converts it has absorbed.

Oh, we know we sound unloving. We know the risk we take. How can I teach you to flee from idolatry if I am not willing to point it out? In a more contemporary vein, when the Roman Catholic Church takes mere bread and wine and performs a ceremony and declares it to be the actual body and blood of Christ, that is blasphemy. That is idolatry. When the Roman Catholic Church pronounces a curse upon me because I teach you that man is saved by grace alone through

faith in Christ's finished work, instead of needing her bread and wine to save me, it is the temple of idols.

Oh Christian, flee from the seductive charms of idolatry.

We have seen **Idolatry as It Related to Some of the Corinthians**
We saw **Idolatry as It Relates to Some of the Israelites**

Now, consider,

III. Idolatry As It Relates to Some of Us

Have we forgotten the lesson of history? Have you forgotten the price that was paid for your soul by Christ? Have you forgotten what others paid to get this gospel to you? Do you have any idea what is at stake? The biggest event of the last third of the twentieth century is not the breaking down of the Berlin Wall, it is the breaking down of the purity of the gospel.

It started with the charismatic movement, the first great ecumenical impetus which joined Protestants and Catholics. The Charismatics brought their tongues and the Catholics brought their beads and both of their religious experiences were enhanced. Then, along came Billy Graham, determined to break down the walls of separation. Even in 1952, 50 plus years ago, Graham's news releases when like this...

"The Pittsburgh *Sun-Telegraph* reported this of Graham on September 6, 1952: 'Many of the people who reach a decision on Christ at our meeting have joined the Catholic Church and we have received commendation from Catholic publications for the revived interest in their Church following our campaigns. This happened both in Boston and Washington. After all, one of our prime purposes is to help the churches in a community. If after we move on, the local churches do not feel the effects of these meetings in increased membership and attendance, then our crusade would have to be considered a failure.'"

Wherever Graham has gone, the Catholics in that community have geared up, training their laity so that they can *facilitate the full reconciliation to the Church of those men and women* who will be moved by Graham's preaching.

Still God's people protest, "Yes, but pastor, when you have won as many souls to Christ as Billy has, you may criticize him."

Paul was responsible for bringing more souls to Christ than Billy ever will be and he never once joined forces with idol temples to do it. He said flee fornication. The issue is not Billy Graham and any other preacher, the issue Billy and this book!

Either the Catholic Church is idolatrous or it is not.

Christian, wake up! Wake up! Wash your skirts from these unholy alliances and a hundred others just like them! Peter said:

2 Peter 1:1-3

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

KJV

False prophets, denying the Lord that bought them, who through feigned words making merchandise of you. James said:

James 4:4

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

KJV

James was not speaking about physical adultery. He was using symbolism. He was reminding us what worldliness really is at heart. That is what *idolatry* really is at its heart! It is adultery!

Consider what inevitably happens when a pastor gets direct and points out the lie so that people can see it. As surely as I speak on Catholicism, I know that I run the risk of hurting some dear Catholic who is not ready for all of this. Moreover, I want you to know, my Catholic friend, that if I did not love you I would not say these things. You have no idea how true that statement is.

I know the risks I am running. I know the price I have paid, and will pay, for telling folks the truth. I know what the opponents of truth will say because they have said it to me personally. I know the accusations that will be made. I know the folks I have “run off” from my services because of my truthful stand.

I just want you to know one thing. I am not standing up in some pulpit with “one hand tied behind my back.” I am standing here with two hands pointing to this book, the Word of God. If I have said something in error, if I cannot document what I have said I will accept responsibility and make it right.

But *you* are responsible to consider the truth. And, if you are in bondage to Catholicism you are in bondage to a system which controls you with fear. Jesus Christ wants to save you and give you *true rest* for your soul. You can know the secret your church has kept hidden for centuries. You can know right now, that you have eternal life!

Good Lessons from Bad Examples - Fornication

Intro: So far, in his history lesson, Paul has used the history of Israel in the wilderness to warn us about the dangers of lust and idolatry. We now encounter the third admonition found in verse 8:

1 Corinthians 10:8

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

KJV

Neither let us commit fornication. Fornication is, of course, illicit sexual sin. I find a touch of irony that the very name of the State of California hints at its greatest problem, fornication. The native Oregonians used to have billboards along Interstate 5 that read: "Don't Californicate Oregon." While fornication is rampant everywhere, one would be hard pressed to defend California from the charges that she, single handedly, has done more to destroy the moral fiber of America than any other state in the union.

Fornication is an issue we all confront daily and it must not be swept under the proverbial sheets. It is a living hellish reality in our society. Dr. Ironside wrote, concerning all of America:

"Our modern novels are reeking with it, our newspaper stands are filled with vile pornographic literature that came from hell, and men are enriching themselves by poisoning the minds of our young people. The pictures they see, the songs that come over the radio, many are filled with suggestions of impurity and uncleanness. How sternly the Christian Church needs to set its face against everything of this kind. We should have no compromise with impurity. People see the pictures, read the books, listen to the songs, and they all have their effect upon the flesh, and before you know it men are drifting off into unholy, unclean things because of the constant incitation to them in the music and literature of the day. Let us give everything like that a wide berth. 'Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.' Gal 5:13."

It should be of interest to note that Ironside wrote those words, not in 1980, 1970, 1960, or 1950, but in 1938. Ironside was only viewing the *tip of the iceberg* that you and I encounter on a daily basis.

With your permission, I would like to approach this in a manner similar to the one we used in our last study.

First, we will see **Fornication as It Related to Some of the Corinthians**

Then, we will see **Fornication as It Relates to Some of the Israelites**

Finally, we'll see **Fornication as It Relates to God.**

I. Fornication As It Related to Some of the Corinthians

If you have been following our study of Corinthians you already know that we have had a problem with fornication in Corinth. Paul first mentioned it in chapter 5 where he brought up a particularly vile instance of fornication in the church. In that chapter, he also warned us that we are not to associate with *any* person who calls himself a *brother* and is a fornicator. It only takes a small amount of leaven to leaven the whole lump.

In chapter 6:13 and 18 Paul explained that the body is not for fornication and that those who commit these sins sin against their own bodies. Sadly, Paul will have to write these words in 2 Corinthians 12:21 as he spoke of what he was afraid he would find at Corinth:

2 Corinthians 12:21

21 And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

KJV

Fornication *humbles* everyone. It humbles your pastor and shames him before the Lord. It humbles your family. It humbles your partner in fornication. It humbles you and me. There is something in fornication that robs men and women of their dignity. The Lord once told Israel that as long as she enjoyed being naked so much He was going to let her be naked she would march with bare bottoms into captivity. And so, she was humbled.

Now, *some* of these Corinthians had a problem with fornication. And we know it did not just relate to a few. Look at this verse again.

1 Corinthians 10:8

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

KJV

Robertson teaches this would best be rendered "*...and let us cease practicing fornication...*"

That brings to mind two things. First, as already noted, you do not have to do it just because everyone else is. Secondly, if you will learn by Israel's experience and stop doing it. You can spare yourself from additional discipline from God.

Now, let's talk about:

II. Fornication As It Relates to Some of the Israelites.

The record of this event can be found in Numbers 25, and yes, it would be good to notice it briefly. While we read only 13 verses, you will quickly notice how serious the whole matter is and how serious God is about this stuff. I begin with numbers 25:1

Numbers 25:1-13

1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

3 And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

4 And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.

5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.

6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

10 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:

13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

KJV

Here are some points to observe.

1. Balaam, the corrupt prophet had tried in vain to curse Israel. In his eyes she deserved no special favors from God. Balaam did not understand God's unconditional election of Israel. He did not understand that while her *practice* was wanting, her *position* in God was secure. His efforts to curse Israel ended only in her blessing and his mockery.

2. So, the Bible says, he concocted another plan to defeat Israel. He counseled the Moabites to destroy Israel, not through warfare, but with fornication and idolatry. His plan was successful. What the Moabites offered was better than anything on MTV, and her downfall into sexual sin came quickly.

3. Then we notice the severe judgment of God where 23,000 in a day and 24,000 altogether are destroyed by God. Why did God do that? He made these Israelites an example so that He would not have to destroy you and me.

4. We also see the great commendation and blessing of one man, Phineas who, while others stood by, destroyed the two who continued their blatant disobedience.

In a word, we have learned at least three elementary principles. 1. When Satan cannot destroy God's people from outward attack, he knows the area of their vulnerability. He knows our weakness. 2. God hates fornication and it angers Him. 3. God honors those who zealously withstand it.

Draw back and look at the big picture. What is it about fornication which is so evil?

III. Fornication As It Relates to God.

Fornication is a big-ticket item with men. It is the E Ride in the cosmos theme park. It fuels the press, it fuels the soaps, it fuels the sitcoms, it fuels the tabloids, it fuels the music industry, it fuels the arts, it fuels the stage, it fuels advertising, it fuels the fashion and fragrance industry, it fuels the movie industry, the casino shows, and, of course, it fuels pornography. It is the opiate of modern life. You simply cannot make it through a day without being confronted with it. It simply cannot happen.

Fornication is an even bigger ticket item with God. Why is God such a big bully about this matter? Why does He reserve some of His strongest statements and judgments for fornicators? What can be that bad about having a little fun, especially among consenting adults in a safe context? Why do preachers make it sound like it is the end of the world because someone is “messing around” a little bit?

I heard a person once say that the reason why God hates fornication is that it destroys the symbolism of Christ and His church as bridegroom and bride. While that is certainly true, there is far more involved than the mere destruction of a beautiful symbol. It destroys the reality which the symbol represents.

A. God hates fornication because of what it does to our lives. Fornication is the most destructive force on the face of the earth. It is destructive because of what it does to us. It destroys our homes and our marriages and our futures. It blemishes the intimacy of marriages it does not destroy. It hurts children and reproduces itself in their futures. It infects with disease. AIDS alone kills more people now than some of our biggest cancers. Even as you read this, all around this world, people are weeping and hurting because of the blight of this disease.

1. One reason why it can do such great damage to us is that it works like salt works on our cars. We do not usually feel the immediate consequences. The law of sowing and reaping usually applies itself by seasons, not by minutes, so, because sentence against an evil work is not executed immediately, we think we can get away with it. Paul has already explained that fornication is the one sin we especially commit against our own flesh.

2. Another reason why it does such great damage is that, again like salt, fornication corrupts from the inside out. Secret desires and sins are often nurtured until they gain their terrible momentum.

Galatians 6:7

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

KJV

But, we must look even deeper if we want the big picture concerning fornication.

B. God hates fornication because it is Satan's number one tool for seducing men away from the truth of the Gospel. Now, let me make a pronouncement which you will want to think about and test. Fornication lies at the *root* of most lapses into apostasy. I did not say that all apostates are fornicators, but I did say that *fornication lies at the root* of most *lapses* into apostasy.

It was always this way in the Old Testament.

1. Do you remember our last study on idolatry? "*The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*" Now, they didn't rise up to play horse shoes after the church picnic. They rose up to have an all out orgy. Idolatry and sexual sin have gone hand in hand since ancient times.

It is that way in our times.

2. Peter reminds us that last day scoffers will walk after their own lusts. Jude's articulate diatribe against apostates reminds us that they *walk after their own lusts*. Jude 16. And do you remember the words of Peter warning us about those, who to this very day, are going after the way of Balaam in his masterful treatment of apostasy? Peter said in 2 Peter 2:18:

2 Peter 2:18

18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

KJV

The key word is *seduction*. Christianity has the Holy Spirit in order to draw men to Christ. False teaching has its spirit of sorts, the spirit of permissiveness. They allure through the lusts of the flesh. One of those lusts is fornication. It is not just

a curious thought, that you can find fornication at the birth of almost every American false cult. David Koresh was a filthy fornicator. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were fornicators. Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy was a fornicator. Pastor Russell was a fornicator. I did not say that every cultist is a fornicator. Many are wonderful, morally pure people. I said that *at the birthing of almost every American false cult* you will find fornication.

Stories abound regarding young people who have *converted* to idolatrous religions because of their physical involvement with another. They think that, because the labels have changed, that somehow the issues have changed. But they have not. When you date an unsaved person, you not only risk having the devil for your father-in-law, you risk having an idolatrous system share in the mothering of your children.

God hates fornication because it destroys our lives.

God hates fornication because it is Satan's number one tool for seducing men away from the truth of the Gospel.

But, God hates fornication, because of still another reason.

C. God hates fornication, because it, above all other sins, is associated with the filthiness and uncleanness of the soul. Fornication and filthiness go hand in hand. Have you ever heard a young person say something like this? *"...when it was all over, I felt so used, I felt so dirty."* The Bible says:

Galatians 5:19

*19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
KJV*

And again:

Ephesians 5:3-6

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

KJV

Uncleanness is what fornication is all about. It is the ultimate expression of the filthiness of the flesh. It is what cheapens us and robs us of the dignity that God gives us. It soils us.

Purity, on the other hand, is such a beautiful word. Paul admonished Timothy, "...keep thyself pure." He told him not to let others disparage his youth, but that he was to be an example "... in purity". He told the older women that their task was to teach the younger women "...as sisters, with all purity." Paul admonished all of us:

Ephesians 5:3-5

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

KJV

Purity is such a beautiful word, but purity never comes naturally. Not even a baby is born pure. The first thing we do is take the little guy over to the sink and wash him, and that washing of that newborn is a fresh reminder that we each need to be purified.

We need to be purified, first, by the blood of Christ. Paul wrote that Christ gave Himself for us:

Ephesians 5:26-27

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

KJV

Now that we have *purified our souls*, God wants us to live lives of purity. It only makes sense. We close study with just a final word, an admonition, for us to consider our own lives in this matter of uncleanness and fornication. It is not *legalism* as Satan would like to have you think, because you draw some sanctifying lines around your home and your leaders draw them around the church. When we grapple with the issues of uncleanness we want to draw those lines far enough back so that there is no margin for error or misunderstanding.

Where does art end and lust begin? Where does good clean dancing end and uncleanness begin? Where does good humor end and filthy jesting begin? Where does good music end and sensual entertainment begin? Instead of grappling with the finer points, why not draw out your sword with Phineas, draw a big circle in the sand, and say, here I stand! Here we stand! Here our family stands! Here our church stands!

And, while you are carving that line with Phineas, remember that wherever you place it in the sand your children will push at it, so draw it up close and tight. Keep your loved ones safe from uncleanness that leads to fornication. Sanctify

your heart and then, sanctify your home, *else* your children will be *unclean*. Stand, tall, true, and pure clean vessels for Christ.

In case you need to clean a few things up; In case you need to come to Christ for cleansing, agreeing with Him about your defilement, please remember these last words which Paul gave to Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:21-22

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

KJV

Are you without Christ? You can be as pure as the new fallen snow. You can have your sins washed away. You can become squeaky clean in God's eyes, with the iron-clad promise from God's Word that He will "remember your sins no more!"

Good Lessons from Bad Examples – Testing God

Intro: There was an Indian, who, whenever he reached a dangerous bog in the swamp, would put up a stake to mark the spot. By this means, he not only guarded his future movements, but also furnished a warning to others who might pass that way. It requires a little more effort and a little more time for a man to drive some stakes in the ground, but in so doing, he has not only protected himself, but he has protected the next generation as well.

That has been Paul's only purpose in presenting our history lesson to us as we have examined 1 Corinthians 10. His purpose has been to drive in the stakes, the warning signs. He does not want to spoil our walk through the woods. He wants to spare us from the quicksand. These things, he says, were written *for our admonition*.

We have taken a short course in lust, in idolatry, and in fornication. It is our purpose to add the two final history lessons into our set. Verse 9 contains the first, and verse 10 contains the second:

1 Corinthians 10:9-10

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

KJV

We shall make every effort to drive in the last *two stakes* as we talk about tempting Christ and about murmuring. Take a look at verse 9 and consider:

I. Tempting Christ

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

A. The first thing we see is the One whom we are tempting.

We believe Paul is referring to Numbers 21:4-9. It was just another incidence of "*second verse, same as the first.*" If you can imagine this, the Bible says in Numbers 14:22 that by the time the children of Israel had gotten to Kadesh-Barnea they had already *tested God ten times!*

Here she is, up to her old tricks, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" Where is our bread? Where is our water? Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Where are the leeks, garlic, and fleshpots? Where is the variety and spice?

1.) Any time we test God, we are really testing *all three persons of the Trinity*. For instance, when you read the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 and you remember how they *lied* about what they had allegedly given to God. Peter said to Ananias:

Acts 5:3-4

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

KJV

In verse 9 of Acts 5 Peter says:

Acts 5:9

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

KJV

Peter was saying that when Ananias and Sapphira lied they were lying to God and they were testing the Holy Spirit. Any time we test God we are testing all three persons of the Trinity.

2.) It is also important to see that these Israelites were tempting *the Christ (literally)*. If you have a modern translation it may be in error in this regard. While it may seem ever so innocent to substitute the word LORD for Christ it destroys Paul's intent and the very logic of his argument that began back in verse one.

You see, *Christ* was the rock which followed them. *Christ* was the bread. *Christ* was the angel that went before the Israelites in the wilderness. *He* was the angel of God's presence that bore and carried and saved them. *He* is the Jehovah they tempted at Massah and Meribah. *Jesus Christ* was the One with whom they had to do. When you and I test God, we are testing our Lord Jesus Christ.

a.) We stress it first, for theological reasons. You need to understand that it is the *second person* of the Trinity who, according to God's plan, drives the redemptive processes in *both* the Old and New Testaments. Jesus Christ *is* Jehovah God. You will always be vulnerable to the cults unless you understand and defend this truth that Jesus Christ *is* Jehovah God.

b.) We also stress this for reasons of the heart. When we test Christ we are testing the One who has carried us, and born us along the way. We test the One who feeds and waters us, the One who never sleeps night and day on our behalf. He is the One who nurtures us. Do all three members of the Trinity

love you? Of course they do! Are all three persons involved with you? Of course! But, Jesus Christ is the One whose relationship you are to nurture in a primary way.

I think every child nurses the idea of running away from home for one childish reason or another. Once, when I was young the thought occurred to me. I also remember what it was that stopped me. It was not the fear of being on my own. I was too ignorant to know that would mean. Rather, it was the fear of hurting my father who loved me. Sin is always against love.

When we consider tempting Christ, you need to remember how the Israelites tempted Christ and we need to remember the terrible consequences. But, oh, how much sweeter it would be if we would just remember that it is Christ, the One we love whom we are testing! That is why you cannot do it! You *cannot* do it, not just because of the consequences, but because *you are hurting the One who loves you more than everyone else.*

Neither let us tempt *Christ!* He is the lover of our souls!

And young person, consider this. When you rebel against your parents, when you think they are wrong and you *in your infinite wisdom* are right, would you remember this? Even if you *are* right, you are dealing with your parents, the ones who bore you and have carried you and have fed you. They are the ones who would die in a minute for you, the ones who love you. Can you hurt *them*? Can you hurt *the Christ* whom you love?

B. The second thing we see is how they were testing Christ. What were these Israelites actually doing?

1.) First, they were testing the *integrity* of Christ. In a word, they were challenging the goodness of Christ, the resolve of Christ, and the ability of Christ to make good on His promises. They summed it all up when they asked, "*Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?*"

They were accusing God of breach of contract. They were accusing Christ (and Moses) of leading them into the wilderness to let them die. There was no *logic* to their complaint. Not one soul would die of hunger on that journey. Not one soul would die of thirst during those forty years. There was no logic. Christ had provided for them miraculously time and again, but they still repeated their charge.

How did they test God? It's worth repeating, they were challenging the goodness of Christ, the resolve of Christ, and the ability of Christ to make good on His promises.

Christ has not led *you and me* into the wilderness to die. You may *be* tempted to *think* He has when the utility company comes to turn your lights off, but He *has-*

n't. He wants you to know that *all things* work together for the good to them that love God, to those who are called according to His purposes.

Why, then, does He let them shut the lights off? God does it to *prove us*. At one time He bestows His blessings upon us and then, just when we begin relying on them He takes them away. He removes the *false props* that we want to lean on so that we will come *again* to the realization that *Christ is walking with us in this wilderness* and we need *nothing else*. Jesus Christ is sufficient. He will see you through this ordeal. He is all you need.

How do we tempt Christ? We tempt Christ by challenging the goodness of Christ, the resolve of Christ, and the ability of Christ to make good on His promises. We tempt Christ when we challenge His *integrity*. We tempt Christ when we challenge His *character*. There is more to testing Christ than this.

2.) They were testing the *patience* of Christ.

This is what we call the sin of presumption. When we *presume* on someone, we take unwarranted advantage of him or her. If I borrow your truck for a few hours and return it the next day, I have *presumed* on your goodness. I have *presumed* on your good will. When you do not pay someone money which you owe you are *presuming* on him or her. You are taking unwarranted license.

These Israelites were testing God by presuming on Him. When they had complained in the past, God graciously gave them food and water. Instead of learning from God's kindness, they took it for granted. They assumed they could complain at any time, make their nasty remarks, and assume that God would come through again.

We take great risk when we presume upon God, when we count on Him for help, comfort, and deliverance, and repeatedly get ourselves into the same trouble. As Christians, we know that there is no end to God's grace and His forgiveness, but we also need to know that God will deal with us as any loving parent deals with a child who is a *repeat offender*.

We test God when we push too close to the line. We test God when, as Roy Laurin says, we trespass "*so close to the borderland of questionable things*," because we put our souls in unnecessary jeopardy and peril.

The Psalmist prayed:

Psalms 19:12-13

12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

KJV

Presumptuous sinning is the sinning we need to fear most. The besetting sin we struggle with for a while and then stop challenging. It is that exception in our lives where we have not come clean, where we have somehow made peace with our problem and have become so accustomed to it that we accept it as normal, or at least inevitable. We bank on God's goodness. We must not presume on the grace of Christ.

As an aside, any time a man stands in a pulpit and claims that he can move God at his pleasure, or any time a man tells you that because of the promises of God you can say "Jump!" and God will ask "How high?" it is good to remember that he too, is coming fearfully close to testing God.

C. We must also ask *why*? Why were these Israelites testing Christ?

They had a problem with motives. The Psalmist said:

Psalms 37:25

25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

KJV

While I am not *that old* yet, let me tell you what I too have seen. I have noticed that when men begin to question God, and they begin to whine and snivel and "doubt their faith," it is time to observe the real conflict. The real conflict with God is a conflict over *expectations*. It is a conflict of motives. It is a conflict of desires. By now, it should have occurred to Israel that, if God could provide manna, He could have provided mashed potatoes and gravy. He could have cooked Israel's desires to order and expended no effort on His part doing it. However, a man's life does *not* consist in the abundance of the things he possesses or in the variety of the things which he eats. Jesus said:

Luke 12:22-23

22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

KJV

Life is more than meat and body is more than raiment. He went on to say:

Luke 12:28-31

28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

KJV

Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God. That is the lesson. The lesson is one of *expectations*. Two kinds of people walk *out* of the wilderness. Most walk out with memories of dryness and despair. Others walk out with memories of Christ and His provision. What is your memory of the last test He put you through? Are you still laboring on the struggle or rejoicing in God's gracious provision?

What do you want most from Christ? Comfort? Relief from hunger? Warmth? Health? The furthering of your causes? Or, would you rather have the joy of His presence? Would you rather see His kingdom advanced?

In a few words, we tempt Christ when our desire to meet our needs is greater than our desire to obey the Spirit. We are right back to the same issue, flesh or spirit. Whose lusts do we want to satisfy?

Do not blame those Israelites! We are guilty of these very things, placing the flesh ahead of the spirit and then hanging our heads in despair when God does not meet *our* expectations. When God gives you a job and takes it, when God gives you a child and then takes him, when God gives you a mate and then takes him, will you *let Him prove you*? Will I let Him prove me?

Let us conclude the matter.

- We have seen that these Israelites were testing *Christ* Himself, the One who carried them through the wilderness.
- We have seen *how* they were testing Christ. They were challenging the goodness of Christ, the resolve of Christ, and the ability of Christ to make good on His promises. They were repeating their sins, presuming on God's forgiveness.
- We have seen *why* they were testing Christ. They had the wrong expectations. They wanted their flesh satisfied. God wanted to satisfy their spirits.

There is still another way to presume upon God. We test God when we refuse the kindnesses and goodness that He offers to us. Particularly, we test Him when we fly in the face of all the facts and refuse the gift of His salvation. When we say, "*No, Lord*, I appreciate what you've done, but I can really handle matters on my own" we presume on the goodness of God. We put God to the test. The author of Hebrews asked:

Hebrews 2:1-4

1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

KJV

Did you follow his reasoning? When a man doubts the truths of this book and says, "Well that sounds reasonable, but I still would like to investigate other avenues of salvation" the author of Hebrews says "*How will you ever escape*"?

When men take this message lightly and neglect it, they are testing the grace and goodness of God. If I told you I had a check for you for one million dollars and that all you need to do would be to come and pick it up would you come? Would you say, "I'll try to get over there when time allows!" Would you say, "I really hope to fit it in before I die?" Would you say, "My job is too demanding right now?"

What if you *did* say those things to me? What would you be doing with my generosity? You would be testing it. You would be presuming on my patience and goodness. The Bible warns us that God will not tender His free offer forever, and that today is the day of salvation.

Do you know what the Lord finally said about these Israelites? Hebrews says:

Hebrews 3:7-11

7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

11 So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

KJV

Today! Today, if you will hear His voice! Harden not your hearts. Enter into the Sabbath rest of salvation while there is still time.

Good Lessons from Bad Examples - Murmuring

This concludes a series of five studies entitled Good Lessons From Bad Examples. The setting for our study has been 1 Corinthians 10. Notice this passage once again, particularly verse 10:

1 Corinthians 10:1-10

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

KJV

Here are five great warnings about five great errors into which Israel fell. They are good lessons from bad examples. In fact, verse 6 tells us that, these were lessons purposely recorded for our benefit.

1. The first pitfall was lust. Vs. 6.

"...we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." We reminded you that the Old Testament use of the word rarely has to do with sexual sin. As we studied Israel's lust we saw that it was primarily for food and water, or more noticeably, the *flesh*-pots of Egypt. We learned we are in a constant battle between the *natural*, the *flesh*, and the *spiritual*, the *spirit*. We lust anytime we prefer the natural and material to the *spiritual*. We lust anytime we prefer our ways to God's ways.

2. Secondly, we were warned against *idolatry*.

We learned that idolatry is the use of copies or empty representations in the worship of the true God or false gods. We explained how Aaron took those calves and proclaimed a feast unto the Lord, and we showed you how the tendency of

man is to mix the *lie* with the *truth*. Remember: 1. Any false gospel is by nature *idolatrous*. 2. Any time Christians involve themselves with false gospels and false teachers in the spread of the gospel they are committing idolatry. The *world* commits idolatry when it espouses a false gospel. A *Christian* also commits idolatry when he mixes the true gospel with false gospels. There has never been a generation of Christians more idolatrous than our generation is. If the Emergent Church movement takes off as expected, it will dwarf even our present levels of idolatry.

3. We then studied *fornication*.

We saw that God hates fornication because of what it does to *us*, to our lives. We saw He hates it because it is Satan's number one tool in seducing men and women away from the truth of the gospel. Fornication, combined with idolatry is a powerful magnet for the flesh. So the Bible says that "*...the people sat down to eat and drink.*" God also hates fornication for another reason. He hates it because, above all other sins, it is associated with *filthiness and uncleanness of the soul*. Young people, keep yourselves pure and clean. Do not wallow in the world's pigpen. Remain a pure and clean vessel for Christ and He will use you! We must determine to keep our thoughts and deeds out of the gutter.

4. In our previous study we talked about *testing God*.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. When we sin willfully, we test the integrity and patience of Christ. We *presume* on His forgiveness and grace. We place ourselves in great danger of severe discipline. If you are *willfully persisting* in disobedient behavior, you are testing Christ. Do not *presume* on Christ.

5. Now we are warned about murmuring. Vs. 10

The final admonition in our list and our final visit to the Old Testament scriptures is found in verse 10:

1 Corinthians 10:10

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

KJV

Concerning murmuring, Strong's says:

1111 γογγυζο {gong-good'-zo} 1) to murmur, mutter, grumble, say anything against in a low tone. 1a) of the cooing of doves. 1b) of those who confer secretly together. 1c) of those who discontentedly complain

The word is what we call an onomatopoetic word. Gong-good-zo sounds like its meaning.

Murmuring is the scourge of missions, Bible schools, Christian organizations in general, and especially of churches. Every pastor has dealt with murmuring. It is in our natures to complain and grumble. We begin our courtship with murmuring as children sitting at the high chair staring at the peas, and we end it in the old folks home, complaining about the same plate of peas. And we are all experts at it everywhere in between.

Murmuring is such a scourge in our churches that pastors are often at risk when trying to preach on the subject, for as surely as they do, some dear soul in the congregation will murmur all the more that the sermon was directed at him. We need to turn back briefly to our scripture passage in Numbers and ask ourselves some questions about this matter of murmuring. First:

I. To what incident was Paul referring? What was the story?

There are actually *two* incidents that follow in order. The stories unfold in chapter 16 where we find *two* groups of Israelites murmuring. First, we see Korah and friends murmuring. We see how Moses and God dealt with them, (The earth opens up and swallows Korah, his gang, and their families in one big gulp!) Then we see how Moses established a memorial. He took those *false* priestly censers (Vs 38-40), had them pounded out as plates that decorated the altar, as a fresh reminder to all. They were a memorial of this occasion.

On the next day, the children of Israel murmur because of God's severity in dealing with Korah. Again, there is severe judgment as the Destroyer sends a death dealing plague through the company killing 14,700 Israelites *as in a moment*. Aaron intercedes for the people by passing a censer with fire, *this time from off the altar*, between the people and the plague. The Destroyer stays his hand. Once again, God sums up the lesson by having the leaders bring rods before Moses, and only *one rod*, Aaron's rod, buds. It is kept, once again, as a memorial of this occasion. In fact, this matter of murmuring is such serious business with God that this rod that budded is kept in the Ark of the Covenant, along with the manna so that Israel will be reminded repeatedly how God hates murmuring.

We have a two-day ordeal with two instances of murmuring, two instances of judgment, and two memorials established. It is as though God is giving us a double lesson to remind us of the seriousness of this situation.

This leads us to the second question:

II. What was Korah's murmuring about and why did God deal so severely with it?

It is *important* that we ask this question. We must underscore the nature of murmuring. It is far more than just complaining about the dish of peas on the high chairs of life.

What was the murmuring about? Korah's complaint is found in verse 3:

Numbers 16:3

3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?

KJV

The defendants: Moses, the commander in chief, and Aaron, God's ordained priest. The charge: "You take too much upon you." You have become little dictators. You have become power hungry. The logic: Notice this clever, serpentine reasoning: *seeing all the congregation [are] holy, every one of them, and the LORD [is] among them:*"

Who are *you* Moses, and Aaron, to think you are any better than we are? We are just as important to God as you are. More importantly, they are effectively saying, "*We are just as qualified to exercise the priesthood as you are.*"

So, the first charge is the charge of *presumption*. It is a challenge to the authority of Moses and Aaron. It was a challenge based upon *democratic principles*. We are all holy and we are all equal. We have a right to decide *how we will approach God*.

You must understand that God, not Moses or Aaron, established that priesthood. Beginning with Cain, men have always tried to put *variations* on God's prescriptions for worship. Cain thought he could alter God's prescribed way and hosts of others, to this very hour have followed in his path.

If Moses and Aaron had capitulated and God had capitulated and opened up the priesthood to Korah and his gang, what do you suppose would have happened? In no time at all that priesthood would have become unrecognizable. Its true message and the covenant it administered would have been obscured. The message of Christ found within its rites and liturgy would have been obscured forever. All of this would have been lost in the name of democracy.

In the day in which we live we have many false priesthoods, the Catholic system, the Episcopal system, and the Mormon system of priesthoods are just a few. They all fit under the description of what the book of Revelation calls "Nicolaitans". Revelation 2:6 and 2:15 warn about the *deeds* and the *doctrines* of the Nicolaitans. We cannot yet be certain who they were, but this much we know: The word comes from "*nikao*" which means *to conquer* - and *laos* which means *people*. And it probably refers to the early notion in the Christian church that it

too *needed a professional priesthood*. That professional, external priesthood, has pre-empted our personal priesthood in Christ.

A *second and third charge* are against Moses in verse 13 & 14 of Numbers 16:

Numbers 16:13-14

13 Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.

KJV

Moses, you usurped your authority. You made yourself a prince over us, and Moses, you are a failure as a leader and as an administrator. You do not have our best interests at heart. You have yours at heart.

And so we see this terrible act of God whereby He opens the earth and swallows up all of the anarchists. Moses did not do this and Aaron did not do this. Moses said that the LORD would do it so that these men would know that they had a contest with the Lord.

Then, the unthinkable happens. The next day, not a year later, not a month later, and not even two weeks later, but the next day, according to verse 41, *the murmuring begins again*. This time, the whole congregation joins in! Notice verse 41:

Numbers 16

41. But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

This speaks to the insipid nature of murmuring and why every pastor hates to see it. Murmuring is insipid and irrepressible. The more one deals with it the more murmuring it causes. It works like a canker or cancer in a congregation. It often begins with non-members and very often with *non-workers* who have plenty of time to spread their "*concerns*" and "*prayer requests*" among other members who are easily taken in. When they are dealt with, the congregation polarizes, and more complainers arise. It is only by the grace of God, when He removes those murmurers or when a wise church family refuses to listen to the complaints, that murmuring can be stamped out. In this pastor's opinion, chronic murmuring is a cause for confrontation and even church discipline, (2 Thess. 3:11, 1 Tim. 5:13).

This leads to the next question:

III. Why did God deal so severely with murmuring?

He did it for our advantage. He did it so that we could see at a single point in time the damage which murmuring usually does over a longer period of time. Every president of every Bible institute, every leader of every biblically sound mission, and every seasoned pastor of every church will tell you that the great nemesis of the ministry is not fornication. You just hear more of it. It is not idolatry, as bad as it is. The nemesis of Christian ministry is murmuring.

If Satan wants to destroy the flock, his first line of attack is often murmuring against the shepherd of that flock, the board, and the faithful workers.

Let's leave Israel behind and bring this into the 21st Century.

IV. How does this issue apply to us?

Paul says that these examples are come to us upon whom the ends of the ages have come. There are two forces at work in our age.

The first, (I have already mentioned) is Nicolaitanism, the imposition of a false priesthood, a false way, in preference to God's way. False priests who would rob you of your true priesthood in Christ are all around us. They are represented by the idolaters whom we have already mentioned. They are the gainsayers who will perish in the way of Core and meet the same doom according to Jude 11.

These gainsayers are also represented by many well meaning pastors who have done the very same thing Korah did. They have set aside God's way and have offered strange fire before the Lord, becoming *little priests* in their churches, lord's over God's heritage, fleecing, abusing, and manipulating the flock. They do all of it in the name of God. They are just as guilty as Korah and his gang.

We said, there were two forces working against each other in our age. The first is Nicolaitanism, the imposition of a false priestly system, a false way in preference to God's way. The second force is Laodiceanism. This word also comes from the book of Revelation, chapter three, in Christ's letter to the Laodiceans, a letter that is especially relevant to our time. **Nicolaitan** means *to conquer the people*. **Laodicean** means *rule of the people*. It is another word for democracy.

You need to be able to discuss and explain this truth to others. Just as surely as God resists those who would impose a false priesthood on the church, God resists those who think that churches are little democracies to be ruled by the people. Churches are theocracies. God sets up leaders who are neither priests nor pew sitters. He calls them elders and pastors. They do not have the authority of Moses and Aaron but neither are they at the disposal of the people. They take their orders from God while remaining accountable to the body of Christ.

Your pastor is not a king and he is not like some diplomat who is immune from prosecution based on the misapplication of David's "*touch not the Lord's anointed.*" Your pastor is not a priest to whom you must come for grace and forgiveness. To do so would be to rob Christ Himself of His priestly role as the only mediator between God and men. Your pastor is not a nursemaid to wipe your nose and kiss your "owies", though he should be as gentle as one. Your pastor is not a politician who stays in power by doing the will of the people. He is not one of the boys. Rather, he keeps his power by doing the will of God in the servant / shepherd model of his Messiah. Respect him and obey him as the shepherd who must give account to God for the care of your souls, not as a lord over God's heritage.

There are three things we can do in order to keep the blessing of God on our fellowship. First, the pastor must avoid Nicolaitanism. He must avoid assuming a priesthood that is not there. Secondly, the congregation should avoid Laodiceanism. They must not accuse the pastor of taking *too much on himself* if God has given him the task. Finally, both pastor and congregation should avoid murmuring like the plague. Both are equally capable.

When someone comes to you and asks you to pray because he senses there is a weakness in your pastor you ask him to go and pray with the pastor concerning his weakness. And when someone comes to the pastor and asks him to pray for you and your problems a good pastor sends him to you to pray with you. Together we can avoid murmuring.

We must not leave the newcomer out of our discussion, the person who does not yet understand salvation, the person who does not know Christ. When Christ came to earth, He did away with Aaron's priesthood. He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and the symbolism of all those sacrifices. He set aside all other authorities when He made the most unequivocal statement that anyone could ever make. He told Thomas:

John 14:6

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

KJV

I am the way, I am truth, and I am life. He said *no man* comes unto the Father but by Him. When Jesus said those words He unequivocally dismantled every other claim. There remains only *one* way. It is not your church's way. It is not in a simple creed. It is in a Person. Men can no longer approach God through earthly priests, for we now have a Priest in heaven. Hebrews says:

Hebrews 4:14

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

KJV

Now this means that all other religious efforts to reach God and to please God are as false as Core's. When you read the religion page of your daily paper and you hear someone piously say, "*It doesn't matter how you worship or what you name your god,*" don't you believe him. This man is guilty of the gainsaying of Core. He is offering a strange fire before God. Jesus said *I am the way*. He did not say, *the church* is the way, not, *Islam* is the way, not, the *Dali Lama* is the way. He said "*I am the way and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" Why was He so unequivocal? So narrow?

Jesus Christ was the only one who ever died for you.

- He was the only one who ever paid the penalty for your sins.
- He was the only one to shed His blood.
- He was the only one to be resurrected from the dead by the Father.
- He was the only one to show the love of God by satisfying the holiness of God, when He made that sacrifice for you.

He is the only one deserving of your worship. He is the only one who can approach the Father on your behalf.

Have you been playing Korah? Have you been announcing that one way is just as good as another? Have you declared that your way is just as good as someone else is? Today, the Bible says, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as these Israelites did in the day of their testing. Step out of Korah's crowd and stand with Moses and Aaron, and most importantly, the Lamb of God to whom they pointed. Step out and take your stand with Jesus Christ, the One who said:

John 11:25

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

KJV

A Never Failing Promise

We have completed history 101. We have studied the examples of the Israelites in the wilderness and we have heeded the warnings that we should not lust, be idolaters, commit fornication, tempt Christ, and murmur.

If you, as a believer, truly desire to honor Christ, and in your heart it is your prayerful desire that you not be caught up in Satan's entanglements - then listen to Paul's concluding words beginning with verse 11:

1 Corinthians 10:11-13

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

KJV

We conclude with **five good pieces of advice**. Just as we saw five sins to avoid we now list five good ways to avoid these sins. The first is found in verse 11:

I. Do Not Forget What You Have Learned Vs. 11

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

I was a late bloomer. In my early years in high school I was a poor student. When I studied Algebra I passed by the skin of my teeth. Years later, after I had developed my academic skills I was determined to conquer Algebra. I took it again at the college level, and I finished the course with an A. I basked all summer in the knowledge that I had conquered an old enemy. The following fall, however, I took Physics. Much to my dismay, I soon discovered that all the Algebra I had learned a year earlier had vaporized. In order to hold my A in Physics I had to relearn Algebra all over again.

It is good for me to think of that in terms of spiritual truths. You see, part of my problem was due to my *nature*. While I enjoy the challenge of Algebra, I simply cannot memorize symbols. But another part of that problem was my *laziness*. Never once did I ever pick up that Algebra book and refresh myself during the summer interim. I simply was not motivated to review.

Now, Paul has given us a lesson, a strong lesson from history and a hard lesson for all of us to learn. Some of us will benefit from the stories of the last few studies. We will have developed a fresh new loathing for sin and a new desire to avoid temptation. Some, if not all of us, will forget to *review*, and *because it is not in our natures* to learn this subject, we may just fail the next test.

If you would overcome temptation in your life, let the first lesson be this: Do not forget what you have learned! Do not forget these lessons. Refresh yourself often with this passage. Examine verse 11.

a.) The first reminder is that these things happened for our examples. The events fell out as they did for *our* benefit. Then Paul says,

b.) They are *written* for our *admonition*. This is not the usual word for admonish which we emphasize so often. This is not *parakaleo*, the love word, the beseech word. The word for *admonition* in this verse is: Strong's 3559 *nouthesia* {noo-thes-ee'-ah}. it is an admonition in the form of a warning and command! This is not a gentle friend coaxing you to do what is right. This is the warning of a leader, *don't do it!*

I take great pleasure in the comments of Martin Lloyd-Jones in his comments on Romans 6 where we deal with the nuts and bolts of overcoming sin. Jones says:

"The main trouble with the Christian Church today is that she is too much like a clinic, too much like a hospital; that is why the great world is going to hell outside! 'We are all suffering' - to quote Charles Lamb again - 'with the mumps and measles of the soul' and feeling our own pulses and talking about ourselves, and our moods and subjective states. We have lost the concept of the army of God, and the King of righteousness in this fight against the kingdom of evil..."

You're in the army now! Stop playing mental games about your temptations and struggles. Don't get caught up in temptation. Just don't do it! Notice also in verse 11.

c.) These things are written for our examples, for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

You and I have the wonderful advantage of learning from the failures of those who have gone on before. Now that we know where the curves are in the road, we're doubly accountable for not losing control.

Our first point then is, *do not forget what you have learned* during these studies. Rehearse the stories of these Israelites, and, by learning from their mistakes, avoid them. Another good piece of advice follows.

II. Do Not Trust Yourself Vs. 12

12 *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

Be on guard against the sin of *presumption*. Of course, this is a general warning against self confidence and over confidence. Never say to yourself or to anyone else "*I could never commit such a sin.*" Never become outraged at the sin of another and judge him for it. You may find yourself doing the same thing. Yes, there *is* a general warning against self confidence and overconfidence here, but, I don't think that is all that Paul intended. I don't think that was the full intent of Paul's warning when he said: *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

If you will read the context and will understand what has been going on in the chapters before this verse and in the verses following, you will see that Paul has been dealing with some overconfident Corinthians. These are Corinthians who, while seeing themselves as *spiritually mature* were, in reality, *spiritual babes*, infants! And, they were infants particularly in the matter of idolatry. These believers believed that they could have their cake and eat it too. They could associate with the idolatrous practices of their day and still be safe. They thought that they could play with fire and not get burnt because they were so *spiritually mature*.

This brings to mind the number of Christians today who think they can dabble and dip into the world's practices and not get hurt. They think they are exercising their Christian liberty when they do so. A little drink here, a little worldly socializing there is safe in moderation. After all we wouldn't want to be legalists. Before long, they are caught up in a whirlwind, one which leaves them with a bad marriage, a child without a daddy or mommy, or a problem with some kind of addiction. All because they thought they were the exception to the rule. They were mature enough. Maturity has absolutely nothing to do with temptation.

I believe Paul is saying, *do not expose yourself to temptation* thinking that you are spiritually strong and this would never happen to you. We can certainly provide a long list of folks who, if you allowed, would say to you "*I never thought this would happen to me. I never thought I would do this!*"

That's all Paul is saying. Try to remember that we are strong when we are the weakest and we are weakest when we are strong. I add, don't let your Christian friends tease you and nudge you into disobedience. If you know you have a problem in some area, don't put yourself at risk! J. Vernon McGee once said:

One of the reasons we yield to temptation is that we are like the little boy in the pantry. His mother heard a noise because he had taken down the cookie jar. She said, 'Willie, Where are you?' He answered that he was in the pantry. 'What are you doing there?' He said 'I'm fighting temptation.' My friend, that is *not* the place to fight a cookie temptation! That is the place to start running!

Remember, no one ever becomes stronger by *resisting* temptation. Resist Satan, but *flee* from temptation!

George MacDonald writes in his poem Sweet Peril:

Alas, how easily things go wrong!
A sigh too much, or a kiss too long,
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again.

Young people, especially, you have no idea, you have no comprehension of the forces which can come into play over you when you toy and tease with temptation. One moment you are dancing on the edge of the Venus Flytrap, and the next moment it has closed in around you and consumed you. If you don't put yourself in a compromising situation you won't have to say no to temptation.

So, we have said:

Do Not Forget What You Have Learned. [From God's examples.]
Do not Trust Yourself. Do not expose yourself unnecessarily to temptation. Now, for the third thought in verse 13:

1 Corinthians 10:13

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
KJV

III. Do Not Excuse Yourself Vs. 13

"There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man..."

A. The first thing this brings to mind is that we are always exceptions. We always think our case is different and that somehow, God understands our problem. We think that our childhood problems with our fathers make us the exception. Our marital situation, our work situation, our nervous condition, or our lack of self esteem makes us the exception.

Pastors and police officers certainly have one thing in common; we rarely hear true admissions of guilt. Even when guilt is admitted, there were *extenuating* circumstances that make the offense more understandable.

But Paul says, no. There are no exceptions. The kinds of temptations that befall you are the kinds of temptations which befall all mankind. The temptations to lust, to idolatry, to fornication, to tempting Christ, and to murmuring are common temptations. You are not the exception, not even if you were dropped on your head as a baby, as sorry as that makes us. So, maybe, if you would strip away all the trimmings, and just call that issue in your life you are struggling with what it *really is*, sin, maybe you could find a way out.

It is time to name it for what it is. A man can't be freed from sin, a man cannot find the way out, a man cannot find release, until he is willing to call sin what it is.

Stop excusing yourself! You are not the first one to be tempted with all the emotional and physical titillation that an affair can drag you into. You are not the first person to be caught in the web of drugs or alcohol! You are not something special! You are not the first person to be tempted with homosexual thoughts or bitterness, or anger!

You are not unique. You are just you. You have been caught up in a struggle, I have been caught up in struggles, and everyone has been caught up in struggles with sin. So stop babying yourself, pampering yourself, and stop excusing yourself. You have a sin problem. Just deal with it. Better yet, let the Lord Jesus deal with it!

B. "Everyone is doing it" is simply a confession of how common sin is.

"There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man..."

We often hear a young person say, "*But, Mom, everyone else is doing it!*" as though that somehow makes it right. If all our friends are doing it, it must be right. When you hear those words, it is a good time to think of this verse.

It is *common* for men to be caught up into sin. It is *common practice* for the world to be caught up into temptation. The very fact that *everyone IS doing it* is probably the most arguable reason why you should *not* be doing it. If everyone is doing it, it is probably bad business.

Some time ago a scientific magazine published an article concerning a certain species of alligator. Being lazy beasts, they seldom hunt for their dinner but just wait for their unwary victims to come to them. They lie near the bank with open mouths, acting as if they are dead. Soon flies begin to light on their moist tongues, and several other insects gather. This crowd attracts bigger game. A lizard will crawl up to the alligator to feed on the bugs; then a frog joins the party. Presently a whole menagerie is there; then there is a sudden "earthquake" WHAM! The giant jaws come together and the party is over! Here is the lesson: do not be lured by large groups of people. The party just may be on the alligator's tongue. Remember, the crowd is always found on the "broad way." The "narrow way" of life admits only individuals, one by one. Most people take the easy, downward path. You as a Christian must follow the Lord Jesus on the upward road; it is the only safe way.

Perhaps, it would be better to state it in the words of Christ who said:

Matthew 7:13

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

KJV

Remember where we are in our struggle against temptation:

Do Not Forget What You Have Learned, – [from God's Examples]

Do Not Trust Yourself. Do not expose yourself unnecessarily to temptation.

Do Not Excuse Yourself. Your temptations are not new. They are common to man and you are not the exception to the rule. God does not make exceptions for pastors, for church members, or for anyone. We all need to face the facts.

Now, we add the fourth.

IV. Don't Look To Yourself Vs. 13

1 Corinthians 10:13

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

KJV

God is faithful. You are not faithful. God is faithful.

I found the commentaries very interesting reading when I looked at this subject. Very few serious commentators look at verse 13 as a promise like many of us do. If I may paraphrase a few of them, here is how they say we should understand this verse. They believe that what Paul is saying is that in the struggle against temptation, you play a part and God plays a part. Here is God's part:

In the normal course of events, God, on a daily basis goes before you and faithfully sees that you are not exposed to more temptation than you can handle.

But, here is your part:

But, if *you* choose presumptuously to put yourself in the place of temptation, you have taken yourself beyond the scope of God's daily commitment to protect and spare you from failure!! You are on your own!

As a thematic preacher who loves developing arguments from the context and from the broad sweeps of scripture, I find a lot going for that approach, because I do believe that Paul has been warning us about this very thing, presumptuous

sin, and tempting Christ. And, I do believe that Christ is personally committed to me, on a daily basis, sparing me from what this *flesh* cannot handle as I walk with Him.

But Christian, remember this. You are never *on your own* and Christ never gives up on you, even when you fail by placing yourself directly in the path of temptation, even if you got yourself into the mess because of your own arrogant disobedience. I believe that *when you repent and truly desire deliverance from the bondage of your sin*, God will begin making a way out for you. It's all locked up in those words "*God is faithful...*" The Bible says:

2 Timothy 2:13

13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

KJV

Even when you doubt the faithfulness of God on your behalf, He is still faithful to you. What a great God we have.

When I was a teenager I had a good friend named Linda. Linda was a little low on self esteem and one day the right fellow came along and swept her off her feet. But he wasn't the "right" fellow; he was the "wrong" fellow. And I warned Linda. I said "*Linda, you are making your own bed and you are going to have to lay in it...*" I never saw or heard from Linda for some twenty years. One day she sent a message to me through my brother. She said, "*Jim, you were right. I made my own bed, and I have had to lay in it ever since.*"

But the Lord Jesus Christ has been right there, along with Linda, suffering with her! He did not leave her when she failed! He did not vacate because things did not go His way. Linda may be suffering the consequences of her poor choice, but her faithful Savior has never left her side.

Now, when you are ready to deal with your sin, and I hope it is today, would you remember there no temptation that has overtaken you, but such as is *common* to us all? God is faithful who will make a way of escape.

Do not look to yourself! Do not get some crazy idea that you have to fight your way back on your own until God will finally accept you again! And This brings us to the last thought of the study:

V. Don't Give Up On Yourself!

It is OK to say, "Don't give up on yourself" as long as you first heard me say "Don't look to yourself!" Look at the last words of that verse again.

...but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it].

Satan's goal is to get you to give up. As already stated, he does this by convincing you that you cannot have fellowship with God until you have overcome your temptation. You may have even heard a pastor tell you that.

That allows for great misunderstanding. If you have not repented of your sin you are not going to have close fellowship with Jesus Christ any more than you would have close fellowship with your earthly father while you are disobeying his commands. However, you must not think that you must *overcome your sins before God will fellowship with you*. We have an interactive God. Do you want to be free from that struggle? Do you want the joy of the Lord in your life? If you know Christ as Savior, Jesus Christ is with you right now. And together, as you learn to reckon yourself as dead unto sin, and as you learn to yield your members as instruments of righteousness, He will do His part. He *will* provide the way of escape.

The last thing that Satan wants you to know is that God is in this *with you* and He *will* see you through when you get serious about this struggle. Don't give up, give it over.

- There *is* a way out.
- You *can* bear it.
- You are *not* on your own.
- You are *no exception*. We all have these struggles! (Galatians 5:16, 17)

When will you begin to win? When you begin to see that your hope for success is based on the faithfulness of God and not on your faithfulness. When will you begin to win? When you lift your eyes up far enough from the floor to look to your side and see that Jesus Christ is standing there with you, on your team, in your corner, working in this struggle on your behalf. He will never say:

“You made your bed. You can lay in it alone.” He will be there with you in your struggle.

The Biblical Basis of Separation

Intro: You may have heard the ancient proverb: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. By now, you understand that this is exactly what Paul has been doing in our study of Corinthians. He has been using practical, pertinent issues as a means of teaching important biblical principles.

When we look at 1 Corinthians 10:16-22 the *subject* becomes very clear. It is the subject of idolatry. We may even be tempted to say, "*Obviously, this passage has little relevance to us, because we do not encounter many idol temples.*" That would be a careless and superficial response. First, we *are* struggling with idolatry, and equally as important, there *is* a principle taught in these verses that is critical for us to understand. In order to instruct us properly, Professor Paul is going to take us on a little field trip from the classroom to the communion table. A new child of Christ may ask, whatever does the practice of *communion* have to do with *idolatry*? The answer will soon be clear.

So that we have some kind of hooks on which to hang our thoughts, we will divide this study into three parts.

- I. The Practice of Communion**
- II. The Principle Underlying Communion**
- III. The Perversion of Communion**

It's time to talk about the Lord's table.

I. The Practice of Communion Vs. 16

1 Corinthians 10:16

*16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?
KJV*

There are two precious ordinances that Christ has provided for His body. One we call The Lord's Table, or Communion, and one we call baptism. These are not options for believers; they are non negotiables. They are commanded absolutely. Every believer is obligated to be baptized and every believer is obligated to participate around the Lord's Table. Many have been disobedient to God with respect to both of these commands and still they wonder why they do not enjoy the fullness God intended for them.

I always feel saddened when I am required to make such a strong point regarding communion and baptism because commanding someone to participate in the Lord's Table, is to me, like commanding someone to eat dinner! You should not have to do it! A person should be hungry for dinner and God's people should look forward with great anticipation to the Lord's Table.

One reason why these ordinances are such absolute requirements in the eyes of the Lord is that they represent the *absolute line of demarcation* between the world and us. Communion, of course, speaks of Christ's death for us, while baptism speaks of our death with Christ, the fundamental explanations of what occurs at salvation. Every baptismal service and every communion service is essentially a gospel preaching service in itself; for the precious gospel of Christ is proclaimed each time we participate. They represent the line in the sand between the world and us.

We sense the preciousness of communion in the verse that we read:

1 Corinthians 10:16

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?
KJV

Dr. Ironside wrote concerning this verse: "In these words he shows us that the Lord's Supper, as we commonly call it, sets forth the very foundation principles of Christianity. It is a *rallying center* as it were, where God's people come together to openly confess their adherence to these great fundamental truths."

If you care about Christ you will faithfully rally around the Lord's Table and openly confess your belief in its message. History tells us that early Christians called this the *sacrament*. We do not encourage the use of the term in fundamental circles because its meaning has been changed by idolaters, but, originally the word *sacrament* was used for the oath of allegiance which the soldiers of the Roman legion took with their Roman emperor. That is one thing I like about the Lord's Table, it is a refreshing and renewal of my oath of allegiance to Christ and the principles which this table teaches.

Examine the cup with me.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?

1. The first thing we notice is that Paul calls it *the cup of blessing*. By that little designation, *cup of blessing* Paul has presented a clue for our understanding. It is, of course, our first connection to the Passover feast that occurred the night before the death angel passed over Egypt. In the years that followed, Israel celebrated the sacrifice of that Passover lamb each year with a rich Passover liturgy. The cup of blessing was the *third cup* and it was the thanksgiving cup. Es-

sentinal in the celebration of the Lord's Table is the element of Thanksgiving. Vice versa, when we carelessly ignore the Lord's Table we show our ingratitude. We now ask, for what are we thankful?

2. The second thing we notice is that it is the *communion of the blood of Christ*. The unbeliever looks on and sees this as such an enigma. Why would any civilized person do such a thing? The believer knows that it is the blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin. It is not just His death, as some modern teachers hold. There are some who would have us think that the blood of Christ was only a *symbol* of His death. They would have us holding a symbol of a symbol at the communion table! If that were truly the case, Paul would not have written:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?

Instead he would have written:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the death of Christ?

But it is the word *communion* which focuses us at the moment , the partnership, the fellowship, the “koinonea .” When you and I partake of that cup we fellowship around the *blood* of Christ.

3. The third thing we notice is what goes for the cup also goes for the bread. Paul says:

The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

Paul did not say the bread *was* the body of Christ. He said it was the *communion* of the body of Christ.

Now, that is the *practice* of communion. There may be some variations on the way we conduct communion, but the cup, representing the blood, and the bread, representing the body, are the two essential elements.

II. The Principle Underlying Communion Vs. 17-19

In a word, that principle is *participation*. Verses 17 and 18 expand on this truth...

1 Corinthians 10:17-18

17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

We, being many are one bread. This is *E Pluribus Unum* in its purest expression! We are one! Red, yellow, black, white, those who have gone on, those yet to be born, every kindred tongue and nation, all of us , rich or poor, all of us are one. Why are we one?

We are one bread by virtue of our participation in the body of Christ. We are one because we are in Christ. Participation is the key. We are totally identified with Christ.

Verse 18 takes us one level deeper in order to underscore this fact.

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

When the children of Israel prepared themselves on that Passover night, they slew a lamb. They not only slew that lamb, *they ate* that lamb. That victim, that lamb, became a part of them. You cannot extend participation much further than that.

When Paul speaks of those who eat of the sacrifices being *partakers* of the altar in verse 18 he is referring to the peace offering when it was offered. The family celebrated a sacred feast in the temple court in which the *priest* also participated and the part of the sacrifice left by the fire was consumed *in common* by all. (Godet)

Once again, when the victim became a part of the ones sacrificing it you have carried the idea of participation as far as it will go. Now, we ask why did the Old Testament scriptures require that? Those sacrifices pointed to the coming Lamb of God who was going to perform something *wonderful* as a part of His sacrifice. When our Savior was sacrificed for us He *not only* paid the penalty for our sins, he became a part of us. The victim became part of us. We are in Christ and He is in us. That is why we drink the blood and eat the bread, to show our participation in His body.

Do not forget, if Christ is in you and Christ is in me then you and I are in each other as well. We are all one body. You see, the Lord's Table belongs to believers, to those who are saved by grace through faith in Christ and not to anyone else!

The principle is participation, unity, fellowship, communion, partnership, and common identity. That is the fundamental essence of communion, to show the world that I am fully and completely identified with the Sacrifice. Just like baptism, it tells the world what has already happened. It is simply a symbol just as baptism is simply a symbol. They are symbols to help us teach these lessons to a lost and dying world.

In the **practice** of Communion, we use the cup and the bread representing Christ's blood and body.

The **principle** of Communion is total participation. It is absolute, total identity with Christ. It does not get any sweeter, or any more precious than this. Sweet communion.

Now, a third aspect in this passage:

III. The Perversion of Communion Vs. 19-22

1 Corinthians 10:19-22

19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

KJV

What is verse 19 effectively saying? It is saying that you and I both know that nothing happens when food is offered to an idol. That is, the food does not essentially change. Nothing magical happens. Food is food.

(Keep in mind that *nothing* happens to the cup and the bread when it is used in communion either. If it was Welch's grape juice before communion it will be Welch's grape juice during and after communion.)

So, verse 19 says the issue is *not* magic. What then *is* the issue? Verse 20 says:

1 Corinthians 10:20

20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

KJV

The problem is participation! What fellowship hath light with darkness? The Bible says that we are to have *no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, but rather, we are to *reprove them*.

Do you recall our earlier definition of idolatry? It is the worship of a false god or the worship of the true God along with false gods. Christians are so naive. They say, oh, idol practices are such foolishness! We know the only truth is in Christ, so what will it hurt if we play their games? Paul says you are participating with devils and demons.

Now, let's bring this up to modern times, and finish up with two reminders. The first is this:

A. The issue *does* pertain to us in our times!

Many of the commentaries which you will read on this passage give it a page or so and go on. They do not deal much with it because they say it is *irrelevant*. They say that most of us Christians have very little contact with idolatry anymore.

That is a bad mistake. Do you know that it is more natural for a man to be an idolater than it is for him to commit any other sin? Do you know that of all the sins rebuked in the Bible, the sin *most often rebuked* is the sin of idolatry, and that God's people were the ones often caught up in it? Many of the great leaders and kings of Israel (Solomon, not the least) were terribly entangled in it!

Do you think idolatry really went away? If you do you have never read the book of Revelation! Idolatry has never gone away. It has only gone underground! When the church of Jesus Christ stood squarely against idolatry on the outside Satan simply renamed it and brought it in through the back door.

And guess where idolatry among "professing Christians" started? It started at the place Satan hates most. It started with the Lord's Supper. Remember, the most precious gifts that God has given us are the ones which Satan has worked hardest to corrupt and pervert.

By the year 100 Justin Martyr had already assigned a *mysterious* element to the sacraments. Augustine would add to that mythology and *teach that special grace* was conveyed through their use. As a result, a priesthood within the church rose up to administer those elements. Thomas Aquinas drove the nails in the coffin, and, just as when Israel of old began worshipping the ark and its contents instead of the God of the ark, so the church of Jesus Christ began worshipping the elements of communion instead of seeing them as mere symbols.

God has never, ever allowed any physical element or object to be a means of conveying His grace. Grace does not need a means of conveyance and God will not be robbed of the glory which belongs to Him alone.

And now, great churches have surfaced which do all that is in their power to obscure, pervert, and hide the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ by teaching that one cannot be saved without their table. That is the table of demons, the doctrine of demons, and, "*I would not that ye should fellowship with demons!*"

Is idolatry alive and well? You may be sure it is. Should we send our converts off into the temples of idolatry? May God spare us! May God open our eyes to the idolatry at our very doorsteps lest we or our children get caught up in it!

Keep this final thought in mind as you look at all of these verses together:

B. Verses 16-23 form the theological basis for the doctrine of separation.

The doctrine of separation is very much in disrepute these days. Any Christian who turns from any form of participation with the world, with its pleasures, with its religious practices, or with its philosophy is branded a legalist, even though there is not one shred of comparison between what the Bible calls legalism and what we moderns call it.

The issue remains, and the issue is participation. And that is not an Old Testament doctrine that concerned Israel only. The Old Testament simply pointed to the New Testament.

Paul said that a man should not involve himself with a harlot because to do so would be to make Christ a member of that harlot. That is the principle of participation.

The question in the back of everyone's mind should never be "*What can I do? What shouldn't I do?*" as though life were a list of rules to be lived out. The question on our minds should be does this identify me with Christ, the One I love? Or, will this action identify Christ with what He hates? Will my participation confuse my identity? Will the world see Christ in me or will it see me as one of them?

"But," you say, "Pastor, I mean so well, but I just get caught up. I just am carried away. I do not mean to bring shame to the name of Christ. I just don't say no when I should."

May I be of help to you? Start looking forward to communion! Start looking forward to the Lord's Table instead of resenting the fact that the service is going to take 20 minutes longer. Start making a big deal out of communion in your heart.

There is good news if you are reading this and you do not yet know Christ. Even though this material has been directed primarily to Christians, you've been getting the gospel all along. You have learned *everything* you need to know in order to receive Christ as Savior this very moment.

- You do not have to wait for a confirmation class.
- You do not have to wait for a baptismal service.
- You do not even have to wait for a communion service.

You come into a living relationship with Christ and begin enjoying this sweet communion and fellowship with Him this very hour, or rather, *this very minute*.

Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow

In order to provide a little variety in the treatment of this text, this study is provided as a handout in chart format.

To properly use this chart begin with page one. The center column contains the text. The column on the left provides the outline formatted to the text. The right hand column highlights important Greek words. It is especially important for the reader to notice that the word *covering* in verse 15 is separate and distinct from earlier words that use the words *covered* and *uncovered* in the sense of *veiling*.

The issue of head coverings in the assembly will likely be debated until the rapture. If the woman required to cover her head while praying or prophesying in the assembly or is her hair a sufficient covering?

A popular treatment of this passage suggests that the whole issue about whether or not a woman's head should be covered rests on verse 15, where it is taught that if a woman has hair, her head is therefore covered and she has met the biblical requirement. The fact that Paul is addressing a separate issue is made clear by the fact that he uses a different word in verse 15.

Pages Two and Three are self explanatory. They present common arguments on both sides of the issue and this instructor's personal position as taught in the classroom.

Please refer to the attachment entitled *Hair Today* found in the Additional Visuals appendix.

"In Remembrance of Me"

Intro: It appears the Apostle Paul has set about the task of correcting problems with the church at worship. In our last study, we broke from the normal pattern as we examined the issue of hair length and veils.

We now have one of the purest, most concise instructions that can be found in all of the Word of God concerning the Lord's Table. Our study begins with verse 17 and goes to the end of the chapter:

- I. Their Table – Vs. 17-23**
- II. His Table – Vs. 24-26**
- III. Our Table – Vs. 27-34**

We begin by examining verses 17-23.

I. Their Table Vs. 17-23

First, there was a *general* rebuke, then there was a rebuke about their table manners.

A. Look at the general rebuke beginning with verse 17.

1 Corinthians 10:17
17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.
KJV

There is a time for praise, (that was found in verse 2) and there is a time to withdraw praise. While the Corinthians had made a great effort to keep the traditions, they had failed in keeping order in their church services. They seemed to be missing strong pastoral leadership. The church had become a candy bar church instead of a meat and potato church. There is a curious point in these next verses that we do not want to overlook. Verse 18 is the *easy pill to swallow*:

1 Corinthians 11:8
8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.
KJV

A division is a schism. We are all opposed to schisms. Schisms are a work of the flesh. When a new cloth is sewn onto an old garment, the Bible says a

schism occurs. The cloth is rent or torn. Our contemporary church is torn almost in shreds. None of us should desire or want this kind of division.

The *hard* pill to follow, however, is verse 19:

1 Corinthians 11:19

19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

KJV

Divisions must occur because heresies must occur. They are inevitable. We ask why they must occur. Why are heresies and divisions inevitable? They are necessary so that the *approved* will be made manifest.

Who are the approved? They are the dokimos, (dokimo") the ones who have been approved by testing. They are the coins that have been proven not to be counterfeit by testing. They are the real stuff.

Why is this a hard pill to swallow? Paul is teaching us that doctrinal purity is more important to Christ than church unity. Paul is teaching us that the very process that Christ uses to purify His church inevitably causes division! God allows division and schism as part of his proving and approving process.

This changes our whole view of church splits. This means that not all splits are to be avoided at any cost. This means that there *is* a right and a wrong position. When righteousness, godliness and doctrinal purity are at stake the obedient in Christ will take their stand and take their lumps! Where there have been no divisions, it is very likely that there has been no doctrinal purity because schisms *must* come. Paul tells in Galatians that heresies are works of the flesh. The battle between flesh and Spirit is not just personal, it occurs collectively in the body as well.

B. The Actual rebuke about table manners Vs. 21-22

1 Corinthians 11:21-22

21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

KJV

I once performed a wedding ceremony where I was reminded again of the beauty and sanctity of marriage. However, as I looked at this young beautiful couple, my eyes wandered to the folks who had come to witness this precious hour. I did not have to look far before I could see those whose purity had been destroyed, whose marriages had been tarnished, whose homes had been broken. This is

because Satan hates God, and the more beautiful and wonderful God's gifts are, the more Satan desires to destroy them.

What Satan has done with marriage, he has also done with another precious institution, another precious gift from God, the Lord's Table. For, of the millions who will partake of bread and wine on a given Lord's Day, only a small remnant will partake obediently.

- Some will hold to and teach the perverted doctrine that these elements bring salvation to your soul. They think there is salvation in this cup. My friend, salvation is in the blood of Christ represented by this cup. This cup offers you nothing.
- Some will hold and teach that his bread and wine will actually become the body of Christ at the incantation of a priest or upon ingestion. They have effectually attached idolatrous and blasphemous connotations to this precious feast.
- Others will come to this table and, while their doctrine may be correct, while they know that these elements are only symbols commemorating the body and blood of Christ, they will still mock this table by their sinful lives and unbelief.
- Others will despise this table by their neglect of it.

The more precious the gift of God, the more quickly Satan would corrupt it. In terms of Church history, Satan seems to have focused his first attack right here, even before he attacked the deity of Christ. He did everything in his power to destroy the sanctity of this practice.

Exactly what occurred in this Corinthian church? While we cannot be certain about the events of early church history there is a general agreement among Christians that the early church of Acts ate meals together each evening and may have celebrated the Lord's Table each evening. The meals were necessitated by the fact that so many new converts were sojourners from distant areas of the world. Later in Acts 20, there is some hint at the possibility that the church met only weekly.

In any case, the eating of meals (called the *agape*, the love feast) and the eating of the Lord's Table seems to have been combined. It appears from reading Jude 12 that the false teachers honed in on this precious time. However, here in Corinth a problem of another sort was evident. The problem was selfishness and self-centeredness as each attendee brought his own food and ate and drank to his own satisfaction, in spite of the hungering who also came.

This seems unthinkable to us, but, be sure they had their own reasons for hardening their hearts to the poor, just as do we. They probably assumed they were all lazy and illiterate moochers, who could all get jobs if they so chose. Jaded by all the poverty around them, they had managed to close their eyes to it.

That was *their table*, a table of selfishness.

II. His Table – Vs. 24-26

1 Corinthians 11:24-26

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

KJV

Every phrase, if not every word of this selection, is the basis of a message. We are looking at a passage bursting with doctrine, with symbolism, and with the richness of the Old Testament blended with the passion of our Savior instituting the New Covenant. Every word is a morsel for sweet meditation. I have delivered monthly devotionals at communion time on the subject of these verses for years and years and have never run out. Whole books are occupied with these four verses. The greatest minds have addressed them, and I might add, failed to explore their depths. It is not in our purpose to provide the full picture. We are only skipping the proverbial rock on the water. Consider some reasons why this table is precious.

A. It is precious because of how it was revealed to us.

Paul is quick to assert: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you..." I received...that which I also delivered. Paul is announcing two things. First, there was a special revelation given to him, and secondly, he had already "traditioned" this to the Corinthians. We are observing a rebuke. These Corinthians were not ignorant of how they should celebrate the Lord's table, they were disobedient. They knew they were disobeying God's order.

B. This table is precious because of the One who revealed it to us.

It is as though the Lord Jesus Himself interrupted the normal process of inscription and said, "Stand aside Paul, I want you to take this information directly from Me, personally." This table is important to the Lord.

C. This table is precious because of the One whom it represents.

It represents our precious Savior. It is all about Him. When you ignore and neglect this table, you ignore and neglect your precious Savior. This is no ritual. This is dinner with your Lord at His invitation and in His honor!

D. This table is precious because of when it was given.

1 Corinthians 11:23

*23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:
KJV*

We may render it literally, "the night in which he was being betrayed." When we read the gospels, we discover that this portion of the Passover meal occurred after Judas went out. While he was delivering his worst, Christ was giving us His best. If you are without Christ, you need to receive Him as your Lord and Savior this very moment. And, Christian friend, we are well advised to scour the rooms of our own hearts, lest we find the seeds of betrayal in the soil of our own hearts.

E. This table is precious because of what it proclaims:

1.) First, there is the bread. The Bible says He took bread:

1 Corinthians 11:24

*24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
KJV*

Our Savior was not merely thanking the Father for the piece of bread grasped in His hand. This was not thanksgiving for His daily bread. This was the bread of thanksgiving, just as He would soon drink the cup of thanksgiving, as a regular part of the Passover ritual.

For the Jew that thanksgiving was initially for his deliverance from Pharaoh; for the Exodus. It was thanksgiving for the deliverance of his past. It also spoke, I am sure, of thanksgiving for future deliverance yet to come for Israel. However, the thankfulness that we express as we partake of these elements is thankfulness for our great salvation, provided by His death on the cross. It is thankfulness for His body and blood. You see, the Savior was giving thanks on our behalf.

When the Jew ate that bread it conjured up memories of the bread of sorrows that Israel ate while in bondage to Egypt. The Lord Jesus changed its meaning that night. It now represented His body and, among other things, the sorrows He would endure.

When we partake of that bread far more than simple thanksgiving is involved. In *eating* we are telling the world that we have become a part of Christ and He has become part of us. We now have the same identities, the same passions, and the same purpose.

2.) Then, there was the Passover cup and those words of our Lord: "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink [it], in remembrance of me."

To the Jew at Passover the wine in that cup that day spoke of the blood of the Passover lamb, spread on the Israelites' doorposts. However, that evening, the Lord Jesus said, "I am the Passover lamb. The blood in that cup was meant all along to represent me. It represents my death. I am the Lamb of God who takes away the world's sins."

So, you while Passover was precious, the Lord's Table is far more precious. The thought of neglecting or abusing it is unthinkable. Finally,

F. This table is precious because of what it promises.

Jesus said: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

According to verse 26, our celebration of the Lord's Table is a proclamation of His death. It is the proclamation of the gospel. According to this verse, we are to do it on an ongoing basis until that day comes when He returns to claim His own.

We have seen *their* table. We have seen *His* Table. Now, we see:

III. Our Table Vs. 27

1 Corinthians 11:27

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

KJV

These are strong words so it is very important for us to understand what Paul is saying.

A. Understand what Paul is not saying.

Paul is not saying that you must make yourself worthy before partaking of this cup. In ourselves, no one is worthy of this cup. This cup is available to sinners only. It is for sinners who have been *made worthy* by the blood of Christ. If you know Christ as Savior, you are worthy, because you are in Christ. You are not only invited, but you are commanded to join. You are worthy.

B. Understand what Paul is saying.

Paul is saying that we can eat unworthily. We can despise this table and the church of God by the way we come to it. Clearly, that is exactly what these be-

lievers were doing by their conduct. We eat unworthily when we eat frivolously. We eat unworthily when we come arrogantly to this table holding on to sinful attitudes, desires and actions.

C. Understand what it means to eat *worthily*.

1 Corinthians 11:28

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

KJV

But let a man examine himself. The word examine is from the same root, the same idea, which we found back in verse 19 where we read the word approved. Remember, divisions come so those who are approved by testing (just as one would test a coin) might be made manifest. When a man examines himself, he tests or proves himself in order to eliminate the counterfeit, the false, the dross. He looks at his attitudes and actions that need to be changed because he wants to be approved. He does not list his sins as much as he exposes his heart to God in the light of His word.

D. Understand what happens when we do not examine ourselves.

1 Corinthians 11:29

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

KJV

Unfortunately, the wording in the King James Bible has caused many to stumble here. No believer is damned because he partakes of the Lord's Table unworthily. Rather, he is judged.

There is a beautiful play in the Greek here because the roots of these words are the same. The man who partakes unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself because he has not discerned or judged the Lord's body, (same root). "For if we would judge ourselves," (same word) "we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Please, please note these words all have the same root. When we do not judge ourselves we are judged by Christ. How are we judged by Christ? Our sins were judged at the cross. Our works will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But, what judgment are we talking about here? Paul does not want us to be in any doubt. He tells us exactly what He means when he says: "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

What happens when we are judged? The Lord chastens (to chastise means to train as in training a child) us because we belong to Him. The world does not enjoy this benefit. Hebrews tells us:

Hebrews 12:6
6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
KJV

God only chastens those whom He loves. If you are without chastisement, you are not His child. He only disciplines His children.

E. Understand why He disciplines us when we eat unworthily.

Paul says that unworthy eating makes us guilty of the body and blood of Christ. Some teach, and I believe in great error, that Paul says such an offense is the same as crucifying Christ anew. They say we are as guilty as though we were re-crucifying Christ. I find no basis for this.

Paul *is* saying, when we approach this table with flippancy or arrogance, willingly nurturing sin in our hearts, we have profaned that which is most precious to us. How can we celebrate the forgiveness of our sins while we cling to our sins? That is mockery.

When we do that, we profane the truths these elements represent. I would not profane my wife in front of you. I love her too dearly. I would not profane my Savior.

Are you without Christ? Do you want to be condemned with the world? There is an open invitation at this Table for you. Leave the pigsty of the prodigal and return to the Father:

- Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (John 10:36-38)
- He shed His blood and died on the cross to take away our sins. (Romans 3:25)
- The Father raised Him from the dead. (Galatians 1:1)
- We cannot make up for the bad we have done with our efforts at being good, but we can have the goodness (the righteousness) of Jesus Christ given to us by faith. (Ephesians 2:8-10, Rom 5:1, Romans 3:22)
- Acknowledge your sinfulness and believe what Jesus Christ did for you! (Acts 17:30, Romans. 10:9, 10)

The Use and Abuse of Spiritual Gifts

An Overview of Spiritual Gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 & 1 Corinthians 14

Note: Additional visuals associated with this section are included in the back of this paper: Understanding Pnuematikos, A Comparative Chart of the Spiritual Gifts, Gifts Related to 1, 2, or 3, and, Three Important Questions.

How to Benefit From This Study

The sections included in this material generally follow a verse-by-verse study of 1 Corinthians 12-14, but digressions are made as needed. They are designed to speak to *both the mind and the heart* as they address the singular issue that has most divided the body of Christ today. While it is best to read the Sections through in order, it may be to your advantage to check out a particular Section regarding a particular issue. In general, you will find:

Section One - Pure Ecstasy.

A study of *pneumatikos*, or spiritual manifestations in general, discerning whether they come from the Lord or Satan. The overall intent of this message is to convince the reader that any serious discussion of spiritual gifts must also include what the Bible says about Satanic and demonic influence.

Section Two – Roots.

An examination of the Old Testament scriptures as they relate to the ministry of the Spirit and gifts. The intent of this message is to prejudice the reader against much of what is represented in the signs and wonders movement today by examining Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit and the prophesied spiritual gifts.

Section Three - Designation and Organization.

A comparative grouping of spiritual gifts based on their purposes. By understanding the essential categories into which gifts fall, the Christian will be better prepared to define individual gifts.

Section Four - How Signs and Gifts Relate.

One must understand signs before one can properly understand spiritual gifts. The issue of signs as they relate to gifts forms a great watershed between careful, literal interpreters of scripture, and the theology of the charismatic movement.

Section Five - Gifts and the Baptism of the Spirit.

The nature of Spirit Baptism and the nature of tongues are totally unrelated. The scriptures clearly refute a great majority of charismatic teachers who view the baptism of the Spirit as foundational to the reception of tongues and associate the two without biblical grounds.

Section Six - Tongues in Plain English.

Hard hitting facts why biblical tongues are not present today and present day tongues are not biblical.

Section Seven - Tongues and Prophecy Contrasted.

Understanding the essential nature and function of tongues in the book of Acts will prevent the misapplication of their use today.

Section Eight - Tongues and Prophecy Controlled.

Even the biblical rules governing the use of tongues and prophecy preclude most of what is going on today.

Section Nine - God's Character and Tongues.

Any manifestation of God will be in keeping with God's character in every respect. The curious charismatic who truly wants to understand why the modern tongues movement is so offensive to thinking non charismatics will want to read this short overview.

Pure Ecstasy

Intro: Read the last verse of 1 Corinthians 11 and the first verse of 1 Corinthians 12 with me:

1Corinthians 11:34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come. 1. Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

If you will notice the first word of chapter 12 "Now," it may help you to understand that it is the Greek word δε (de) and it is in the adversative position. What does that mean in English?

Paul is saying, "...the rest will I set in order when I come, but concerning spirituals, I do not want you to be ignorant." The Corinthians could wait for Paul to come in order to settle some of the issues. However, the matter before them could not wait. There was too much at stake. It needed to be dealt with at the moment.

I feel the same way about the passage that we have in front of us. It cannot wait. More than ever, the body needs to have clear talk and straight shooting on the matter of spiritual things and spiritual gifts. We can never ignore any portion of God's Word without paying a price for it in our churches and when we ignore the Bible's teaching on *spirituals* we get into deep trouble for several reasons:

1. We allow Satan and his demons to take advantage of us by the infiltration of false teaching that always rides in on the back of spiritual gifts when they are abused.

2. We hinder our testimony in the world when these matters are abused. The charismatic movement has made us a great laughingstock among unbelievers. Roy Laurin wrote:

"Christianity recommends itself to human intelligence. It is a common sense religion. It is sane and well balanced. Heretics make it appear unreasonable while fanatics make it appear to be unbalanced. It is neither. (UL mine)

3. When we ignore what the Bible says on this subject we rob ourselves of the very resources that we desperately need to conduct our spiritual warfare in this hour.

A friend of mine was discussing his former pastor with me recently, explaining that the pastor did not believe in preaching on spiritual gifts because it would cause people to focus on their gifts instead of focusing on serving Christ. If that

pastor's logic was true, Paul was in error when he said that all scripture was profitable. More importantly, *if* there are any divine enablements available to you, you need them! How can you effectively serve Christ if you do not contemplate your gift or gifts?

Now, look again at the verse in front of you, verse 1, for herein we find the overriding subject of the next few chapters. Herein we introduce the “spirituals”, the πνευματικός, pneumatikos, {pnyoo-mat-ik-os'}. Again I read:

1. Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

Zoom in on the term "*spiritual [gifts]*" in this verse and learn the first important lesson. The word "*gifts*" in this case *is in italics or brackets*. When Paul tells us that he does not want us to be ignorant of *pneumatikos*, he is talking about far more than *just* gifts. He is talking about the whole realm of pneumatics. I have prepared a chart to help you understand this important point:

[See Visual: Understanding Pneumatikos. Then return here.]

Therefore, we have learned that the whole arena of spirit manifestations is under discussion first. Then, in a few verses, Paul will narrow the discussion to what is commonly called *spiritual gifts*. Before we talk about the *manifestation* of pneumatikos, we must talk about the *imitation* of pneumatikos, or spiritual manifestations from sources other than the Holy Spirit.

I. Pneumatikos - Their False Imitation

Look at verse 2:

2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

One may ask: What in the world does that verse have to do with spiritual gifts? The answer is *everything*.

These Corinthians lived in a world that was *full* of spiritual manifestations. These Corinthians knew that behind those speechless idols of wood and stone were real demons, real spiritual forces that had led them off (as a victor would lead his captives) toward their doom.

These Corinthians were quite aware that there were *spiritual* realities associated with idolatry. There were many *manifestations*. Equally important, it should be noted that the *ecstasies* associated with these practices can be traced as far back as Babylon!

At the time of the tower of Babel in Babylon a great mystery religion existed which was a great spiritual harlot. Because of the division of tongues and the na-

tions, that harlot spawned many more religions, but they are all Babylonian in nature and they will all ultimately be judged in the tribulation.

The mystery religions all have their *false* and *counterfeit* religious experiences, their trances, their visions, and their ecstasies. Mormons, for example, have their burning bosoms and their speaking in tongues. Please do not be offended if you have a Mormon friend. The Bible says that a man must be justified by faith. He must receive the righteousness that comes only from Jesus Christ in order to be saved. The LDS teach that one must add his personal righteousness to Christ's righteousness in order to be saved. But herein lies the issue of the moment. The average Mormon does not know how deeply Joseph Smith was caught up in Babylonian practices which he imported through Freemasonry. From the Talisman on the Mormon underwear all the way to the Mormon doctrine of godhood, these practices can be traced right to Babylon and her mystery religions.

As painful as it is to discuss, we must seriously ask whether the practicing Roman Catholic can have true spiritual life in him. Any Bible reading and Bible loving Catholic will soon see that the roots of Romanism are Babylonian roots. Herein lay the facts: In order to be Catholic, the Council of Trent requires the devout to reject, at hand, the doctrine of justification by faith in the finished work of Christ alone. When a Catholic, who rejects totally the doctrine of justification by faith, speaks in tongues, *those tongues are demon induced*. They cannot be of the Holy Spirit.

What is our point? What is Paul's point? The first point that Paul is making is this, not all ecstasies, not all spiritual manifestations are of the Holy Spirit! Many are cheap imitations!

We have some Cubic Zirconium running around today that looks and behaves so much like the real thing that no one would suspect these stones are not diamonds. Do not be deceived. The Lord has given you the ability to discern if you will listen to the Scriptures.

Many of our dear Charismatic friends are also being led off and carried away by demon influences exercised in the name of Christ. Please do not misunderstand. When your charismatic friend says, *"Of course you have to receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but you must also add your own righteousness to His righteousness,"* he is just as lost, just as much in bondage to the doctrine of demons, as is the Mormon and Catholic *who says the very same thing*. In this case, we dare not cut the charismatic any slack. We do not serve him when we treat him as a fellow believer. Of course, we are not addressing our brethren who are resting completely in Christ for their salvation, and not their own works.

However, one asks, what about those rich, deep, glorious experiences, and all those manifestations about which they speak so glowingly? Our Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

We may rightfully infer from these words that *the potential for demonic abuse exists!* Heaven is going to be a lot emptier than most folks think it is, not because folks didn't work hard enough to get there, but because folks worked to get there at all! (Galatians 3:3.)

Grasp the truth which Paul is revealing and move on with us:

2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

These Corinthians were a lot smarter than many of us are. They knew there could be demonic manifestations. The Gnostics who lived all around them, the pagan idolaters and captives of the mystery religions, all knew pneumatika, but they were demonically produced pneumatika.

Now that we have introduced the possibility that false manifestations can imitate the real, we may rightfully ask, what shall we do? Shall we toss the whole doctrine of spiritual gifts out the window because we cannot be sure about their genuineness and discern their reality? Nonsense! We would do well to *try* or test the spirits (and the doctrines we hear) to see whether they be true.

1John 4:1. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

How shall we put these matters to the test? We have seen the **false imitations** of the work of the Spirit, now we see:

II. Pneumatikos - Their True Manifestation

Consider three things about the works and gifts of the Holy Spirit from this passage that will help *you* discern. Later we will provide some more practical helps, but noting our passage, we learn:

A. True Spirit Manifestations are Pure. Vs. 3

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and [that] no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

There are actually *two* tests found in this verse, a negative test and a positive test.

1. The negative test: No man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed.

From our point of view this statement is obvious. It may not have been as obvious for the Corinthians. The ever-present Gnostics were also at Corinth though they may not have gone by that official title. These Gnostics who claimed their own "pneuma," held the doctrine that flesh is evil and spirit is good. Jesus, being in the flesh had to be *accursed*. The Jew would have also agreed that Christ's crucifixion ("...cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree," Gal. 3:13) disqualified Him from future glorification in His *body*. The Jewish misunderstanding was in failing to see that Christ satisfied the demands of that curse and was raised as proof of God's approval, (Romans 4:25.) The Christian sophists, however, will be forced to deny either the deity of Christ or they will deny that Christ actually had a physical body as we know it. Both of these ideas fleshed out in great heretical movements which are with us to this day. We have said all of the above to argue that this statement of Paul's was probably very important to the Corinthians' understanding.

While we do not know absolutely what prompted Paul's remark we do get the point. If a manifestation is of the Holy Spirit it will not degrade Jesus Christ. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

2. Then, we see the positive test, one that is misunderstood more often.

Paul says:

...No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

If a man is under the control of the Holy Spirit he is going to say and teach those things that the Holy Spirit teaches. One well known charismatic says he is pleased when he is "in tune" with the Spirit 50% of the time!

It is not uncommon for a charismatic to say "See, my gifts are real; they are the Holy Spirit kind, because I call Jesus Christ Lord." That is not what Paul says or means when he says that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, except by the Spirit. Even the demons were wont to proclaim His Lordship, and their pneumatika were patently false!

Paul does not mean that a man's ministry *must be* of the Spirit because he claims the Lordship of Christ. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7? Many will say "Lord, lord" and He will say "...depart! I never knew you!"

That is not what Paul is teaching us! Paul is explaining that no man has ever come to the realization that Jesus is Lord (Jehovah) except through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Here is the point. The Holy Spirit is the only source of what is true. He is in the truth business. He does not speak lies. He only speaks truth. He is the only source of truth.

Therefore, what can we conclude? We can conclude that a man who is under the control of the Holy Spirit will not deny but affirm the “Jehovahship” of Christ.

If the message is pure, it is pure as to its origin. We may assume the Holy Spirit sponsors it. If the message is in error, we may assume the man to be in error, or worse, possibly even to be under demonic influence.

What is the first evidence? The message will be pure. The Holy Spirit does not tell lies about Christ or suppress the truth about Christ. He does not curse Him. He asserts His Lordship.

Notice secondly,

B. True Spirit Manifestations Are Predictable. Vs. 4-6

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

There are diversities of gifts, **but the same Spirit**; there are differences of administrations, **but the same Lord**; diversities of operations, **but the same God**.

When we look at the works of the Holy Spirit we see nothing but diversity and variety. His work is everywhere and it is kaleidoscopic. However, as wide and varied as it is, it is absolutely consistent and predictable. It is from the *same* Lord, the same Father, the same Son, the same Holy Spirit. We may call this the Union Label. You can be sure of the workmanship, the origin, and the quality when it all comes from one and the same God. A good way to say it is like this: If it is *of* God, it will *reflect* God.

If you will look at those groups that make the loudest noise about their spiritual manifestations you will often find in their congregations the least correspondence to the Word of God and His character!

God is a God of truth. Therefore, His manifestations will affirm the truth of His Word, not the lies of prosperity theology, name it and claim it teachings, or the new age *little gods* doctrines.

God is a God of order. Therefore, His manifestations will not extol ignorance, fleshly sensual behavior, and wild interpretations of non-existent prophecies.

And, to carry things a step further, *Jesus Christ's* Lordship will be the center and focus of it all.

There are many gifts. There are many administrations or spheres of influence. A teacher, for instance may have great impact among one group and have no im-

pact among another. There are many operations or levels of strength and energy. One man may be a great teacher and another only a good teacher. The variety goes on and on - but the same Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work in us all. The same product comes out in the end.

How do we test pneumatikos?

A. True Spirit Manifestations are Pure.

B. True Spirit Manifestations are Predictable. They will consistently reflect the character of our God. Finally,

C. True Spirit Manifestations are Profitable. Vs. 7

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

The final evidence of the genuineness of a Spirit gift is that it will be *profitable*. It will edify. It will build up the believer in Christ. It will enhance the Body of Christ, (Not the experience, but the obedient walk, as we will see in our next study). The proof of the eating is in the pudding of life.

Our charismatic brethren have not been above misconstruing non charismatics. In some of their eyes the non charismatic doesn't believe in miracles. He does not believe that miracles are for this age. According to many charismatics, we do not think God has the power to do His job; we do not have the faith. That is not the issue at all.

The non charismatic says two things and both are important:

1.) First, he says that much of what is touted in the name of miracles and tongues is counterfeit and demon inspired. It is impure, unlike God, and unprofitable. It is a cheap imitation of the real stuff. It is absolute counterfeit, propagated by the counter Christ. We must have the courage to stand behind this claim.

2.) Secondly, we also feel there are good explanations that we can find in God's Word that help us to see why God's emphasis is not on miracles in our age.

The non charismatic simply takes his Bible and he tries the spirits to see if they are of God. He tests the manifestations for purity, for predictability, for profitability, and when he burns the dross away, he finds precious little which can be construed as signs and wonders.

The demons have their *impure* manifestations. The manifestations of Christ will be pure. The demons have their *confused* manifestations representing anarchy and disorder. They would have us laughing, jumping, jerking, quirking, and behaving as if we were under seizures. The Holy Spirit would remind you that the spirits of the prophets are under the control of the prophets, (1 Corinthians 14:32) and ours is a God of order, decency, dignity and purity. The demons would have

you high on emotional *ecstasy* Sunday night and down in the dumps Monday morning when the stimuli wear off. Do you know what the Holy Spirit wants us to do with our Mondays? He wants us to be meditating on the good food we received, and on the great task that He has for each of us. He wants us experiencing the presence of the living Christ. He does not want to see us coming down off the ceiling of a church.

Are there such things as spiritual gifts or divine enablements to help one minister to Christ's body? Be sure there are. Is there something for each of us? Be sure there is! Should a man of God want you to find and recognize your gift or gifts? You can be sure we do. Are true spiritual gifts Cubic Zirconium? You may be sure they are not! Do not settle for cheap imitations! Do not settle for fool's gold when you are sitting on the real nuggets! Fool's gold belies true gold!

If you are one who has not appropriated God's free gift of salvation, maybe it's time that you woke up to the fact that there *is* a spiritual world out there, that Satan *has* an agenda, and you may well be one of those whom he has "*carried off*" through ignorance. The Bible says, "*If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed...*"

Roots

Intro: If you have had occasion to spend any amount of time discussing either issues of theology or church polity with me you have probably discovered a personal obsession of mine. It is in my nature to be obsessed with *foundations*. For example, I devote an inordinate amount of time emphasizing the need for consistent *literal interpretation* when it comes to handling the Word of God. I do this because I know that if *I can lay that foundation*, truly lay it in your handling of the scriptures, you will never go too far astray or off the deep end in Bible study. Foundations are everything. False arguments are like trees; you chop them off at the roots. You do not bother with individual branches. You get to the *foundation* of the issue.

We have entered the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians and we have begun a study that is extremely important. Ignorance is not bliss and we do *not* have the luxury of blithely saying, "*It really doesn't matter where one stands on the subject of spiritual gifts, the important thing is that we all love the Lord.*" The luxury of this innocent approach may make for a more delightful social atmosphere, but it belies the real fact that at the bottom lays two very important issues:

1. These very spiritual gifts or grace gifts that were imparted to us by our loving Father as a celebration of our unity have, *instead*, become a constant source of division, confusion, argumentation, and embarrassment in the body of Christ.
2. Secondly, Satan's demons have had a heyday, falsely substituting demonic manifestations in place of true spiritual occurrences, thus, blindly neutralizing great numbers of Christ's sheep.

This is not an hour to call for loving tolerance amidst honest disagreement among God's people. This is an hour for rediscovering the purpose and use of God's grace gifts as He intended them.

But, if one is to even begin to understand the real issues of spiritual gifts he must start with the *foundations*.

In our last study we started working our way down below the emotional frost line looking for the solid bedrock upon which to place our opinions. *We looked closely at verses 1-3 of chapter 12 and we discovered:*

1. True spiritual manifestations *are* falsely imitated by the demons who masquerade behind dumb idols. Vs 1.

2. There are three things that help us *test and prove* true spiritual manifestations. According to verse 3, they are *Pure*. They are also *Predictable*. That is, they will be in keeping with the character of the Holy Spirit because the *same Spirit* gives *all* the gifts, verses 4-6. Finally, we saw that true spiritual gifts are *Profitable*. They produce genuine spiritual results. Vs. 7.

Look at verse 4 again:

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

If we would understand the whole subject of spiritual gifts, we must take a backward look before we can take a forward look. We must take a backward look at the two key words in our discussion: *Spirit* and *gift*.

While my wife and I were driving by Mt. Shasta we commented on how many folks pass Shasta on I-5 and never see it. If the clouds are hanging low, it is very easy to see the Black Butte and mistake it for Shasta! This same problem occurs in our study of spiritual gifts. If our study of spiritual gifts is confined to Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4, we are really only seeing the Black Butte. We are not getting the larger picture. In order to do that we need to look back over our shoulders for a backward look.

I. Take a Backward Look at the Word *Spirit*

Of course, you already know that we are talking about the Holy Spirit. You know that spiritual gifts are the domain of the Holy Spirit. They are gifts of the Spirit. We will take three scoops with the shovel and look at three Old Testament passages.

A. First, discover the *biblical symbol* of the Holy Spirit.

In my personal opinion, if you choose to perceive the Holy Spirit symbolically as a dove based upon Genesis 1, Genesis 10 and our Lord's baptism where the Spirit descended upon Christ in the bodily form of a dove, I understand. But it is also good to know that the Bible *nowhere* designates the *dove* as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. There is a similar symbol for the Holy Spirit that the Jews understood perfectly well.

Zechariah 4, verses 1-6:

*Zechariah 4:1. And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep,
2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a **candlestick** all [of] gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his **seven lamps** thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which [are] upon the top thereof:
3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right [side] of the bowl, and the other upon the left [side] thereof.*

4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What [are] these, my lord?

5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This [is] the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, **but by my spirit**, saith the LORD of hosts. [Emphasis mine]

What symbol did the Lord Himself use to depict the Holy Spirit? If you were reading the passage carefully you saw that it was a *lampstand*, not a candlestick but a lampstand. The biblical symbol for the Holy Spirit of God is *first* a lampstand. You see, a lampstand is basically a symbol of testimony. The churches of Revelation were to carry on this work of the Spirit as lampstands. The two witnesses of Rev 11 are called lampstands as they work directly under the control of the Holy Spirit. However, primarily, the Holy Spirit is the lampstand.

The Jews understood this. Now, turn your shovel to the second Old Testament passage.

B. The lampstand defines the character and behavior of the Holy Spirit better than any other symbol.

Turn to Isaiah 11:1-3 where we have a messianic passage concerning Christ.

Isaiah 11:1. And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

The passage represents a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ (the rod out of the stem of Jesse.) What intrigues us is His *special relationship* with the Holy Spirit. In this passage we have the Spirit of Jehovah represented in three *couplets*: Wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, and knowledge and fear of the Lord.

Jewish writers point out that the ancient Jew superimposed these very traits on the lampstand of Zechariah 4. The seven lamps of the candlestick correspond exactly to these seven descriptions with the three couplets arranged under the top bowl, the Spirit of Jehovah.

Now we ask, how does this relate to the New Testament gifts of the Spirit? The Holy Spirit has not changed. He did not have one personality in the Old Testament and another in the New. Any gifts that He gives will reflect wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and fear of the Lord.

Let me provide one more passage to strengthen my case.

C. The Holy Spirit gives gifts that become Himself.

Exodus 31:1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

5 And in cutting of stones, to set [them], and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; [underline mine]

The first evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work is the presence of true *wisdom* and *understanding*. He is the Spirit of intelligence and order and edification.

How the demons must laugh when men and women jump on pews and cluck like chickens and fall slain in the Spirit on the floor and chuckle and yodel in unintelligible guttural tones. It is blasphemy to attribute such activity to the Holy Spirit of God. It is unbecoming to Him. He did not lose His brains at Pentecost. It will come as no surprise to us that the first two gifts that Paul will mention in his list (beginning in verse 8), will be *the word of wisdom* and *the word of knowledge*. No believer who is under the Spirit's control will flop around like a decapitated chicken.

The second backward look is even more important.

II. Take a Backward Look at the Word *Gift*

In verse 4 we read:

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

The word gift in verse 4 is the word *charisma*. It speaks of something that is given freely and without expectation of return. The root of the word is *grace*. We often refer to spiritual gifts as *grace gifts* for this very reason. When we say that someone has a gift we mean that they have a special *divine enablement*, a spiritual talent, so to speak, a special ability.

But why do we have *spiritual gifts* in the first place? What is the *precedent* for giving gifts? Why are they called *gifts*? Did Old Testament saints have gifts? The answer to these questions is very important and must not be missed. There is an important theological basis for them. When one understands *why* the gifts have been given one will understand *why* they are so important to us and *why* we dare not let Satan and his demons distract us from their use.

A. Understand that the Coming of Spiritual Gifts was Prophesied.

King David, for example, prophesied it in Psalm 68:18

Psalms 68:18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, [for] the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell [among them]. [Underline mine]

As usual, what *looks* like a very incidental verse, tucked away in an Old Testament passage later becomes the centerpiece or cornerstone for a New Testament doctrine. This is exactly the case with respect to David's prophecy. Paul explains to us exactly what David was saying in Ephesians 4. We need to turn there and read verses 4-15.

Ephesians 4:4 [There is] one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ:

Here are just a few of the facts.

1. There is *one* body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (vs. 4-6). We have *already* seen Paul underscore this point in Corinthians. There are many *false Gods*. There are many demons, many manifestations, but there is *one body*, the body of Christ, or Messiah. In Corinthians, we will soon learn that it is the Holy Spirit who places us in this body.

2. *Because* of his placement *in this body* every believer has received a gift of grace, measured out by the Messiah Himself, Vs 7. Please understand this vital point. Your ownership of a spiritual gift (or gifts) is a direct result of your placement in Messiah's body. Now, the plot thickens even more.

3. Notice *verse 8* again.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Bible students part ways on this point. Some feel that these verses are talking simply about the death and resurrection of Messiah, but a closer look reveals more. He led captivity captive. He descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He ascended in order to *fulfill* all things.

Peter sheds some light on this event when he records:

1Peter 3:18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

My point is not to lay idle conjecture upon you. It is to stick with facts that we know, facts that must be properly understood.

1. Messiah descended *bodily* and proclaimed His victory to the demon world.
2. He led captivity captive.
3. He gave gifts (spiritual gifts) to us *at this time*.

[I do not want to break our train of thought, but for those who have already meditated on these things, you should be able to see that spiritual gifts are first *positional* and then *practical*. That is, you received them *as a part of your baptism*. We will deal with passages that are used to infer that we can get *more* gifts after salvation later in our study.]

Now, sit tight, hold on, and grab the major points.

Spiritual gifts relate to the *body* of Christ, and were given as a result of fulfilled prophecy *in response to Christ's dealings with the demon world*.

No wonder Satan wants to see us *confused* and *abused* when it comes to this matter. Clearly, very clearly, he has much at stake. Let me carry this a step further.

Have you noticed how many times the word Messiah has been substituted for Christ in this study? The words, of course, mean the same thing, but *we do not always see them as the same*. Somehow, we see Messiah as belonging to the Jews and Christ as belonging more to us. When we do this we lose our Old Testament connections.

The work and ministry of Messiah was clearly outlined in Isaiah 40-49. He is the Lord's servant, carrying out the Lord's command: 1.) to bring justice in all the earth (through the honoring of the covenants) and, 2.) to bring the gospel light to the Gentiles. The Bible says that Messiah will complete the first half of His task *only after He has completed the second half, the calling out of the Gentiles*. See Isaiah 49. He will do that personally in His glorified body.

But first, Jesus Messiah is continuing with His task, even to this very hour. He is not sitting in heaven watching the whole scenario play out. He is working it out through His body, the church. In Messiah's physical absence, *spiritual warfare* is being carried on through His *spiritual body*, the church. That is *why* you have a spiritual gift.

As an aside, students of the Word will find a strong parallelism in the fact that, just as God gave specially gifted men to build His Old Covenant tabernacle and temple, so He has provided specially gifted men to build on Christ's New Covenant temple, (Zechariah 6:11-13.) The priestly aspect of this temple ministry has begun in our age. The theocratic aspect will be realized in the millennium. Not only has our Priest provided the offices of Ephesians 4, but he has given gifts to every man, properly measured to assist us in our temple building service. This, of course, would be the substance of an entire chapter, but the diligent student will want to carefully compare the Old Testament passages surrounding God's provision for His earthly temple, with the entire fourth chapter of Ephesians, and 1 Corinthians 3:9-15.

B. Understand Why this Prophecy is Important to Us.

We need to get this down to where the rubber meets the road. We need to change our attitudes so that our actions will change accordingly.

1. We were not left here to sit, soak, and sour.

We were placed into the body of Messiah in order to carry out Messiah's task of being a light to the Gentiles. Half of the problems in our lives result from the fact that we do not understand our purpose. We are not personally focused on our task. We may still be waiting for the bus. We are here to be a light to the nations.

2. We are in a great spiritual contest , *not* a physical contest.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places].

This warfare is spiritual warfare, against spiritual forces. We are in it *collectively*. Soldiers always fight collectively. We are in the body of Messiah, carrying out His task. You cannot go to war by yourself. "You're in the body now."

3. We *will* fail on the battle field if we do not use our spiritual weapons.

The whole point of Ephesians six is that the soldier going into battle carries both weapons and supplies. It is unthinkable that he would enter conflict without logistical support.

4. We *will* fail on the battlefield if we do not use our spiritual gifts.

Satan does not want to see you *activated*. He wants you to think you are in the reserves.

Here is the bottom line. We have devoted the better part of two lessons warning about Satan's abuse of spiritual gifts. We have warned about the demonic intrusion into the practice of spiritual gifts that is all around us, and the blasphemy that insults the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, we need to understand and affirm the most important point of all. If you have turned a deaf ear to the discussion of spiritual gifts because of all the confusion that surrounds them today, you too, have fallen prey to Satan's tactic. The last thing Satan wants is a healthy enemy. The last thing he wants you to know is that you, even as a brand new Christian, have a spiritual gift, a divine enablement. You have a gift that God has given you in order to nurture and maintain His body so that His body can be about His task. Do not let your reaction to the abuse of spiritual gifts rob you of the treasure that Jesus Christ designed and measured out personally, just for you, through His Holy Spirit. Open your package!

If you are not using your gift, you are hurting *me*. You are hurting and hindering the person next to you. You are hurting *your family*. You are hurting and hindering *the body of Christ*. You see, the real question is not, "*What is my gift?*" The real question is "*Do I want to use my gift?*" In most homes, the presents left under the tree for Christmas are all opened on Christmas day. We do not leave them around until April or May. We open them. Some of us may well be in the Septembers, Octobers and even Decembers of our lives, and we have not put our gifts to work in the body.

If you are without Christ and without any of the benefits of spiritual warfare, keep in mind what Paul says about you. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:21 that you need to *recover yourself from the snare of the wicked one because he has made you captive at his will*. You are a helpless pawn in a great spiritual war you may not even know is going on.

Jesus Christ wants to save you and set you free. He wants to place you in His body. He wants to enable you to serve Him. He wants to give you victory. You can be baptized into His body this very hour!

Gifts - Their Designation and Organization

Intro: Move to 1 Corinthians 12 and put your hiking shoes on. We have some mountain climbing to do as we begin the third study in this series on chapter 12. We are discussing the profitable use of gifts.

When we approach the discussion, we approach some of the most controversial issues that divide the body of Christ at this very hour. As early as two hundred years ago, there were few issues related to gifts and no noticeable divisions among the body on the subject. That was all to change, however, with the rise of mysticism and the holiness movement, first in Europe and then spilling over to our shores. Then, with what was touted as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Kansas City and, again, at the Azusa Street Mission in L.A. the church was launched into a new era, *a divisive era*. On the one side, those in the Arminian camps became convinced that the days of signs and wonders were returning in fulfillment of prophecy and in response to the great apostasy of our time. On the other side, the Calvinists have become increasingly convinced over the years that those purported signs and wonders and supernatural manifestations would not likely follow a movement as biblically ignorant, doctrinally remiss, and ecumenically attached as the charismatic movement.

And the end result? When we sing "*We are not divided, all one body we, one in hope and doctrine, one in purity,*" we sing a lie. It may be true with respect to our position in Christ but it is a lie with respect to our practice. It would be better if we sang it "*One in hope, not doctrine, such an irony.*"

And why is this division in the body such an irony? It is an irony because the very gifts of the Spirit that were intended to help us celebrate our unity in one body - the body of Christ - have been the very gifts that have been used to drive the wedge between us - and that, my friend, is the irony. Therefore, we will not study these verses in order to *prove* our position and put our theological enemies down. Instead, we will study them to *form* our position and lovingly win others to what the Word of God says.

Paul says, in verse 4 where we left off in our last study:

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

That leads us to ask:

I. Gifts in General

A. What is a gift?

Charisma {charisma - khar'-is-mah}, the Greek word for gift occurs 17 times in the Bible. It can be used in a general sense meaning an undeserved favor that anyone receives without any merit of his own.

More specifically, though, Paul is talking here about *gifts of the Spirit*. And, in this context, using our Lexicon we see that Paul is referring to "*grace or gifts denoting extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating on their souls by the Holy Spirit*"

Now, remember that is a good definition from a good Gentile lexicon. The Bible does not even define what a *gift* is. It only refers to *charisma* as though our common sense would tell us what it is. To compound matters, the Bible doesn't tell us what a *sign* is. The Bible does not give us the definition of an *Apostle* or a *Prophet*. In each case, the Holy Spirit seems to expect us to know. The whole discussion is very *Jewish*. Jews aren't as driven by definitions as they are by moods, and themes, and signs. Definitions bore them to tears. They are beyond that.

We Gentiles want our *wisdom*. We want to observe, classify, organize and chart the data. We want to index it, sum it, and make the sum of the parts equal to the whole. The Jews on the other hand want to *feel it*. They want to *see it*. They want to make the sum of the parts *greater* than the whole.

It helps to stop thinking so much like a Gentile and begin thinking like a Jew! Second question:

B. How many gifts are there?

Answer, "So, who cares?" Stop thinking like a Gentile! No one knows how many gifts there are and no one should *care* how many gifts there are! That ruins the whole argument of the passage in front of us. Paul says there are diversities of gifts that the Holy Spirit gives *as He wills*, to every man.

Again, we must look at the Bible as a Jew would look at the Bible. Let me illustrate. On the Gentile chart that you have in front of you entitled: "A Comparative Chart of the Spiritual Gifts," you will find every mention (*Well, maybe* every mention) of a spiritual gift in the Bible. Why do I say maybe? Is casting out demons a gift or is it just a sign? Was Peter's ability to perceive Simon's gall a gift or just a sign? Look at these lists, taken from the four key passages on gifts.

[See Visual: A Comparative Chart of the Spiritual Gifts]

None of the lists are complete. None of the lists agree. They are not intended to be inclusive. All Paul ever did was give us *samplings* of the gifts. And all we are doing (in our Gentile way of looking at things) is to take four *sample lists* of gifts and combine them. But these are just samplers. There is no way of knowing that we have the whole box of candy on our list.

So, not to worry! Who cares? When someone asks you, "*How many gifts are there?*" You can talk to them like a Jewish mom, "*Who knows? Who cares? Eat your bagels!*" The spiritual gifts will not submit to a head count or a yardstick. You cannot put the Holy Spirit in a box. Leave Him alone and stop trying to fit Him on a spreadsheet.

"Ah, So!" you say! "But, how will we ever defeat those disobedient charismatic rascals who let their imaginations go wild running around slaying each other in the Spirit?" In reality, *If* they have the truth, I want it! If they have the lie, this Book will expose it and lay their emotional charades bare for what they really are. So I am not *threatened* by pesky disobedient charismatic rascals. However, this does lead us to the third question:

C. If we cannot really define (for sure) what a gift is, how can we discern?

If we cannot even make a conclusive list of how many gifts there are, how can we discern the false from the true? How can we protect ourselves from the false?

To quote a former president: "*Now, that is a very good question.*" But first, let me urge you; don't be so uptight about it. If you did end up speaking in tongues (perish the thought) it would not kill you. You would not die. Remember, when we tense up and *react* to someone else's abuse we usually find that we *close our own minds* to the truth, often espousing radical positions opposite to the things we oppose. When we are *reactionary*, we are not free to consider all the facts. Chill out. The Word of God will stand forever. We have seen our God lead many folks out of the charismatic movement, folks who were initially sold out to it. However, if we are threatened and afraid of the discussion we will be of little help to our friends.

D. What then, is the key?

While the Bible *does not* literally define our gifts and tell us how many there really are, the Bible *does* give us enough information to work with and to protect ourselves from the doctrines of demons. Remember, if you, as a believer, are not under the control of the Holy Spirit in the use of your gift you may be under the influence (not possession) of a demon, an imposter spirit. You must be sure.

The Bible *does* help us. It *does* classify gifts according to their purposes, giving us enough *examples* so that we can shape our mindsets. If we *want* to know, the truth can be found. The Bible classifies gifts *in different ways* depending upon the

subject under discussion. I am only going to provide two or three examples, and the first is in front of us.

II. Gifts Classified According to Unction

You are actually looking at that classification right now. Look at this list of gifts between verse 8 and verse 11, but before we start asking questions such as, "What is the word of wisdom?" or "What are the gifts of healings?" we must ask two other questions. 1.) What is Paul's Argument, and, 2.) What is Paul's Organization?

A. What is Paul's Argument?

If we read verses 4-11 without stopping to sniff out the gifts, (as we usually do) we can find the argument. Read them out loud placing the emphasis where this pastor believes Paul intended it to go. I have underlined the words to emphasize for this purpose. We're going for the big picture, now, the theme, the argument. Later we'll get out the microscope.

*1Corinthians 12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.
6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.
7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.
8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;
9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;
10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another [divers] kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:
11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Did you get the *big picture*? Of course you did! Paul wants us to know *clearly* that while there may be many gifts there is only *one* Spirit. He is the prime mover. He divides these gifts to men severally as He wills.

That is the argument. That is foundational. Next, Paul will develop that idea when he *also* tells us that there is *one* body. Incidentally, the very fact that some so-called gifts are causing division in the body is strong evidence to question whether those purported gifts are of the Holy Spirit. He is not divided against Himself.

However, that was the easy question. What is Paul's Argument? Now, we ask ourselves:

B. What is Paul's Organization?

Look at the list beginning with verse 8. Is there an order here? We see word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, and so forth. Are these just listed randomly, or was Paul organized in his thoughts? The answer is, yes, it does *appear* to be an organized list. Keep in mind that the following paragraphs are based on observation only. No direct statements in the Word of God support this observation. It is worthy, however, of serious consideration.

There are *different kinds of people* receiving *different kinds of gifts*. Unfortunately, one can only see this in the Greek. Look at the attached chart and observe:

1. There are *two* common Greek words translated "another" in English. One, *allos*, means *another of the same kind*. The other word, *heteros* means *another of a different kind*.

2. Thus, by respecting these two words, we observe three kinds of people and corresponding gifts. But *what* seems to be separating them? Remember, the subject is the Holy Spirit and His involvement. If you will look at the list you will notice a trend. What do we have at the very top? We have the *word of wisdom* and the *word of knowledge*. What do we have at the very end of the list?

Tongues and their interpretation. Is there any wisdom or intelligence required with the use of tongues? The answer is no. The man who speaks in tongues is *only a channel* of divine revelation and his knowledge level is not a factor. Consider what I believe Paul is saying about the Holy Spirit. It has to do with the matter of unction, the level of the Spirit's participation in the gift:

In all three cases, or kinds of believers, we have two personalities at work: The personality of the Holy Spirit and the personality of the believer.

In the first group, *word of wisdom* and *word of knowledge*, the Holy Spirit is there. He is operating. *He* is providing the *word*, but nonetheless the believer is the dominant player. The Spirit is in the background. We might say that there is a *lower* level of Spirit unction. Instead of the Spirit dictating, He uses the mind, personality, and wisdom of the believer to assert the word. We see this same kind of ministry present in the process of inscripturation, 1 Cor. 2:13).

Skip to the last group where the very opposite occurs. The man is there, but the Holy Spirit is the *key* player. The man does not necessarily *know* what he is saying. We might say that this is a *high* level of Spirit unction with a low level of cognitive participation in the believer exercising the gift.

And the middle group? The middle group of five gifts represents gifts where the Spirit's dominance and the believer's dominance can vary. Take prophecy as an example and consider Isaiah or David. We pick up our Bibles and start reading a Psalm of David. We know it is God-breathed, we know it is inspired. But suddenly, it is as though David is no longer speaking. His words, his vocabulary, and his personality changes, and we now find a man immersed in the musings of

Messiah. The personality of Messiah is so strong that it can in no way be confused with David's personality. Then, the next thing you know, it is David writing again. The point is that both personalities, the Holy Spirit's and the believer's actively participate in the performance of the gift.

So, what is Paul doing? Personally, I believe he is explaining to us that regardless of the kind of gift or level of involvement of the participants, it is *the same Holy Spirit* behind it. There is one Spirit in contrast to many demons. We can always test the gift by its consistency with its source and its fruit, even though there may be levels of unction involved in the gift.

Something else is very important to notice in this particular sampling of gifts. Look over the list again and observe that all of the gifts have something in common. In our next study we will see that all of the gifts in this list have something to do with the Word of God. This is a very important point that cannot be ignored. Every gift in this list has either to do with the reception or authentication of God's Word, every single one. In fact, that key unlocks our whole understanding of the subject. Hold on to it! Each gift relates to the ministry of the Word!

Now, you say, *"Okay, I think I can see that these gifts are organized according to unction. I think I understand what Paul is saying. He is saying that, regardless of the level of unction it is the same Holy Spirit who enables all the gifts. But is this the only way in which gifts are organized?"*

The answer is no. Look now at the *next* sampler, the next list of gifts that is found in verses 28 and 29.

III. Gifts Classified According to Position

Read the verses in this second sampler and notice that there *is* a hierarchy. There is a cardinal order.

1Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

29 [Are] all apostles? [are] all prophets? [are] all teachers? [are] all workers of miracles?

First, come the apostles, then come the prophets, then come the teachers, and finally, come the various tongues speakers. We are *all* equal. We are all important. However, we are not *anarchists*. There is a divine order given for the exercise of the gifts and God expects us to respect this order.

In nature, animals instinctively follow a pecking order. Each knows his place, his role. In nature, the order is established by brute strength. This is not so in God's body. The level of authority in Christ's body is determined first, by the level of *responsibility* associated with it.

The apostles came first, then the prophets, then the teachers. Our human bodies are built the same way. All of our parts are equal. All are needed. God balances the comely with the uncomely. However, there is still an *order*, a pecking order, right within our bodies.

To this point we have seen that we can classify gifts according to unction, and according to position or priority. We now see a third means of classifying gifts.

IV. Gifts Classified According to Function

The most important question we want to ask about spiritual gift is “*What is the purpose of this gift? What is its function in the body?*”

In our *next* study we will expand this point and classify every one of these sampler gifts according to one or two *functions*. We seek to understand their *purpose* and how they have been designed for use. You may be surprised at how much the Bible has to say about the *functions* of the gifts.

We will conclude this chapter with the summary found in verse 12.

1Corinthians 12:12. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is] Christ.

We want to end exactly where we ended our last study. Notice those last words. Reading literally from the Greek they say, “...so also, *the Christ*.” The Messiah, Jesus Christ is the *head* of this body. We are the hands and the feet and all of the other parts. It is a spiritual body made up of all believers and it cannot be seen.

We have no hesitancy about preaching the truth of the Word of God. It is our only hope. Someone has to stem the tide. Someone must rebuke disobedience. Someone must shame those who are compromising the truths of Christ. Someone needs to name names and withstand compromisers to their faces. We do that here. But, in our firm stand for righteousness and obedience there is a line we can cross. There is a message that we can send. It is a message that says “*We don't really love you.*” Now, we cannot change our stand in order to communicate our love. We cannot compromise the truth. That is not true love. However, there are some things we can do.

First, we can always treat our brethren in Christ with love and respect, even those pesky charismatics, those outrageous seeker church people, and those uptight legalistic fundamentalists. Moreover, we can exercise our gifts on behalf of them all. When we face daily life we face two obstacles. First, we go into a world of unbelief. Secondly, we enter a world of confused and mixed up Christians who are divided by Satan. Both groups need to see that we love them. As

long as we withhold our respect from those who feel they are sincerely right, we are also withholding our love. We can still express love without compromising our stand.

We can do that. We can do that with the *gifts* and opportunities that God has given to us. We can do it by reaching out, even at times at the risk of being seen as compromisers. We can do that by approaching those who differ from us with love and with the facts.

It is not enough that the local church be known as a church that stands for the truth. It must be known as a church that cares for and loves the lost and those who disagree with it. God did not call us to build a citadel; He called us to build a hospital ward to care for the hurting and the lost around us.

Now, how can we do that? How can we stand firm and still be loving and caring? We can do it by remembering just *who* we are. We are the arms, legs, and feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are His body in action. When Christ shows His love this week, will it be through you and me? If He ministers to anyone, opens any blind eyes, weeps with any who sorrow, will it be our loving arms that are stretched out? Will it be our words? Our prayers?

Finally, if you are without Christ, struggling through the complexity of all we have taught, can you just remember this? Jesus Christ wants us to become a part of His life, and He wants to be a part of ours. You will never feel right; you will never feel full, satisfied, or fulfilled until you come into a living relationship with this One who wants to place the Holy Spirit in your heart. You can know the joy of having your sins forgiven, your eternal destiny in glory assured, and your present life on earth enhanced and enriched with the presence of Christ.

How Signs and Gifts Relate

Intro: We desire to be students of the Book and we desire to be relevant. A while back, I received a letter from an old friend who presented a list of questions for me to answer. Some of them read like this:

I hear much about people on TV programs who say the Lord told them to do this or that. Is that true? Pat Robertson said that a few days ago - Is he so holy that the Lord really talks to him? ...and what about healing?.. (and)...Why do they fall backwards when they are supposed to be struck by the Holy Spirit?...Also, do you speak in tongues?..

My point, Christian friend, is that the issues we are facing deserve careful study. We must not be accused of the precept upon precept, line upon line, *here a little, there a little* mentality of Old Testament Jews who picked and chose what they wanted to hear. Instead, we want to *think as God thinks*. We want to reason with God.

Here are some concepts you should have mastered so far in our study of 1 Corinthians 12.

1. You must understand that the narrow study of spiritual *gifts* falls under the broader study of spiritual *manifestations*. The essential Pauline argument is that while demon manifestations come from many sources, *spiritual gifts* all come from one source, the Holy Spirit. Such gifts will *become* or *adorn* the Holy Spirit. True spiritual gifts will be recognizable because they will reflect the personality of the Holy Spirit. In contrast, a great deal of what we see represented as spiritual gifts are more in keeping with the disorderly behavior of demons, than they are in keeping with the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge.

2. We introduced the *second* concept in the last study. We learned that, while gifts are not easily defined, they *can* be *classified* according to their nature and purpose. We said that gifts can be classified in at least three ways:

In verses 8-10 we saw that gifts can be classified according to UNCTION. (For a detailed explanation, be sure to get a tape of our last message on this subject.) Regardless of the unction level, it is the *same* Spirit working in the exercise of the gift.

In verses 28-29 we saw that gifts can be classified according to POSITION (or priority). This sample list of gifts goes from the most important to the least important. These gifts are listed according to the level of responsibility and authority related to their exercise.

Then, we explained that spiritual gifts can also be classified according to their FUNCTION. They are defined by their purpose and their use. We then left the study for this lesson.

So, take a quick look at the chart that we supplied once again:

[See Visual: A Comparative Chart of the Spiritual Gifts]

I. First, notice that some of these gifts are related *only* to an *office*.

These include the office of Prophet, Apostle, Pastor/Teacher, and Evangelist. We reserve them for later discussion.

II. Secondly, we see that every other gift falls into one of two categories.

A. Some are church related.

They are saint related. Their use is obvious. They are primarily for the edification of the body of Christ. They include teaching, ministry, ruling, governments, exhorting, giving, showing mercy, and quite possibly, helps.

B. Some gifts are Word related.

They are sign related. They focus on confirming witness to unbelievers whereas the first list focuses on ministry to saints. They include, not without coincidence, the entire passage in front of us (Vs 8-10) including prophecy, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, discerning spirits, tongues, and interpretation.

We may say then, that there are *two* groups or *two* designations by purpose, the edifying, saint-related gifts on the one hand, and the confirming, sign related gifts on the other.

There is *little controversy* concerning the first group, there is *great controversy* over the second group. The charismatics are quick to argue that all of these gifts are presently functioning and available in the body of Christ today. Noncharismatics who know their Bibles argue that there is *no evidence* that this second group is functioning *at this point* in history.

[See Visual: Gifts Related, 1, 2, or 3]

The stakes are very great. *If these gifts are functioning*, the noncharismatic is missing out on great tools and resources for witnessing and winning the lost. He

is only half equipped for battle. He is out of step with the working of the Holy Spirit and he has effectively denied the claims of the Word of God.

If these gifts are not functioning, the charismatic is guilty of a fearful list of errors. He has allowed Satan and his demons to deceive him, and he has added to the Word of God by his purported revelations. He has divided the Body of Christ with his "Johnny come lately" doctrines of the last century or so, and he has made us all more vulnerable to the irrepressible wave of ecumenism that is sweeping our world. The stakes are high. There is no middle ground.

Therefore, you see, you have a perfect right to ask, "By what right do you call these gifts 'signs'?" and; "Why do you say these gifts are not necessary now, in these evil last days?" And, "Why do you say you have seen no evidence of their biblical existence today?" It is time to answer these three questions, and wrap up this study.

III. Three Burning Questions

A. Question # 1: "By what right do you call these gifts 'signs'?"

We call these gifts sign gifts because that is how the Bible designates them. The following is spoken by the mouth of the Lord Jesus:

Mark 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

19. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with [them], and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. [Underline mine]

A. Consider Three Salient Facts:

Fact # 1. This passage belongs in the Word of God. It is true that it is not found in the two over emphasized Greek manuscripts, but its authenticity has never been disproved. It is well quoted by early teachers and is in full agreement with the Word of God.

Fact # 2. In this passage, the following were specifically designated as signs: casting out devils in Christ's name, *new* tongues (probably new to the speaker), taking up serpents, drinking deadly potions, and healing.

Fact # 3. These signs were given explicitly for a singular purpose. The Lord Jesus Himself personally worked these signs through them, *confirming the word*, with signs *following*. (The secret of New Covenant ministry lies in the under girding fact that Messiah is now carrying out His prime directives that He began through His body.)

Focus on this third statement. *Why* did the Lord Jesus work these signs? Answer: He was *confirming the word*. What word was He confirming and why did it need to be confirmed? The word was the spoken Word of God, not the written Word of God. Nowhere in scripture do we see any evidence of the *written* Word of God being confirmed with a sign except with the giving of the tables of stone. Only *new revelation* as it is revealed from heaven is confirmed in this manner.

B. Consider signs in Old Testament times.

A sign is a token. It is a token that confirms God's Word. When we read our Old Testaments we see that God used signs in one of three ways:

1). He would call objects or procedures a sign.

For example, the Sabbath, and circumcision are both signs and tokens of God's special relationship with Israel.

2). He would use a sign to authenticate the message and authority of a prophet.

Hezekiah's sundial or Gideon's fleece are good examples. This is how the Old Testament believer knew that new information was coming from God.

3). He would use a sign to indicate great prophetic changes in His program.

There are two exceptional periods in the Old Testament where God relied heavily upon signs. The first, was at the Passover as God used Moses' miracles (literally, signs) to convince Pharaoh that a change was underway. Secondly, while the Bible does not specifically call them signs, God used signs prolifically on Mt. Sinai with the giving of the law to Moses. There were great voices, thundering, clouds of darkness, and so forth. Once again, God was confirming the giving of His covenant, and the inception of a new economy.

After this, signs were used only incidentally to confirm the messages of the prophets, or they were used explicitly to confirm and announce great prophesied events yet to come.

Next, we come to the New Testament where we suddenly encounter a great outpouring of signs. Again, they centered around two events.

First, they centered on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Passover Lamb. The Bible says that many signs and wonders accompanied His ministry. In fact, the Gospel of John is a classic textbook on signs as we see the Lord Jesus perform exactly seven of them in fulfillment, again, of the Old Testament scriptures. The signs that followed the Lord Jesus *confirmed His message* and *confirmed a change in God's program*. Peter said in Acts 2:22:

*Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man ap-
proved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by
him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*

Immediately following the life of Christ, the book of Acts reports that the Apostles in particular and a few others performed great *signs and wonders*. These signs were always among unbelievers, and they were always to *confirm* the *word* being spoken by the disciples. These signs were first to convince unbelieving Jews that, once again, *another change* was coming about. They also convinced the apostles themselves that they were on target with their message.

Again, why were signs needed? They were needed to *confirm the message* of the apostles because God was *revealing new information, new truth*. God was bringing about a change. These signs were the assurance that God was bringing about a change and that He was approving the new message.

We asked three questions.

Question # 1: "*By what right do you call these gifts 'signs'?*" The answer: Because that is what the Bible calls them. Now, the second:

B. Question # 2: Why do you say these gifts are not necessary now, in these evil last days?"

The charismatic says to himself, "If things were bad then, consider how much worse things are now! If we needed miracles then, we surely need them now! Why wouldn't God do the same for us?"

It sounds reasonable. It is a simple exercise in math. Our generation is wicked to the bone. We need all the help we can get. Right? Wrong. That is not the reason signs and wonders were given. Signs were given for two purposes, not three.

Signs were given to confirm the spoken Word of God that had not yet been written and to authenticate or approve the one delivering the message. Secondly, signs and wonders were given to signal a great change in God's program.

So, when would a sign or sign gifts be valid? Based on the history of their use in scriptures, they would only be valid if God was again confirming that He was revealing more of His Word or if God was signaling another grand change in His program.

Notice 2 Peter 1:16 and follow this argument right from the mouth of an apostle Peter himself, who saw the end of his own ministry coming. Peter said:

2Peter 1:16. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

19. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.

Did you pick up on it? Just *exactly what* is the more sure word of prophecy? What saves us from *private interpretations*? The *more sure word of prophecy is the scripture, the written Word of God*. You see, the Bible teaches us that *signs and wonders* can be imitated and falsified, Matthew 24:24. The Scriptures stand the test of time. Not even Rome, with all her power, may privatize the written Word of God! They stand alone and need no affirming word from the “fathers.”

It comes as no surprise that by the time early church history arrives at the end of the book of Acts the *signs and wonders* have disappeared. They had served their purpose. The written Word of God was fast coming together and the new economy based on the New Covenant was firmly in place.

What then, is the twofold purpose of a sign? It is to *confirm new revelation* and to *signal a change* in God's economy.

Address the third question:

C. Question # 3: Why do you say you have seen no evidence of their biblical existence today?"

By now, you can probably see where we are going. We have the written Word of God, so we do not *need* signs for that purpose. Secondly, God has not yet signaled or signified that a change is coming in His economy.

This is where charismatics are woefully lacking in their Bible exposition. The charismatics argue that we are now in the last days and that the day of *signs and wonders* has returned in *fulfillment of prophecy* and this is the reason why they are now recurring. You need to know they are grabbing for straws and barking at the moon.

First, *if that is the case*, God is *way* behind schedule! God's *manifest* signs do not typically *precede* His changes in economy; God's signs accompany those changes to affirm that the changes are *purposed* by Him. Charismatics have been claiming that their signs and wonders have been signaling the end *for over one hundred years!* If these signs and wonders signal the end, God is a little late for the train! Of course, that is not the salient point. We only say that as a tease

to provoke the serious charismatic brother to think. The real point is in the words of the Lord Jesus who was asked this very question.

Read Acts 2:16-21 and listen in on Peter as he was explaining what these signs at Pentecost concerned. You see, everyone was quite impressed on that Pentecost morning. This was a super event. However, Peter was saying, *this was only the beginning!* He was explaining that these few signs shown on Pentecost were only precursors of a coming day. Here is what Peter said:

Acts 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

21 And it shall come to pass, [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In 122 words, what was Peter saying? One day, all of Israel will have the Spirit of God poured out on her, but *before* that happens there will be signs in the earth beneath, blood, fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, *before* the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. When the apostles asked the Lord Jesus what the *sign* of His coming would be, do you recall what He said? He did not say that first there would be miracles, and healings, and tongues. He said that first, there would be false prophets arising showing *their* signs and wonders, deceiving, if possible, the very elect, (Matthew 24:11 and 24). And, *then* shall the coming of the Son of man be.

In summary, when you read Joel 2, Matthew 24, and Luke 21 carefully and prayerfully you will be quick to discover these facts:

a. The signs of the end of the age and the coming of Christ relate to the Jewish people and God's program for Israel.

The church will be gone.

b. False prophets performing signs and wonders will appear first.

Then there will be physical signs in the sun, moon, and stars.

c. Finally, God will pour out His Spirit after the return of Christ.

God will pour out His Spirit and *Israel's* sons and daughters will prophesy and dream dreams and enjoy visions.

The key: False signs and wonders will precede true signs and wonders.

When my charismatic friend shows me his signs and wonders, I run like a scared chicken, even when they are in the name of Christ. If the signs and wonders you are seeing today are the fulfillment of any Bible prophecy at all, they are precursors to the false Christs and false teachers who will condition this world to receive their false message, deceiving, if it were possible, *even the very elect*. Note: Charismatics have no easy task in absolving themselves from all the false signs and wonders to which they point, rarely, if ever, confronting them. Nothing distinguishes their signs from the false signs and wonders of Mormonism (such as the gulls), Catholicism, (such as Fatima) and tens of thousands of others.

When someone confides privately, "*You could just feel the Holy Spirit there...*" you had better run for the cover of this Book in order to be absolutely certain. Satan is an angel of light who delivers his goods in Trojan Horses. Your *sure word of prophecy* is not an inner feeling that the Holy Spirit is present and it is most assuredly not a burning in your bosom. It is the black and white ink on paper of the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures never contradict the Holy Spirit.

Did you grasp the big picture? Sign gifts relate to signs. Signs are for confirming new revelation and signaling great changes in God's program. We no longer need signs to confirm the *more sure* word of prophecy, the scriptures. The next change in God's economy will be accompanied *first* by false signs and wonders, then physical signs, and finally, dreams and visions.

Conclusion: Any signs and wonders that you see today are far more likely to be precursors of Satan's false movement than they are to be signs of the return of Christ! Guard yourself from signs, wonders, and the purported gifts associated with them. There is no middle ground.

[See Visual: Gifts Related 1,2, or 3]

Wake up, and stop being led blindly and blithely down the primrose path of ecumenism and disobedience through the false presentation of the ministry of the Holy Spirit! And, unsaved friend, you don't have a snowball's chance in Hell to avoid being deceived in that great day when false signs and wonders abound if you don't settle your account with God and allow the Lord Jesus Christ to take away your sins. Get in your Bible and read these things for yourself. Remember those last words we read in Acts, by Peter:

21 And it shall come to pass, [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved

You may not understand anything else that in this study, but you can understand this, the promise is still open at this very hour. You can come to know Christ as Savior.

Gifts and the Baptism of the Spirit

Intro: I have spent many hours alone in the mountains of Idaho, climbing, horseback riding, and hunting. As a result, those mountains have revealed some of their secrets to me. I have also spent many hours hiking, horseback riding, and hunting, so to speak, in the Word of God, and the scriptures have rewarded me with some of their treasures as well. The scriptures have their peaks and valleys, their springs, their steep slopes and gentle slopes, and the same geophysical variety as do mountains. Our study of 1 Corinthians 12 has led us, not to a valley, but to a pinnacle, a watershed, a continental divide.

You have been a patient (if not reluctant) climber with me as you have probably read a few hours already in order to get this far. However, if your feet are not too sore, I think we can scale the peak of chapter 12 now, and begin our descent into the more nurturing slopes of chapter 13.

Just before we step foot on the peak I want to remind you that we are leaving some unfinished business behind. We have listed the gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and we have taken the liberty to generally classify them as *sign* gifts. In effect, we have said that these gifts are associated with signs and should *follow the rules associated with signs*. This means that each of these gifts relate to either the revelation or confirmation of God's Word. They are particularly Jewish in nature and perspective, and it is not likely that we will see any recurrence of any aspect of these gifts until after the *false signs and wonders* predicted in Matthew and Luke have prevailed.

When I say that we have unfinished business it is because we have not really grouped these gifts or covered them individually. God permitting, we will do that on our way back down the other side of the mountain. We will deal with the words of wisdom and knowledge and prophecy, faith, miracles, and healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and the discerning of spirits later in our study. For now, however, we must return to the argument and the flow of the passage in order to keep our sense of momentum.

I. Body Basics

1Corinthians 12

11 *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

12. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is] Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

This is Biblical Anatomy 101. You already know the main argument, because Paul has made it so undeniably clear. It is:

A. The Argument of Common Nature

There may be many gifts and many varieties of gifts, *but there is one origin for them all*. There is One Spirit. This, of course, is the main thread of 1 Corinthians 12. There is *one* Spirit in contrast to *many* demons and *many* demonic manifestations. Why is this important to us? It is important for the purpose of recognition. Spiritual gifts will suit their giver, the Holy Spirit.

Look again at verse 12 and notice:

B. The Argument of Common Identity.

The argument shifts from the *gifts* that the people possess to the people themselves.

12. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is] Christ.

Personally, I believe that this is what Paul is saying. Just as there is a wide variety of gifts, but only one Holy Spirit, so there is a wide variety of believers, but only one body, the body of the Christ. Once again, the dominant theme is *unity in diversity*. This struggle of individual versus group and group versus individual has gone on from the beginning of time.

1. Now, we could view this verse politically. When we study, for example, the philosophical bases for world governments we see socialism on the one hand and capitalism on the other. The issue is far deeper than just economics. The socialist says that *unity* must come first, and the ultimate success of the group takes precedent over the rights of any individual. The capitalist says that *diversity* comes first; the right of the *individual* must never be lightly surrendered to the rights of the group. Both, of course, are wrong. E Pluribus Unum looks good on paper, but in reality, pluralism will destroy us. You see, there must be a *third element*, a meeting place between the individual and the group. There must be a *head* to the body.

2. We could also talk about reconciling the issue of unity and diversity from a philosophical perspective. We will omit this discussion, except to say that Francis Schaeffer has done some excellent work in this regard, as he has pointed out that *only in the Trinity* can the philosophical struggle between unity and plurality

be satisfied. This is the dynamic and beauty of the Trinity. Be thankful that we have avoided *that* trail at this time.

3. Instead, we will only talk about this verse biblically. Paul is, in effect, telling us, that the *only way* we can meet the needs of both the individual and the group is in a correct understanding of the body of Christ. Only, as born again Christians, in Christ's body can we be free to be fully ourselves and remain fully a part of the group. In this maddening struggle for identity that worldlings relentlessly pursue, the only answer is in the doctrine of the body of Christ.

Only in the body of Christ can we find the perfect blend of unity and diversity. As the body is one and yet has many members, so also, is the Christ. The miracle, then, of the doctrine of the body of Christ, is that it reconciles the struggle between the individual and the group, between unity and diversity. It gives us *equality* and *individuality* at the same time. For you mountain hikers, this is a trailhead that will lead you to revolutionary new ideas in government and philosophy, but it is not the substance of Sunday preaching or this Bible study!

Our third point *is* the subject of serious Bible study, however, as we notice:

C. The Argument of Common Birth and Baptism

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

When we first look at this verse, it is like standing at the bottom of the mountain looking up. It does not look *that high*. It is only as we start climbing that we get a real appreciation. This verse looks too innocent and incidental to be the great pinnacle, the great watershed that I claim it to be. Yet, as you will soon see, it is. It deserves our careful attention. Consider first,

1. The *Person* of Spirit Baptism.

This may come as a surprise. The Person of Spirit baptism is *not* the Holy Spirit. He is only the agent. He is not the One who actually *does* the baptism. We must be careful about our "body language".

Unfortunately, our English Bibles read "*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...*" [Underline mine] This is because the Greek word "εν" {en} can be translated "*in, by, or with*". However, in this case, the proper translation should be "with." We are never baptized "*by*" the Holy Spirit. We are only baptized *with* the Holy Spirit. How do we know that and why does it matter?

a. We know that to be a fact, because the Bible says it is so. The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the One who baptizes us into His own body. The Holy Spirit is simply the *agent*. If I wash my car with water, who is actually washing the car?

Christ baptizes with the Spirit. Turn with me to Matthew 3:11 and notice that John the Baptizer is speaking. John says:

Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and [with] fire:

12 Whose fan [is] in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Who is the speaker? John the Baptist. Who is the One coming after him? The Lord Jesus. What *two things* will the Lord Jesus do? He will baptize with the Holy Spirit. He will baptize with fire.

These are not *the same act*. These are two acts. He will baptize *some* with the Holy Spirit and He will baptize *the rest* with fire, unquenchable fire, the fire of judgment reserved for the chaff.

Every living person *will be baptized*, either with the Holy Spirit or with judgment fire!

The story is told of a great fire on the open prairies that was sweeping rapidly toward a party of pioneers who faced certain extinction if they did not act quickly. A veteran quickly gave the instructions for the pioneers to start a fire immediately. When asked why they would do such a thing, he replied, "We shall stand where the fire has been!" That is what happens to the Christian who is baptized into the body of Christ. He stands where the fire of God's wrath has already been. He is hidden in the Son. Everyone else will be baptized with fire!

May God spare you, by bringing you into the body of Christ through your salvation! This body is fast being completed, but there is still room for more; there is still room for you!

So, what have we learned? We have learned that it is Jesus Christ who baptizes us into His body and that it is not really Spirit baptism, the Holy Spirit is simply the agent just as water is the agent in believers' baptism. Now, we ask,

b. Why is that important?

Well, *first*, it is important because it helps us understand *when* this baptism occurs. It occurs at the time of our salvation. *Secondly*, it is important because it places the focus on Jesus Christ, not on the Holy Spirit. The glory and the attention surrounding this doctrine belong to Christ. Look at the simple logic of this passage. Look at the verse again. It is so simple, so basic:

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

What are the only two things that happen when we are baptized with the Spirit? We are baptized into the Christ and we are all made to drink into one Spirit. Look at the Person of this verse. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself baptizes us using the Spirit as an agent. Now, see:

2. The *Participants* in Spirit Baptism.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

How many does “*all*” include? As far as we know, the word *all* still includes *everyone*. Everyone who has received Christ has received this baptism, every single person, *all*.

There are some well-meaning brothers in Christ who have come up with some strange ideas about this baptism. They tell us that there are two levels of the Christian walk. One is the birth level and the other is the true spiritual level. One becomes truly spiritual only *after* he has received a second work of grace, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The logic implies that we receive the Holy Spirit at a later point (after salvation) and that we must seek Him and this baptism. The problem with that is that the Bible does not provide us with any instructions as to how we must seek this baptism. We cannot seek what we already have. Nor would there be any doctrinal or theological necessity for such a pursuit because, once placed in Christ, we have *all* of Him.

In the interest of fairness, you need to know that some of this misunderstanding has arisen from our study of the book of Acts. Acts is a transitional book, but it is doctrinally accurate. It records the transition of the church from the Jewish economy to the church or grace economy. In order to help folks understand a change was taking place, the Holy Spirit supplied the church with the *sign gifts* we talked about in our last study.

One of those gifts, *speaking in tongues*, was associated three times in Acts with this baptism by the Holy Spirit. Each time it was proof that the persons involved *had* become saved in accordance with the giving of this New Covenant and *had* been baptized into the body of Christ. Modern tongues advocates miss this point. If the tongues were still evident, the very first place they would be seen is *at conversion*, as evidence that real salvation had taken place.

The problem is this. In one instance, and only one, recorded in the book of Acts, folks received salvation, but the sign of their conversion was *delayed*. The story is found in Acts 8:5-17.

Philip had gone to Samaria and had begun evangelizing Samaritans. Samaritans were a mixed race, mixed with Jew and Gentile. Philip was quick to discover that his signs and wonders worked as well among them as among the Jews and that they too could be saved. However, the Bible says, that the Holy Spirit was not poured out upon them *until* the Apostles came up from Jerusalem to see what was going on. Why did God allow this? Did He want us to see that the Apostles approved? On the contrary, He wanted the apostles to see that He approved of the salvation of the Samaritans.

That is the only instance in scripture where the outward evidence of the reception of the Holy Spirit was delayed. Otherwise, it always occurred *with* salvation.

Now, *if* outward signs were still accompanying the baptism of the Holy Spirit, where would they most likely occur? They would occur *at the point of salvation*, just as they did at Pentecost; just as they did at the household of Cornelius. Yet today, the very opposite occurs.

Let's bring this down home to where we live. This is what we have said:

When we study this passage we see that Paul is providing three arguments in verses 11-13.

a. The argument of a common nature. There is only ONE Spirit, the Holy Spirit who is active in this process.

b. The argument of a common identity. Though there are many members, there is only one body. We have the wonderful blend of unity and diversity, because we are one body and Jesus Christ is our head. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism - one body.

c. The argument of a common birth and baptism. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Person of our baptism; the Holy Spirit is only His agent. We are *all* participants in this baptism, not just a few of us. It is not correct to speak of the baptism *of* the Holy Spirit. It is more accurate to speak of the baptism *with* the Holy Spirit, because it is the Lord Jesus who baptizes us into Christ. The Holy Spirit is His agent. This baptism is synonymous with our salvation. From our perspective, this event occurs the instant we are saved. *All* believers have been placed in Christ's body. There are no exceptions.

d. This is why we must believe the scriptures:

When we insist that there is a baptism of the Holy Spirit that is apart and separate from our salvation, we rob *three people* of what is rightfully theirs:

1.) First, we rob Paul of the flow and logic of his argument. Paul says there is one Spirit, one baptism, one body and we have *all* been made to drink of that

Spirit. We have all been baptized. The whole sum of Paul's argument is that there is *one class* of believers including Jews and Gentiles. There are not *two classes*, the Spirit baptized and the non Spirit baptized. We blow the scriptures right off the page and invert their meaning to suit the purposes of the self-imagined super spiritual.

2.) Secondly, we rob Christ of the glory that is His. It is His baptism and His body. The focus is on Him. *Anytime* we demand a second work of grace we imply that the first work of grace was insufficient. We cheapen the work of the cross.

3.) Thirdly we rob you. If you have *not* had a second work of grace or a supposed baptism of the Holy Spirit, we put you in spiritual limbo, waiting and longing for the time when the Holy Spirit will really fill you and use you. Christian, you are complete in Christ. Your salvation is complete. You are standing in Him. You have the Holy Spirit. You need nothing else, nothing. You are not the second class Christian some want you to think you are because you have not shared *their* ecstasy. And, for all who claim such experiences, will one of them explain why the quality of their walk, life, and witness is no greater than the quality of life, walk, and witness of those who have not had this supposed ecstatic experience? What permanent, long lasting consequence have they experienced that the rest of Christ's faithful saints have not? There is no room for spiritual snobbery in the body. There are not two *classes* that result from Calvary.

Christian friend, Satan wants to *disable* you. He wants to belittle you. He wants to accuse you. He wants you to doubt yourself, for when you doubt yourself, you doubt Christ. He wants you to think that *you* are not worthy. And, you are *not* worthy, not in yourself. However, in Jesus Christ you have *already* been given all things, everything that pertains to life and godliness. You were born with all your fingers and toes. You are complete in Christ. When a man walks up to you and says that he has been saved but he has not been baptized by the Spirit yet, you tell him that would be like being born without a body.

You were born *with* a body, the body of Christ. You are a part of me and I am a part of you. We are all a part of Jesus Christ. We are all equal in Christ. We are one in the bond of Christ. We have joined our spirits with the Son of God.

If it happens that you are not *in Christ* and you are not a member of His body, your baptism has already been scheduled. But, it is not a baptism of joy and unity. It is not a baptism of love. It is a baptism of fire, unquenchable fire. It is a baptism of judgment. Get into the ark! Get into the place where the fire has already been. Go where God's wrath has already been outpoured! "Come to the Savior, make no delay; Here in His Word He shows us the way." Come today. Come now. Come just as you are.

Tongues in Plain English

Intro: We are moving from 1 Corinthians 13 into chapter 14. Presently, we will emphasize only tongues, not the full passage. We are charged with *two* tasks. We must not only make the scriptures clear, we must also find a means of separating the modern tongues movement, a false movement, from the true biblical expression of tongues.

That is our stated goal. We will not cover everything that there is to say about tongues. We want to present the issue of tongues in *plain English*, focusing on the *basics* of this issue. We do this so that we may be protected from the false movements around us and be enabled to confront, in a loving manner, those who are caught up in them.

We have a two-point study and we will mention the second only in passing: I. Why Biblical Tongues Are Not Present, and, II. Why Present Tongues Are Not Biblical. We begin with the first:

I. Why Biblical Tongues Are Not Present

The real issue is not whether God *can* cause men to speak in tongues. God is sovereign and can do as He jolly well pleases. Nor, are we lacking faith when we challenge the claims of tongues speakers. In truth, the man of God who is willing to rely solely on the Word of God, even to the point of denying his own experience and his own senses, is truly the man of faith. In short, one will never resolve the issue of tongues until one is willing to do this. The man of faith first, accepts the Bible as his only authority. Secondly, he stands on sound doctrine. That means he never sacrifices truth at the expense of so-called love. Thirdly, he listens to the warnings of God's Word concerning these last days and the doctrines of demons and seducing spirits. Refusing to be gullible should not be confused with lack of faith. We repeat, a man will never be settled on tongues unless he lets the Bible be his final authority, not the words of men.

When we say that biblical tongues are not present, we mean it from several perspectives:

A. Biblical Tongues Are Not Present by Virtue of their Definition.

Even the slightest glance at the Word of God will show that what occurred in the Bible and described as tongues is simply not happening today. It is simply not present.

What *is* a biblical tongue? Speaking in tongues is the ability to communicate a mystery (a biblical revelation) in a foreign language that is not otherwise understood by the speaker. Please notice those elements. If you remove *either* of these elements, the definition fails.

First, it is the ability to communicate a *mystery*. A mystery is a hitherto unrevealed secret. It is a revelation of divine truth. The Holy Spirit is, of course, the *steward* of God's mysteries. Notice 1 Corinthians 14:2:

1Corinthians 14:2 For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth [him]; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

Therefore, if a man speaks in a tongue today, he must be *revealing a mystery of God*. He must be claiming divine revelation from God. He must be handling *information*.

We will come back to this again after we notice the second element of our definition. To speak in tongues is to communicate a mystery by *translation* into a *foreign language that is not otherwise understood by the speaker*. This fact is not incidental to our understanding of tongues; it is intrinsic.

When we study Acts 2:1-13, Acts 10:44-47, Acts 11:15-18, and Acts 19:1-7 it becomes patently clear that tongues involves speaking in a foreign language. The gift of interpretation, properly called *translation* was the ability to return that information back in the language of the speaker. To speak in tongues is simply to translate a mystery of God (real information) into a foreign language. To interpret that tongue is simply to translate it back.

Modern tongues advocates rarely suggest (as they used to) that they are speaking in a foreign language. This is especially true since the advent of the tape recorder that has done great harm to their claims. They now insist they are speaking in the languages of angels, they are groaning with groanings that cannot be uttered, or, they are simply voicing ecstatic utterances. What is the problem with this logic? The problem is that it simply is not biblical. To speak in the language of angels, (even if it *was* likely, and Paul certainly suggests that it is not in 1 Corinthians 13) would make no sense. The angels do not need to hear God's mysteries from us, and we do not need to hear of God's mysteries from them. Not only that, but also, such communications would be highly *unreliable* because we know that demons can and do speak through willing people. Heaven's angels must be an ignorant bunch indeed, for, unlike Satan's demons who have no problem mastering and speaking in foreign tongues, they supposedly need us. Clearly, there would be no *purpose* in speaking the language of an angel.

Advocates of false tongues suggest that they are speaking in an unknown tongue, or language, but when they do so they fall into a simple trap. The idea of

an *unknown* tongue in the King James Bible is simply a reference to a foreign tongue. It is unknown because it is foreign. In fact, you will notice that the word *unknown* is *always* in Italics if you have a good Bible. That is because it simply does not occur in the Greek. Stop and think about it. If a tongue were truly *unknown*, it could not exist because no one would *know it*. Whether he is a man, or an angel, or God, if he knows the tongue, it is *known*.

The proponents of false tongues make one last effort to validate what they are doing by insisting that their tongues are ecstatic. We have no argument with the fact that ecstasy *could* be associated with tongues. Personally, I would think that anyone who had this gift would be ecstatic with its use. That is not the issue. The issue is it is still, biblically, a foreign language. Yet, pages and pages of documentation by linguistic experts who have analyzed tongues all agree. Gibberish is being passed off as a language. This childish repetitious recitation of certain vowel and consonantal sounds is anything but language, be those utterances of men, of angels, or of God Himself.

The modern proponent of false tongues has pulled a bait and switch on us. Because he cannot produce *biblical* tongues, tongues that communicate the mysteries of God in a foreign language, he has devised a second kind of tongue, a tongue that cannot be verified biblically. This tongue is never once described in God's Word. This alleged tongue has no correspondence to biblical tongues.

Common sense should cause every one of us to ask the question, why would God want me to accept *by faith* something that cannot even be found in His Word? Moreover, why do we fail to find even a single *verifiable* instance where *biblical* tongues, the kind spoken at Pentecost, are spoken today? Is not that a strange coincidence? Biblical tongues are not present by virtue of definition.

B. Biblical Tongues Are Not Present by Virtue of their Classification.

Note: This paragraph is an overview of our last study for those who have not read it. The Bible says, according to Mark 16:17-20, that biblical tongues are classified as signs. As signs, they must follow the definitions and rules of biblical signs. Signs were revealed to unbelievers. That is, they were often those who believed in God but who needed to have their minds changed concerning the new truth that was being given by God. As noted earlier, signs were used to signify *change* in God's economy *especially* to the Jewish people. Will we see signs again? Yes, we will, when God takes upon Himself the completion of Joel's prophecy concerning the Day of the Lord. They will *first* be noticeable by terrible changes in our galaxy. Prior to this the Bible says we will see false signs, false signs and false wonders that will deceive, if possible, the very elect of God. Concisely, signs signify changes in God's economies. There will be no new signs until the Day of the Lord comes upon the world, an event the Bride of Christ will not experience first hand. Any suggested signs or wonders in our day must necessarily be false. Biblical tongues are not present by virtue of their classification *as signs*.

C. Biblical Tongues Are Not Present by Virtue of their Purpose.

At this point in our study have a general idea why God gave us biblical tongues. You saw it in our definition of tongues. But, please look more closely:

1. Tongues Related the Gospel to the Jew.

There are some who teach that no one was ever saved because of the use of tongues. I strongly differ. Acts tells us the opposite in very understandable terms. On that day at Pentecost, Acts 2:11 says that all of those foreigners heard the wonderful works of God spoken in their own tongues. Peter's message to Israel, on the other hand, was delivered in the language of the day. While all of those present at Pentecost were Jews, this was nonetheless a great multicultural harvest day. As Jews, they were believers of a sort, but they were *unbelieving* believers. They had yet to embrace Christ. Tongues really have no purpose in Gentile evangelism. Notice 1 Corinthians 14:22 and 23:

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying [serveth] not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in [those that are] unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

When one first reads these two verses it can appear as though they contradict each other. Verse 22 says that tongues are for a sign not to them that believe but to them that believe not, {apistei' ' " – apisteis}. Yet, verse 23 says that if unbelievers come in when tongues are being spoken they will say we are mad. It is almost a contradiction. But it really is no contradiction at all. Was Thomas a believer or an unbeliever? He was both. Thomas believed in God. Thomas loved the Lord Jesus. Jesus said to Thomas,

John 20:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust [it] into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

Be not faithless, (apisteis) or unbelieving. Be not unbelieving, but believing. Therefore, Paul does not contradict himself. On the one hand, tongues serve an important role in winning the *believing unbeliever*, the Jew, who needs to see that God is changing His economy. On the other hand, it provides little value for the Gentile who can already hear the gospel in his own tongue. To the Gentile, tongues speakers appear to be mad. Tongues related the gospel to the Jew, not the Gentile.

2. Tongues Ratified the Message to the Jew.

They certified the truth that the apostles were speaking. Even the Apostles themselves needed this certification. All of this new biblical information was be-

ing set into place. Tongues helped authenticate it. In Acts 10 we have the story of the conversion of Cornelius (a believing Gentile) and his household. The Bible says, in verse 45:

Acts 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Those Jews needed proof positive that a change was taking place. If this was not the case, Peter had taken it upon himself to violate Jewish law and tradition. Those tongues spoken that day by Gentiles were for the benefit of the circumcision, the Jews who were present, not the Gentiles.

Again, what is our point? Those changes have long since been made. The new economy is in place. We now have the completed Word of God. Those believing Jews who believe God's Word do not need tongues to confirm that a change has taken place, and unsaved Gentiles were never converted or convinced to come to Christ because of tongues. Therefore, once again, we see that tongues related to Jews, not Gentiles. Those who insist on speaking in tongues today are like folks dressing for a party with no place to go.

3. Tongues Rebuked the Jew.

Perhaps you are asking, why do you suppose these biblical tongues had an impact on Jews, while we have no biblical evidence that they had any value among Gentiles? This is because not only are tongues a sign, (and the Jews require signs) but tongues are a fulfillment of Jewish *prophecy*. Peter has already explained this to us when he quotes Joel 2 in his Pentecostal sermon. But, please notice verse 21 of our passage where Paul quotes Isaiah:

1Corinthians 14:21. In the law it is written, With [men of] other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

Paul was quoting directly from Isaiah 28:11-12 and he was using a touch of irony. He was urging these Corinthians to stop being childish in their views of spiritual gifts. They were parading tongues around as if they represented some spiritual badge of courage that set them apart from the pack. They missed its point and purpose. Does this sound familiar?

Maybe you have missed the point and purpose of tongues too. Why *did* God use tongues at Pentecost? Why *did* He allow it to flourish in the first century? He allowed tongues to flourish as a rebuke to the Jews. Every one of those Jews who stood at Pentecost were experiencing the judging hand of God first hand, just as Isaiah first prophesied. They had all been dispersed to foreign lands where they all learned *foreign* tongues. A nation that was once charged with reaching the Gentiles would now hear God's Word in the language of Gentiles as a sign of God's judgment upon her.

What do we have at Pentecost? We have a loving, merciful God saying to His beloved Israel that even in judgment, there is mercy. Even in your exile will I speak to you in other tongues!

Those tongues at Pentecost were practical, yes. They were helpful, yes, but they probably were not even necessary. A great many of those Jews could easily have still understood every word Peter spoke in the vernacular. That was not the point. The point was that the God who was judging Israel was still reaching out and saving her. In the hour of her humility, He was calling her to Himself. When God called out to Adam and said, "Where are thou?" it was a call of tenderness, a call of love, even in the hour of Adam's defeat. Even so, God was tenderly calling out to His own people, "Where art thou, Israel?" And even for all that, they would not hear Him.

Have you noticed the similarity in these points? Tongues related the gospel to the Jew. Tongues ratified the message to the Jew. Tongues rebuked the disobedience of Jew. Now, let me ask a simple question about the modern false tongues movement. What impact has it had on the Jew? For whatever reason tongues may be practiced today, clearly, they have not benefited the Jews in any way.

The modern tongues advocate may protest: "Not so! You have forgotten the most important reason there is for our prayer language of ecstatic utterances. You have forgotten that tongues were also given for edification!"

We have not forgotten. We have saved the best until last. Invariably, after you have removed the modern tongues speaker from the biblical definition of tongues and the biblical expression of tongues he reverts to one last argument. He says, in effect. "All of those things you have said may be true, but that is not why I practice tongues. I practice tongues because it edifies my soul. The Bible says that tongues are for *edification*." Invariably, our attention is then directed to verse 2 of chapter 14:

1Corinthians 14:2 For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth [him]; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

Please read verse 4 as well:

He that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Yes, this is it. The whole supposed theological basis for redefining tongues and allowing a personal, prayer language for personal edification is found *right here*

in these verses and in these verses alone. This is the last bastion of the modern false tongues movement. Or is it?

Supposedly, the man who speaks in a tongue speaks not unto man but unto God and therefore, it is legitimate. There are two problems with this logic, problems that can be solved if folks will simply read the *whole verse*. Look at the first statement, and read it completely:

For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth [him]

Is Paul *contradicting* the other places in scripture such as verse 21 where tongues were definitely used to speak to men? Hardly. The Bible does not *contradict* itself. Either tongues are used to speak unto men or unto God.

Or, Is Paul suggesting that there are now two kinds of tongues, one for speaking to men and one for speaking to God? Hardly. The *contradiction* in this statement would still be there. Paul would have differentiated. He would have explained that there is another kind of tongues. He would have given us a new definition of tongues. What is Paul saying?

For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth [him]

Paul is simply saying that the only One who would understand a man who speaks in tongues *without an interpreter* is God Himself. Why? Because no one else would understand it. That is the first half of the verse. Now, look at the second half of the verse. That is the important part:

howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries

Speaking mysteries is the only redeeming purpose of tongues rendered without an interpreter. A mystery is a hitherto unrevealed secret. It is a revelation made known by God. This is where the modern false tongues position unravels. In the case of *biblical tongues* the believer was edified by the presence of mysteries, truths of God, *even if there was no interpreter*. Thus, there *was content* in the communication. There *was* truth, there *was* content, and it *was* that content that edified his soul. Christian, it is *always the Word of God* that edifies the soul. When two believers *edify one another*, they do it through the Word of God. When Christian music edifies us it is because it is set to words, words that relate our experience with God's Word. Clearly then, the tongues speaker to which Paul refers receives and communicates *mysteries* with his tongue, and if no translator is available, he *alone* is edified. Therefore, there would be no public value.

The modern false tongues speaker would have us believe that his soul will be edified simply because he is the conduit between the Holy Spirit and God, speaking mysteries he does not understand. Why, then, the *mysteries*? From God's

point of view, do you suppose He needs to hear the mysteries? I do not think so. He wrote them. And, from man's point of view, does he need the mysteries? He does not need them if he cannot understand them. Only false tongues would suggest such a thing.

What are we saying? We are saying that the practice of biblical tongues always involved the *revelation of God's Word*. There has never been a time when true tongues were spoken when God was not revealing His Word. If the proponent of the false tongues movement bases his tongues on these two verses, he must also be claiming to be having the mysteries of God's Word revealed to him. Every time he concludes his tongues-initiated prayer he should be vested with new biblical truth, revealed to him personally by God Himself. Additionally, he will be edified through the mysteries that he speaks *each time*. That is something that no modern tongues speaker claims. This experience will be further reflected in his life, in his handling and treatment of the scriptures, and in his growth and his walk.

Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, while speaking in tongues (at least every other day) was visiting prostitutes on his off days. Whatever kind of tongues *he* spoke did not *edify* him very much. We are not being snide. Look at the big picture instead of the "exceptions." We are arguing that the very context in which the false tongues movement occurs, an anti-doctrinal, anti-separatist, name-it-and-claim-it, pro ecumenical environment, speaks to the ingenuousness of what is being purported. Christian, open your eyes! If the Holy Spirit were in this movement, these churches would be the champions of sound doctrine, godly living, and the defense of the faith. They would be the ones producing this kind of material!

We have not touched on the issue of whether or not a man *can* receive the Word of God now that our Bibles are complete. We have not even approached the proverbial tip of the iceberg. We must simply settle for reminding ourselves that whatever is going on today in the name of tongues should not be confused with what the Bible calls tongues.

By definition, biblical tongues are a foreign language used to convey the unrevealed secrets of God. By classification, tongues are signs. Signs signify changes in God's plan. False signs and wonders will first precede the next occurrence of true signs. By use, they are Jewish in nature and purpose. They related the gospel to the Jew. Tongues ratified the message to the Jew. Tongues rebuked the disobedience of Jew.

Whatever is going on today in the name of biblical tongues should be guarded against. It should be feared.

II. Why Present Tongues Are Not Biblical

A. These tongues place a false spiritual experience ahead of the true spiritual experience.

Instead of appropriating our position in Christ, we focus on subjective experiences.

B. These tongues place strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit instead of on Christ.

C. These tongues place strong emphasis on self and give illusions of spiritual maturity to spiritual children.

Many go so far as to say that one is not saved who does not speak in tongues!

D. These tongues place strong emphasis on experience over truth and have been the seedbed for doctrinal and spiritual compromise.

The ecumenical movement rides on the back of modern false tongues. Most false cults have a tongues experience available for their adherents.

E. These tongues place false leaders and false teachers in positions of authority and spiritual influence.

We have come full circle. The man of faith first, accepts the Bible as his *only* authority. Secondly, he stands on sound doctrine. That means he never sacrifices truth at the expense of so-called love. Thirdly, he listens to the warnings of God's Word concerning these last days and the doctrines of demons and seducing spirits. If you are reading this and you have been offended because you feel I have conveyed an angry spirit, please talk with me. However, if you have been offended because you have been confronted with the truth, please talk with the Lord. If I can plant one seed of doubt to shatter your illusion of what spirituality really is, I shall have succeeded. Genuine spirituality arises out of an abiding relationship, not an ecstatic event.

The same principles apply if you do not know Christ as Savior. Until you accept the Bible as your only authority, and until you accept the Bible's only solution to your problem, you too will be tossed about with every wind of doctrine and error. You will be unable to decide and discern the truth of God. The issue is not whether modern tongues are false, the issue is whether the saying of Christ is true, especially when He said: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me..."*

Tongues and Prophecy Contrasted

Intro: We summarize the key thoughts we have brought together in our study of tongues.

First, we have raised the issue of **misplaced definition**. We have explained that biblical tongues are not present and present tongues are not biblical. This means that, in our study of chapter 14 we are now going to have to keep constantly in mind that Paul is talking about biblical tongues, not the counterfeit tongues of today.

Secondly, we raised the issue of **misplaced purpose**. Tongues were a sign for the Jewish people. The biblical use of tongues was for convincing the unbelieving believer, the Jew who believed in God but who needed proof that God was making a shift in His economies.

Thirdly, we have raised the issue of **misplaced priority**. Paul ended chapter 12 with the words "*... and yet, I show unto you a more excellent way.*" The true expression of love is always superior to the true expression of any gift. When we are prioritizing tongues, we find it at the very bottom of the list of all gifts and useless outside of the context of love.

Now, we raise one more issue, the issue of **misplaced productivity**. And this is really where the rubber meets the road. There is really one real question surrounding the use of all the spiritual gifts: What makes them valuable? Paul says there is only one gauge in our toolbox that helps us measure the effectiveness of our respective gifts. The real question is not, "How glitzy is my gift?" The real question is not, "How much influence does my gift bring me?" The real question is: "How productive is my gift? How *fruitful* is it? In the final analysis, how much does it edify?" That is always where the rubber meets the road. We each must ask this same question with respect to all that we do. "*How much does this really edify?*"

That is the real subject of chapter 14. Chapter 13 emphasized spiritual gifts and *love*. Chapter 14 emphasizes spiritual gifts and *edification*. As we take a broad look at this chapter, it seems that it falls into two parts. The overall theme is edification, the building up of the believer. In verses 1-19 we see Tongues and Prophecy Contrasted. In the next chapter we will look at verses 20-40 and see Tongues and Prophecy Controlled.

Look at verse 1-3:

1. *Follow after charity, and desire spiritual [gifts], but rather that ye may prophesy.*

2 *For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth [him]; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.*

3 *But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men [to] edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*

The first question that we must answer is this: *Why does Paul compare tongues with prophecy?* Before we can follow his reasoning as to why prophecy is superior, we need to understand exactly what prophecy is. When we understand *what* biblical prophecy is it will help us understand why Paul is comparing it with biblical tongues. We begin with a definition.

I. Definition

The biblical gift of prophecy and office of the prophet is associated with the ability to both receive and to proclaim the mysteries or revelation of God.

There are three essential elements associated with prophecy. Remove any of the elements and the definition fails.

A. The gift and the office are the same.

Notice that Paul designates those who prophesy as prophets in verse 29. Modern Bible teachers would like to disassociate the two. They say that one can have the gift of prophecy and not have the office of the prophet. However, there is no biblical reason to separate the two.

Apostles and prophets were first given to the church and they were later replaced by pastor/teachers who are elders. In the church at Corinth, we do not see much evidence that any pastors had yet been put in place. Conversely, in the church at Ephesus, a mature New Testament church, we see elders, but we do not see much of any evidence of apostles or prophets. Historically, apostles and prophets simply faded off the scene as evangelists and pastors replaced them. Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were built on the *foundations* of the apostles and prophets. Ephesians 2:20 he says:

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone];

This marvelous temple of the church had its foundations laid by apostles and prophets, not evangelist and pastors. Now, remember the first essential element in our definition of a prophet: The gift of prophecy and the office of the prophet are the same. You cannot have the gift if you are not a prophet and you cannot

be a prophet unless you have the gift. The second element of our definition is equally important.

B. The gift of prophecy entails the ability to receive mysteries or revelation from God.

This is important. When you prophecy you are claiming divine impartation of truth. You are claiming that your prophecy is a communication from the living God. The key to being a prophet is the ability to receive the mysteries of God. This means, for example, if you add to or take away from the *prophecy* of Revelation you could well add to yourself the cursings of the book (Revelation 22:18 and 19.) This is extremely important business. This is why Peter tells us we have a *more sure word of prophecy* as he argues that the scripture (the written word of God) is superior to verbal prophecy in 2 Peter 1:19. By the way, Peter warns us that many *false* prophets will come and he tells us of their hellish end. It is serious business to be a false prophet. I heard recently how the pastor of Jack Hayford, (of Promise Keepers fame) announced that God had given him a vision in which God declared that He called and ordained the Beetles to bring a new music medium into the world. He further alluded that Christianity has benefited from that new medium even though God later had to take away the anointing of the Beetles. According to him, God is now about to give it to someone else. If I were Jack Hayford's pastor, I would be far more concerned about what God is going to do with him as a *false prophet*. This pastor is a liar. Christian friend, it is a fearful thing to claim to receive a message from God. The third element is simply a clarification of the second element.

C. Prophecy is also the ability to proclaim those revelations from God.

You *cannot* separate these abilities. It includes both. You see, there are some who say something like this: "In the Old Testament prophets foretold the Word, but in the New Testament prophets tell forth the Word of God." Not only is there no biblical justification for this kind of reverse deduction, it simply makes no sense. The Old Testament prophet was born along by the Holy Spirit as he received the Word of God and then, he told it forth. Some of it was about future events, some of it was about current events, and some if it was simple exhortation. New Testament prophets *also* did both. Read the book of Acts. If you believe you have the gift of prophecy, you must believe that you can receive the mysteries *and* relate the mysteries. Notice what Paul says, for example in 1 Corinthians 13:2:

1Corinthians 13:2 And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

What can the man who has the gift of prophecy do? He receives, and understands mysteries and knowledge and relates it to others.

We are asking, "*Why is Paul contrasting tongues with prophecy?*" The answer is this: Essentially, prophecy and tongues *are the same gift*. Both concerned receiving the mysteries or revelations of God. Both concerned proclaiming those revelations. Both *edified*. The only difference was that tongues related to the use of foreign languages and prophecy was, effectively, tongues without language conversion. That is why Paul is contrasting the two.

II. Prophecy Edifies in All Circumstances. Vs. 1-5

We have already read the first three verses, now begin again with verse 3:

3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men [to] edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

4 He that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater [is] he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

Did you catch the key word? The issue is *edification*, the building up of the believer. That is why every gift was given. That is why every office was given to the church. Look at Ephesians 4:11 - and look closely:

Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ:

What is the work of the ministry? It is the building up or edifying of the believer so that he is not tossed about with every wind of doctrine? How do we edify believers? By speaking; by speaking the truth; by speaking the truth in love.

Is the average Christian tossed about with every wind of doctrine? Yes he is. Why is he tossed about? He is being tossed about because instead of being fed the sound meat of the Word of God, he is being coddled by pastorettes who are preaching sermonettes to Christianettes.

Back to the text. In verses 1-5 Paul has argued that prophecy edifies in **all** circumstances. Now see:

III. Tongues Only Edify in Limited Circumstances. Vs. 6-12

6. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them [is] without signification.

11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh [shall be] a barbarian unto me.

12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual [gifts], seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

According to verse six *when* do we profit? We profit when someone speaks to us by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by doctrine. What do all of those things have in common? The answer is simple. They all involve words, teaching, concepts, and information. Those are the kinds of things that build us up.

Paul says that even lifeless things such as pipes and harps require distinctive sounds in order to be appreciated. This again does away with the prayer language myth. If these words are true, then the man speaking in tongues is edified by the mystery that is revealed to him (verse 2). He is *not edified by the ecstatic experience*. Uncertain sounds have no profitability, no benefit, and no value.

The man who speaks in tongues without an interpreter *alienates* his listener according to verse 6. What rules should we then follow in the exercise of our gifts? We should seek to excel to the edifying of the church, vs. 12. We should understand that it is foolish to think that we will be edified if our spirits pray but our understanding is unfruitful, vs. 14. We should pray with the spirit and with the understanding. We should sing with the spirit and with the understanding.

Prophecy offered this alternative to the Corinthians. Tongues without an interpreter did not.

How important was all this to Paul? He said in verse 19:

19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that [by my voice] I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an [unknown] tongue.

That is a ratio of 1 to 2,000. An average Sunday morning message is about 4,000 words. That is good for two words spoken in tongues.

In conclusion.

What have we learned in the above verses and why is it important to our discussion? We have learned that there is no value in either tongues or prophecy unless it results in edification. We have learned that edification is the result of the

ministry of God's truths or mysteries, not the result of an emotional experience. Emotional experiences may *result* from edification, but they never produce edification.

While a man's emotions may be stimulated by a wonderful symphony, that symphony will not edify him or change his life in any way. In fact, its effects will wear off faster than a Chinese dinner. But, if we add the Word of God to that music, the man's emotions will not only be affected, his soul will now be edified. The music has been a medium for the Word of God.

Tongues, as an experience does not and cannot edify. It only edifies as a medium for communicating the truths of God. If there is no truth involved in the exchange, no edification has occurred. Emotions do not and cannot edify the soul, though they may be the result of edification. God does not use two mediums, the Word of God and experience. He changes the will and the experience through the Word of God.

Interestingly, many non charismatics who will readily accept this reasoning refuse to carry it into the realm of music. Music, like tongues, does *not edify* unless it is administering the Word of God. Two biblical words conveyed by spiritual songs are worth ten thousand wordless songs. This is not to say we may not draw pleasure from songs without spiritual words, it is to argue that *no edification* results because edification is the result of ministering the Word.

Serious lovers of God's Word will have a difficult time with constant repetition of a few phrases performed repeatedly against the backdrop of the music that dominates the experience. When the medium dominates the ministry of the Word we have a right to question whether there is much that edifies in the experience.

Of course, we could extend this discussion far beyond balancing songs and lyrics. The whole motif of our modern services now tend far more toward the *experience* than to the Word of God which should be the source of the experience.

Do you love your church because of its worship experience or because of its intense focus on the Word of God?

Tongues and Prophecy Controlled

Intro: We are in 1 Corinthians 14. We have divided the chapter into two parts. In verses 1-20 we saw tongues and prophecy contrasted. We now cover the remaining verses.

We have raised the issues of *misplaced definition*, for both tongues and prophecy, and *misplaced purpose*, (tongues were for a sign and both tongues and prophecy were for receiving the revelation of God's Word). We have seen *misplaced priority*, (tongues, the least important gift of all had been elevated to the most important.)

In our last study, we stressed *misplaced productivity*. The real issue concerning the use of any spiritual gift is the issue of its fruitfulness or its ability to edify. We stressed that we must study the passage in its context, and that biblical tongues and prophecy are not present today, and present tongues and prophecy are not biblical.

Now, we come to the fifth and final matter that has been misplaced in the study of these sign gifts. Today we deal with the issue of *misplaced performance*. We see Paul outlining some important rules for the expression of both tongues and prophecy.

We may rightfully ask, if biblical tongues and prophecy are not presently evident, why do we need to study the rules for their use? This is somewhat like your middle schooler asking, why do I have to study Algebra if I am going to be a truck driver? Let me give you three good reasons for looking closely at verses 23-40:

1. First, we need to study this passage because the Bible says we will profit from it, even though we may not understand how right now. The Bible says:

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

We will profit and we will be edified through the study of these verses.

2. As we see these rules explained and we compare them with the practices of modern so-called prophets and tongues speakers, we will see how disobedient they are to the Word of God. The irony of the discussion is this: The heated

steam of the modern tongues and prophecy movement would be chilled to cold water if these few verses from God's Word were obeyed.

3. Finally, we will profit by the study of these verses because the *principles* that are taught in these verses will help *every church* where they are applied, *even* if that church is a non charismatic church.

We will group these verses into principles or laws relating to the practice of tongues and prophecy. We see *four* laws that were to be in effect if these Corinthians were to be biblical in the exercise of their gifts.

The first law is found in verses 23 - 26.

I. The Law of Relevancy. Vs. 23-26

Read these verses with me:

1Corinthians 14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in [those that are] unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or [one] unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on [his] face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

26. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

This, of course, is a summary of all that has gone on before in the chapter. The *goal* is to edify men. The unlearned unsaved will only look upon tongues as some kind of hysteria, some kind of insanity.

It is the word of God, revealed at that time through prophecy, that convicts the heart and causes the sinner to fall on his face before God!

When we speak of being *relevant* we are speaking about meeting men's needs through the Word of God. We are not speaking about pleasing or entertaining men in order to get them to listen to us. That is not relevancy. That is deception. God's Word *is* relevant.

The reason why we do not have a lot of falling on our faces before God anymore is that the Word of God has become hidden and obscure. A paper in the community where I pastored contained the account of the theatrical performance being put on that year by a local church for Christmas. According to the ad, in the style of the Rockettes, they will effectively can-can their Christmas story.

That is not the kind of relevance we are addressing. No one will fall on his face before God because of that performance! When we speak of relevance, we are

speaking about making the Word of God clear to those who come to hear a message from God. Christian friend, it is this Book that changes lives. This Book calls men to fear an eternity in Hell without Christ. It is this Book that not only teaches the heart to fear, but relieves that fear through the precious presentation of Christ. The Word of God makes a ministry *relevant* to the needs of men.

Notice that last sentence in verse 26 that sums it up: "*Let all things be done unto edifying.*" If it does not edify we must not do it. What are the things that edify? The Psalms (probably put to music) the doctrine, and the tongue that revealed God's Word through an interpreter all edify. What do all of these things have in common? We have the precious Word of God.

So, first, there is the law of relevance. It is God's Word that changes lives, not entertainment, not stories, not moving illustrations, and not drama. We are in the midst of famine and poverty. Our people are dying for lack of knowledge, the lack of truth. So, do you know what our response has been to this anemia? Our response has been *to feed them less!* We put more inert ingredients into the baby bottle and more flavoring, (as though the milk and meat of God's Word needs flavoring) and less nutrients. We are a strange bunch!

The goal of every church should be the clear, forthright, edifying ministry of the pure Word of God. That is the law of relevance. We *are* relevant when the Word of God is the centerpiece of our ministry.

II. The Law of Propriety Vs. 27-31

Verses 27-31:

1Corinthians 14

27 If any man speak in an [unknown] tongue, [let it be] by two, or at the most [by] three, and [that] by course; and let one interpret.

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

30 If [any thing] be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

First we have the "less than four, plus one" rule. Neither tongues speakers nor prophets are to dominate the service. The chances are very good that the Corinthian church had the opposite problem that afflicts us today. According to verse 26, everyone wanted to participate. It is not that verse 26 is necessarily a rebuke. When we read those words, "*How is it then, my brethren?*" it is not to suggest that Paul was asking them *why* so many wanted to participate. The Ar-ab translation reads: "*What is the sense of my words?*" In our words, Paul could

have been saying, "So, *what is my point, brethren? When ye come together every one of you hath a psalm...*" and so forth.

We seem to go to extremes in whatever we do. In some churches, the level of disorder is high. In other churches, we would almost be pleased if we had that problem because we have so few who are willing to participate openly, even in smaller groups. However many folks we involve in our services, the goal remains the same. There must be order and sense in what we do because our behavior is to characterize our message and our God. The issue is *order and propriety*.

Then we have the *required translator*. Once again, remember that the best word is *translate*, not *interpret*. Again, the issue is *order and propriety*.

Finally, we see that while only two or three prophets or tongues speakers could speak at a given service, *everyone* was to be given opportunity to speak. There was to be no pecking order. This is the very heart of ministry. We all want to benefit. We benefit by ministering *and* by being ministered to. We all grow when we minister, even if not all of our efforts to minister may be as "professional" as we desire.

The reason why Paul is requiring order in these services is so that *everyone* can be edified. With Paul, pastors would have their entire flock jump up and give testimonies, and sing a little off key, and pray a little too long, and play instruments that may not be quite up to par. We are not suggesting that we be careless or shoddy about the Lord's work. We are not suggesting that you give less than your best. We are saying that we are all edified *by* ministering as well as by being ministered to. In ministering, however, the goal is *order and propriety*.

III. The Law of Integrity. Vs. 29

Notice verse 29 one more time:

29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

The NASV reads "*...and let the others pass judgment*" The actual Greek word ($\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\nu\omicron$ - *diakrino*) means *to discern, to discriminate, to separate*" The words of the glossalalists (tongues speakers) and prophets were not to be accepted carte blanche! They were not to be accepted at face value! They were to be *tested* against what was already the Word of God. No one's ministry is beyond scrutiny. No pastor or elder enjoys the favored status of not having his teaching challenged by honest Bible students.

I am sad to say that we have come a long way from the days when every man, every head of every home, saw to it that every thing his family learned and was taught was right. In the name of tolerance, love, and open participation, we must

never surrender our duty to judge and scrutinize the things we hear. Many folks hold certain doctrines to be true simply because of their great confidence in their pastors. We forget that many of the things our pastors believe in are held because *their pastors and teachers* taught them! Just like the old telephone game, after a truth has been handed down once or twice, you can be sure it will be embellished or skewed. What is the answer? The answer is to do as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11.

Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

In industry and in teaching we always say, "*Do not expect what you do not inspect.*" The same applies in ministry. Demand the very best. Do not settle for second best. Discern. Discern. Discern!

Relevancy, Propriety, Integrity, and now, notice the fourth and final law. For want of more creativity, we name it:

IV. The Law of Authority.

Authority is such a fearful word. Those who have it today do everything in their power to conceal it. We want police officers to be our friends. We want our teachers to cajole and nudge us. We have long since thrown out our bosses that told us what to do, and we have replaced them with coequal team members. Yet, submission to authority lies at the very heart of all that God expects of men.

When we disciple a man, for example, all we are doing is placing him under the *authority* of the Word of God. We see authority evidenced at least three times in this passage.

A. The spirit of the prophet is to be in submission to the prophet. Vs. 32

1Corinthians 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

The spirit of the prophet is to be in *submission*. He is to reflect submission as in a military man recognizing the rank of someone higher than himself. The spirit of the prophet is to be in submission to his mind and will. There are to be no uncontrolled outbursts! There should be no dancing on the pews! No rolling on the floor! These things do not occur in *orderly* services. The Holy Spirit of God does not take over someone's body and cause him to fall down backwards in a swoon! He does not force a man to speak in tongues!

1Corinthians 14: 33 For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

If the service you are attending is not peaceful and orderly, God is not in control. The spirit of the prophet is to be in submission to the mind of the prophet.

B. The spirit of the woman is to be in submission to her husband. Vs. 34-35

Verses 34 and 35:

1Corinthians 14:34. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but [they are commanded] to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Do you see those words, "*but [they are commanded] to be under obedience*"? That word for *obedience* is the same Greek Word we saw when we were talking about the prophets *submitting*. Paul is not making a statement of inferiority, he is making a statement of *rank*. Just as the spirit of the prophet must submit to the mind of the prophet so the wife must submit to the husband. Admittedly, we have some questions about this verse.

1.) We have the question of address. To whom was Paul speaking. Was he speaking to all females or just to wives? For example, the very word woman that we read here, I believe, is in reference to wives. The Greek word can mean either, but the context speaks of husbands. Virgins, on the other hand, are still in submission to their fathers.

2.) We have the question of limitation. Is the woman to keep silent *at all times in the service* or only in those matters of tongues, prophecy, and teaching? Again, based upon the context and Paul's instruction to Titus (Titus 2:12), I believe that the woman is to be silent in two matters: The matter of receiving and teaching the Word of God to men, and the matter of usurping spiritual authority over the man.

3.) The third question is the question of purpose. Why does Paul make this command? Is it because women talk too much? The Bible never asserts that. Is it because women are inferior, less intelligent, or more prone to gossip and trouble making than men? I think not. There would be no wars, for example, if there were no men.

I believe the clearest answer comes from Paul's instructions to Timothy as indicated in 1 Timothy 2.

1Timothy 2:11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

There are many myths that we nurture in modern society. One of those myths is that all men are created equal. That would be a terrible thing if it were true. We would bore each other to death. Trust me; you do not want me to paint an oil canvass for your living room wall. You do not want to see me figure skating. There *are* fundamental differences between us all. You see equality is not similarity.

Paul says that one of the traits of the female is that she, not Adam, was deceived. He does not take the time to tell us about some of Adam's flaws. He only deals with Eve's flaw because that alone relates to the issue. Women *are* more easily deceived. They appear to be more easily prone to doctrinal error. This is not inequality. This is a fact of nature. That is *one* of the purposes of Paul's command for the women to be silent.

However, there is a second reason. Two cannot walk together except they are agreed. You cannot even have a democracy with two people. There is no one to break the tie. There has to be a chain of authority.

Some disagree strongly in this respect, but I am not convinced there *was* a "chain of authority" in the garden. I am not convinced Adam was Eve's head before the fall. They were equals. Because of the curse, certain constraints were placed upon Adam and certain constraints were placed upon Eve. One of those was that Adam was now obligated to be in authority over her.

There is a touch of irony in all of this. For as this Bible student confronts the realities of life he has discovered that most of the women who have complained to him complain because their husbands are remiss in their headship. They are *failing* to lead, especially spiritually. Adam has not changed much since the garden. Adam still prefers not to deal with the issue. He will often sit back and let the woman take the lead when the woman usurps that role.

You see, it is an issue of *natures*, not an issue of equality. It is no more demeaning for a woman to be in submission to her husband than it is for a man to be in submission to his boss or sergeant or for Jesus Christ to be in submission to the Father. For these reasons, the woman stays out of the arena of teaching and ruling over men spiritually. And, when she teaches other women, she is wise to do so with the knowledge and permission of her husband.

Are there problems with all the details? Yes. But does the *principle* stand? It certainly does. Now, there are two kinds of women. One kind submits. The other submits willingly. She submits in spirit. The one who submits in spirit sets the example for new converts, for her sisters in Christ, and for her children. She does so by her silence in the assembly when the Word is ministered, she does so, Paul says, by her hair length and the way she covers her head. But do not underestimate her gentle spirit and quiet ways, and do not make the mistake of thinking less of her. For, when the scores are tallied and the crowns are passed

out, it seems a given to me that two women will stand commended of Christ for every one man. In the time of trial a woman is the last to break and turn from God. On the scoreboard of sacrifice and godly living she usually outperforms her own husband.

The spirit of the prophet must submit to the prophet and the spirit of the woman must submit to her *own* husband. That is what the Greek says in both Timothy and here in Corinthians.

C. We must all submit in spirit to what the Bible says. Vs. 36-37

Paul says:

1Corinthians 14:36. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

The issue here is the Word of God. It does not come to us just so that we can benefit by it and be blessed. It comes to us so that we can share it with others. When we do not obey it, our message is no longer credible.

We must *all* submit to the authority of God's Word and acknowledge that the things that Paul has written are the commandments of the Lord. They are not optional. We may not rewrite them. We may not accuse them of being culturally biased or adjust them to our cultural purposes as The Message so violently does. I find it most interesting that Paul uses some of his strongest words claiming inspiration in this very passage that Christians want to do away with the most.

Either a woman is to keep silent or she is not required to. Either a prophet is to control his spirit or he is not required to. Either the tongues speaker must obey the rules or he is not required to. Do you consider yourself mature in Christ? Then, accept what Paul says and stop trying to dance around it.

If you are lost and without Christ, you need to submit to the authority of this book and the authority of the Christ of this book, Who Himself said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life...and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me...*" (John 14:6.)

The Character of God versus False Tongues

Consider the following arguments, based on the nature of God Himself, as they relate to false manifestations of His power.

The Consistency of God: The Principle of First Mention

"In the mind of God all thought is connected; therefore, the first mention of a subject in Scripture gives a clue or a key to all subsequent mentions of the subject."
- Wendell Babcock, Biblical Hermeneutics

If the first usage of tongues implies the literal use of language, known languages, it makes sense that all subsequent references will imply the same use unless Scripture implicitly indicates otherwise.

- The proponent of false tongues has no biblical right to redefine the definition of tongues.
- Interestingly, Paul is still defining tongues as a foreign language as late as 1 Corinthians 14:21

The Orderliness of God: The Laws of Language

God is a God of absolute order. The entire creation functions under the perfect laws of God that are in constant evidence. The laws of creation are evident in every discipline such as math and physics. All the known languages of men function under identifiable laws.

If modern tongues, for example were the language of angels there would still be evidences of language and structure, even if we could not break the language. William E. Walmers, Professor of African Languages at the University of California has examined the utterances of renowned glossalalists. His analysis indicated:

- There were "no more than two" contrasting vowel sounds.
- There was "a most peculiarly restricted set of consonant sounds".

- These made up "a very few syllable clusters that may recur many times in various orders."
- The "intonation patterns" are "completely American English".

Note: Either all our angels have anglicized or tongues are not really the languages of angels after all.

Burdick cites Walter A. Wolfram of the Hartford Seminary Foundation who analyzed glossalalic texts from eight primary informants concluded:

- The texts were clearly related to the language backgrounds of the speakers. They had obviously drawn phonemes (speech sounds) from languages with which they were familiar.
- There are similarities among the speakers that would not be present if they were speaking different languages. These included excessive use of the vowel a, a high frequency of open syllables, and a tendency to end breath groups in vowels and often the same vowel.
- There is a high frequency of repetition of certain words or clauses. One informant repeated the same clause "more than ten times in succession." Some glossolalia is largely made up of a clause repeated continually. Words, also, are repeated in numerous alternate forms. Two informants employed as many as twenty alternates for one term.

Conclusion: Modern linguistic analysis unequivocally denies the existence of any necessary elements in tongues that would make them qualify as a language.

The Trustworthiness of God: The Laws of Translation

Numerous authors allude to the story of a seminary graduate who had majored in Hebrew when he attended a tongues meeting in California. At the proper time, he rose to his feet and quoted the First Psalm in Hebrew. He was followed by a man who solemnly announced that God had given him the gift of interpretation and that the seminarian's message had to do with a revelation concerning women prophesying in the church. When the student announced what he had actually done, confusion reigned! While I have never verified this story, it does raise an issue:

How *are* we to discern the truth from the lie? Does God expect us to be victims of charlatans? New Testament tongues, on the other hand, were verifiable, (Acts 2:8).

“. . .thy Word is truth." John 17:17

The Predictability of God: Their Temporary Nature

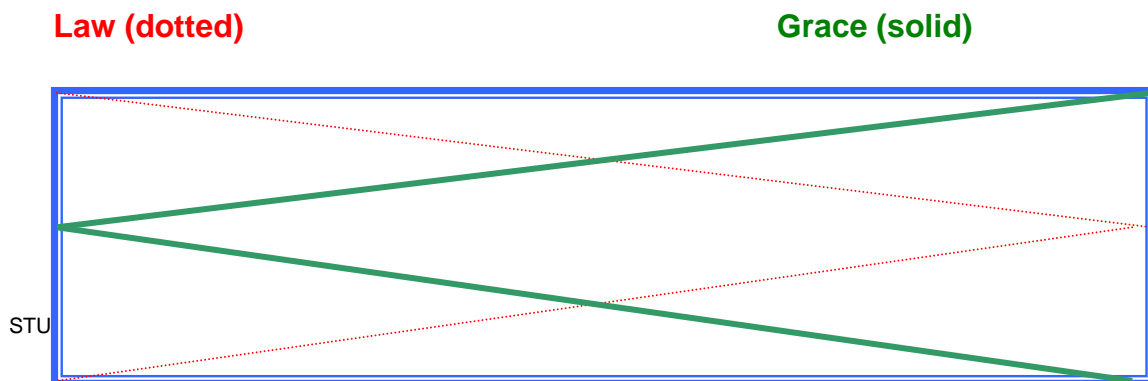
Model A: If tongues, knowledge, and prophecy were for both Jew and Gentile and were not related to signs that indicated the change in God's economy, they would have been present throughout the church age.

Model B: If tongues, knowledge, and prophecy were signs for the Jews to indicate changes in God's economy, they would not have been consistently present throughout the church age.

What are the facts? The historic presence of tongues cannot be verified even to the end of the first century.

- In the year 95 (only forty years after the Corinthian epistles), Clement writes again to Corinth and no mention of tongues is made.
- Justin Martyr, a prolific second century church father makes no mention of tongues in all of his writings and does not even include them in his list of spiritual gifts!
- Origin, third century scholar makes no mention of tongues, but he does argue that the sign gifts of the apostolic age were temporary and were not exercised by the Christians of his day!
- Chrysostom, fourth century scholar argued that tongues had not only ceased, but could no longer even be properly defined.
- Augustine said: "In the earliest times the Holy Spirit fell on them that believed and they spoke with tongues. These were signs adapted to that time, for there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit. That thing was done for betokening and it passed away."
- The church was in unanimous agreement that tongues had passed away, in keeping with Hebrews 2:3-4 and 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.

The Cross-Fading of Jewish and Grace Economies



The Purity of God: Truth is Never Compromised for Love's Sake

Notice the peculiar circumstances under which tongues thrive best.

This relatively recent movement is fast breeding in liberal (Christ denying) churches and denominations. Scores and scores of Roman Catholic leaders and laymen participate as well as charismatics. The spirit is decidedly ecumenical with strongest support coming, strangely, from the most liberal groups such as the Episcopalians. There is never a sound or warning about false doctrine, and never a plea to separate from apostasy. Liberal and Catholic participants, for example, readily admit that they have not changed their views on the doctrines of salvation, inspiration, and so forth. Very few believers are historically aware of the great compatibility between Pentecostal and Catholic theologies.

Benedictine monk, Father Edward O'Connor of Notre Dame:

"Catholics who have accepted Pentecostal spirituality have found it to be fully in harmony with their traditional faith and life. They experience it, not as borrowing from an alien religion, but as a connatural development of their own."

"Similarly, the traditional devotions of the Church have taken on more meaning. Some people have been brought back to a frequent use of the sacrament of Penance. . . Others have discovered a place for devotion to Mary in their lives, whereas previously they had been indifferent. . . One of the most striking effects of the Holy Spirit's action has been to stir up devotion to the Real Presence of the Eucharist."

Christianity Today: (February 1, 1972)

"The force that appears to be making the greatest contribution to the current Christian revival around the globe is Pentecostalism. This movement, that began several decades ago, and which in its early years was very sectarian in character is now becoming ecumenical in the deepest sense. A neo-Pentecostalism has lately appeared that includes many thousands of Roman Catholic... a new era of the Spirit has begun. The charismatic experience moves Christians far beyond glossalalia... There is light on the horizon. An evangelical renaissance is becoming visible along the Christian highway from the frontiers of the sects to the high places of Roman Catholic communion. This appears to be one of the most strategic moments in the Church's history."

The church of Jesus Christ is playing into the hands of the coming antichrist through its participation in ecumenical evangelism. Thinking Christians will see that the charismatic movement, with false tongues as its primary force, is leading us down the same path.

2Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean [thing]; and I will receive you,

If you do not have the proper attitude toward the Word of God this message will do you little good. O. Talmadge Spence has made an interesting observation concerning our various responses to God's Word. He says:

"They ignore God's Word passively - (Heathen)
They deny God's Word actively. - (Infidel)
They subtract God's Word partially, - (Modernist)
They add to God's Word extantly. - (Neo-Pentecostal)
They pervert God's Word originally, - (Neo-Orthodox)
They practice God's Word situationally. - (Neo-Evangelical)
They believe God's Word completely - ([The biblical] fundamentalist)

This is the end of the special section on chapters 12-14.

Believing in Vain

Intro: When we move from 1 Corinthians 14 into chapter 15 it is like stepping out of one room and into another. The transition is abrupt and complete. At one moment we are talking about the exercise of our spiritual gifts (their use and abuse) and the next moment we are swimming in the greatest treatise on the resurrection of Jesus Christ which anyone can find anywhere in the Word of God. This leads us to ask, what prompted this change?

One possibility lies in that word *moreover*. It is the Greek conjunctive, δε, and is most often translated, *but* or *and*. It can simply be continuative. That is, Paul may just be saying “And now I want to talk to you about the gospel; I want to talk to you about the resurrection.” Or, this little particle, δε, could be *adversative*. The possibility exists that Paul is saying “But I want to talk with you about the gospel; I want to talk with you about the resurrection.”

In any case, remember that spiritual gifts are the *product* of the resurrection. They find their basis in it. It may be that that reason alone represents a sufficient point of transition for Paul to bring up this great subject. As Paul introduces this subject, one thing is clear. Paul wants us to be absolutely certain concerning some essential historical facts.

The singularly most important fact about the resurrection is that our Lord rose bodily from the grave. That is the truth which the pagan Corinthians would have resisted. These lovers of wisdom who were immersed in what was later labeled a Gnostic mindset, would have no truck with the idea of a physical resurrection because, in their eyes, matter is evil and the goal of man is to be free from it, not to return to a new body of flesh.

We must not convey the wrong impression in our preaching and teaching. The Grecian philosophers were not generally materialists. A large percentage of them embraced immortality. It was the *physical* resurrection of Christ which would offend the pagan mind.

In our context today there has been a great rise of interest in reincarnation. In times past well meaning folks have come to me and asked, “Pastor, what is wrong with reincarnation?” When asked this question, pastors are likely to reply that it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment,” (Heb. 9:27. That answer is insufficient because it does not address the real problem of reincarnation. It is not enough to believe in immortality. One cannot be a Christian unless he believes in the *bodily resurrection* of Jesus Christ and, once be-

believing in that resurrection, he will believe in his own bodily resurrection. The resurrection is the *consummation* of our redemption.

In chapter 15 Paul is going to argue the bodily resurrection for the sake of the pagans. Then, for the Jews, he will argue that the resurrection of Messiah's body was prophesied in the scriptures and is demanded for our salvation. Finally, for the sake of us all, Paul will shed so much blinding light on this subject that we will be stunned and amazed at all the overtones which surround this precious truth.

Notice the two parts into which this chapter seems to fall naturally. In verses 1-11 we see The Resurrection Declared. In verses 12-40 we see The Resurrection Defended. This particular study concerns itself only briefly with the first eleven verses of chapter 15.

I. The Resurrection Declared Vs. 1-4

Verses 1-4 will reveal *its place in the gospel* and, verses 5-11 will reveal *its proof in history*. So, notice now:

A. Its Place in the Gospel. Vs. 1:

1Co 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

Note some elementary facts concerning the gospel.

1. The Gospel Declared. There is a bit of a play on words in the manuscripts here. Paul is actually saying "moreover, brethren, I am "goodnewsing you with the good news." Another way to say it would be, "I am gospelizing you with the gospel." We wish we could *gospelize* everyone with the gospel and *immunize* them from the false gospels which our evangelical culture tolerates so nonchalantly. Now, notice:

The gospel is a *personal* matter. Paul said, I have preached this gospel unto *you*. When you stand before God it will be of no consequence whether your mother or your father received this gospel and the fact that you may have been baptized as a baby certainly won't hold any water. Each of us must respond personally to this all important truth.

The gospel is an *urgent* matter. It must be *taken unto ourselves* or received. Do not bother yourself with an endless stream of technical questions, unsaved friend. Accept this message by responding to it personally and by appropriating it for yourself.

This gospel is also the *only thing that matters*. When a man responds to this gospel, the bible says he *stands* on it. He is established in it. Whereas he once

trusted in his own energy and efforts he now places his entire hope for eternity squarely on this gospel of Christ.

It is a common problem among missionaries to encounter folks who will readily accept the gospel of Christ right along with their other belief systems. They do not understand that the gospel is not *inclusive*, it is *exclusive*. It is the only thing worthy of your trust. When one stands in the gospel he stands in the gospel alone. It is not a possible answer or part of an answer, it simply is *the* answer.

2. The Gospel Demonstrated. Vs. 2:

1Co 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

A number of important facts cascade from this verse as well. First, we see that the gospel gives *no assurance for the superficial believer*. Some misunderstand this verse and read it backwards. Paul is not suggesting that the way we keep our salvation is by keeping the elements of the gospel in our memory. We do not keep ourselves saved by refreshing our memories from time to time as to the contents of the gospel. That would make no sense at all. Salvation would then be dependent upon a mystical exercise.

The man who truly *stands* in the gospel will *not* allow its essential elements to be compromised. He will never give in on the sacrificial death or the bodily resurrection of Christ. A man who does so was simply not saved in the first place.

The gospel *modified* is the gospel *nullified*. Take special notice of the sharp words of Paul found in Galatians 1:6-9.

*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.
(Gal 1:6-9)*

Based on the above verses, when we remove ourselves from the gospel we remove ourselves from Christ. When we remove ourselves from the gospel we pervert the gospel. When we do so, we are seen as accursed in the eyes of true believers. There can be no room for tolerance here. The man who perverts the gospel is to be seen as accursed in our eyes. Sadly, we are no longer willing to do this.

So, we have learned that this gospel gives no assurance to the superficial believer. Secondly, we learn:

A person *can* believe the gospel in vain. It is popular these days to speak of “*easy believism*”. While we all sense what is meant by this term, it is not found in the scriptures and it is a mistake to use it. Doing so leads to great confusion. Take for example, a well known Bible teacher who bemoans the shallow and superficial Christianity of our day. In his own words, he lays responsibility for this at the feet of Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Dispensation- alists in general. His solution is to return to *hard believism*. He believes we must make the gospel *hard* and that people must *agonize* in order to enter into salva- tion. In his own words he declares that the Sermon on the Mount is *pure gospel*. In reality, we know that not one person has ever come to Christ as a result of striving to enter in or striving to be saved. It is a terrible sin to place obstacles in front of the gospel in an effort to avoid a shallow appropriation of this truth. This, by the way, was the crowning sin of Puritanism and it lead ultimately to the de- struction of their own spiritual life cycle.

There is no such thing as easy believism and there is no need to fabricate a new and harder gospel or retrofit it with the Sermon on the Mount in order stem the tide of so-called easy believism. What *is needed*, however, is a return to the truth that men and women can *believe in vain*. The pure, sweet gospel of grace, regenerates the life and sets a process of sanctification in motion. Self refor- mation, even that kind of reformation intended to prepare one to receive the gos- pel, will only put men into greater bondage.

If is a fearful thing to note that most Roman Catholics, most Lutherans, Most Ad- ventists, and many, many Arminians are believing in vain. They believe they must mix, to some degree, their efforts with Christ’s finished work. They believe they must *persevere* in order to be saved.

How do we know when men are believing in vain? They are believing in vain when they are not *standing in the gospel* and in the gospel alone.

We have seen the *declaration* of the gospel in verse 1 and its *demonstration* in verse 2. We have seen how critical this issue is. We must stand in the gospel without adding anything to it (such as infant baptism or the Eucharist) or taking anything from it. If this fact is true, we must be sure we know exactly what the *pure gospel* is. It makes sense, then, that Paul now sets upon this task.

3. The Gospel Defined. Vs. 3-4

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:
(1Co 15:4)

Notice that this is not *Paul’s* definition of the gospel. He is simply the messenger who is delivering what he has received personally from Christ Himself. Essential-

ly, we see that there are two dominant aspects of this gospel. It is *rooted* in the death and burial of Christ and it is *realized* in the resurrection of Christ.

a. It is rooted in His literal death. The facts are clear:

It was a *literal death*. He did not fake it. He did not swoon. He did not slip into some state of suspended animation, hibernate, or otherwise slow His metabolism in order to deceive us. He died. Messiah died. And what at once looked like the greatest disaster of history became the greatest victory of history. But it is not enough to know that He died.

To believe that Christ died and was raised from the dead still *does not* make one a Christian. We must not stop with the simple words that Christ died.

b. It is rooted in a sacrificial death. Christ died *for*, our sins. He died as a sacrifice *in our place*. He took our place. He alone could do that. He alone could satisfy the wrath of God. This is the aspect of the gospel which offends the unbelieving mind. It is unthinkable that a Holy God would be so offended by sin as to require eternal death for sinners. It is even more unthinkable to the unbelieving mind that God's wrath can be satisfied through the bloody sacrifice of His own Son. This is the watershed. It is not enough to believe that Christ died. You must believe that Christ died *in your place, personally*. He offered Himself as a sacrifice for *your* sins.

It should be noted that children certainly can and do receive the gospel. However, children's workers, in particular, need to be warned about downsizing the gospel. Children must know that Christ died *in their place* and *for their sins*.

c. It is rooted in a scriptural death. Paul wants us to know that we should not be surprised by the death of Christ. He died *according to the scriptures*. It was prophesied that Messiah would make such a sacrifice. It was prophesied in *typology* and *symbolism*. Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The substitutionary death of Christ is taught in the Law and throughout the poets and the prophets. It is everywhere. One of the sweetest substitutionary passages in all the Old Testament is found in Isaiah 53. Notice verse 6:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
(Isa 53:6)

Such tender words! Such wonder! My iniquity has been laid upon the precious Lamb of God. When *we* turned out of the way, *He* placed Himself *in the way*. He took the punishment which was meted to us. That is the stuff of salvation. You are not standing in the gospel if you do not embrace the doctrine of substitution.

d. It is Realized in His supernatural resurrection.

Verse three announces, He was buried, He rose again the *third* day, and, He rose according to the scriptures.

Christian friend, when you present this gospel without making reference to this resurrection you have *perverted* the gospel. Do not settle for a partial presentation. Give the listener the whole truth and nothing but the truth!

We want to close this study by bringing home a truth to which we alluded earlier. This gospel is unequivocal. We may not add to, nor take away, from this gospel. This servant of Christ has spent his whole life defending this gospel from those who would do both.

While charlatans are everywhere and easily observed, we must point out that many sincere and well meaning folks are party to the perversion of this gospel. They have never thought their positions through. Sincere church attenders, for example, have never listened *carefully* to what their denominational leaders are saying.

If you believe that infant baptism saves a little baby you have perverted this gospel. Infant baptism does not save or regenerate in any way. The practice is *not even mentioned* in the Bible. And surely, if it were so important, Paul would mention it right here! Billy Graham was quoted in the Lutheran Standard:

"I do believe that something happens at the baptism of an infant... We cannot fully understand the mysteries of God, but I believe that a miracle can happen in these children so that they are regenerated, that is, made Christian, through infant baptism."

Christian friend, you need to devote your life and ministry to defeating that doctrine. When a man places his hope for eternity on the *rite of a church* he is not standing in the gospel.

Others tell us that we are saved by the Eucharist, the Mass. Jack Hayford of Promise Keepers calls it *redeeming worship*. There is no such thing as redeeming worship. There is only redeeming blood. If you believe that you must take communion or celebrate the mass in order to gain or keep your salvation you are not standing in the gospel. You have believed *in vain*. You are lost. The old gospel song declares:

*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness,
I dare not trust a sweeter name, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.*

But there is a warning here for true believers as well. This danger presents itself in the way we proclaim the gospel and it is especially observable in child evangelism. When a teacher is found saying:

*Will you give your heart to Christ?, or
Will your surrender your life to Christ?, or*

*Will you confess your sins and ask Jesus to forgive you?, or
Will you come to Christ and promise to serve Him from now on?, or
Are you willing to forsake all your sins to receive Christ?*

Be very careful...you may well be confusing the gospel. What is wrong with those representations? Each may contain an element of truth but all of them include error as they stand. Each shifts the emphasis away from the gospel. Christ died as the sacrifice for our sins. He was buried. He rose again. That *alone* is the gospel. It is the appropriation of that fact which produces repentance and salvation. The real question is:

Do you believe that Christ died and paid the penalty for your sins and that He rose from the dead?

That IS the gospel. That is the truth which must be understood by the smallest child. We need to understand that we could be leading and encouraging listeners to believe in vain. Satan is in the business of offering false hope through a myriad of schemes. We must exercise great care in making the gospel clear.

How then, do we know when a child, or a man, or a woman is truly saved? Do we have to wait until the hour of their death in order to be sure they do not falter along the way? We know a person is saved when *his entire hope for salvation* is based on the blood sacrifice of Christ on the cross and when that person understands that Christ's resurrection is what secures his own resurrection. It is that simple.

Where do you *stand*? Have you appropriated this great truth? Have you appropriated this great Person?

Serving in Vain

Intro: If you have not read the last study, you would be benefitted by scanning it quickly.

I. The Gospel Proven by the Resurrection

We are learning that our gospel is *rooted* in Christ's death, and, *realized* in His resurrection. This resurrection was a *literal* resurrection which involved His physical body. It was also a *logical* resurrection, because it was required in the Old Testament Scriptures. Notice Romans 4:25:

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Rom 4:25)

In this verse we see an added dimension. We learn that Christ was raised, literally, *on account of our justification*. Christ's resurrection at the hand of the Father was the Father's declaration that His sacrifice was sufficient to cover our sins. When the Father loosed the Son from the chains of death it was a *logical consequence*, an absolute declaration of His innocence and the sufficiency of His sacrifice.

His resurrection was literal, it was logical, and it was also *legal*. That is, it was a legal representation or proof of what had occurred. The resurrection had to happen. It was not possible to stop it.

It has often been stated that the resurrection is the most proven fact of history. It was witnessed by individuals, by small groups, and by large groups. This is the stuff of verses 5-11. Read them once again:

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. (1Co 15:-11)

II. The Gospel Perfected in the Resurrection

There is a trend to which we must not fall prey. It relates to *how* we present the gospel. Consider reading through the book of Acts with the singular purpose in mind of studying how the Apostles presented the gospel. Your study will underscore how far our departure has come. The apostolic kerygma (the style and content of their message) was intensely Christ centered, intensely scriptural, and far more heavily focused on the *resurrection* than most of us have ever noticed. In fact, as we read these sermons we are amazed that, in many cases, more emphasis is placed on the resurrection than on the death of Christ. The resurrection, based on the obvious death of Christ, was the *keystone* of their kerygma.

We are not witnessing this strong emphasis on modern gospel preaching. We have adjusted to our culture and know better how to present the gospel. We know how to get more results. Christian friend, it is not only the bodily resurrection of Christ which adds power to the presentation of the gospel, it is the message of that resurrection which liberates us in our struggles against our present fleshly natures. The man who ignores the resurrection in the presentation of the gospel perverts the gospel.

Now, Paul brings his witnesses to the stand.

He was seen of Cephas (or Peter). There was both irony and beauty in this encounter. There was forgiveness in this, because we know that Peter, who was so confident in his support of Christ, denied His Savior. Peter needed to know that Christ's forgiveness was perfect and complete, just as you and I need to know that when we repent of our sins, we have a Savior who forgives completely.

While noting that, there are other equally important reasons why Christ appeared first to Peter. If Peter had not been convinced of the resurrection others would have not considered it so quickly. As the unofficial spokesman for the apostles he became the orator of Pentecost, the persistent goad in the sides of the Sadducees and Pharisees, and the one through whom God opened the door of witness to the nations. Peter had more than an intellectual understanding of the resurrection, he had a life altering understanding.

Following Peter come the twelve. They are so completely and thoroughly convinced that not one dissenter remains. Even Thomas surrenders to the risen Christ.

Then came the five hundred plus brethren. Many of these were still living at the time of Paul's writing to Corinth. They were ready, at a moment's notice, to testify of that singular event which changed their corporate history. And after them, came James, and all of the apostles, not just the twelve. We were not to think that there were only five hundred who saw Christ. There were five hundred at once.

Finally, there was one who was really the least in this list. That great persecutor and enemy of Christ, Saul of Tarsus, had his own resurrection encounter. If ever the Jewish people could have provided a witness against this resurrection; if ever there was a man living on the face of all the earth who could have proven that Jesus was not resurrected, it would have been Saul. He was the crown jewel of the Pharisees and of Judaism. When conquered by Christ, he became the star witness for the prosecution.

No court, no team of lawyers in the history of mankind could have amassed a more comprehensive group of witnesses, and, without the smallest peep from the opposition, the fact of the resurrection was legally cemented.

Yet, there remains a point of irony in all of this. While it is true that the resurrection is the most proven fact in history and a fact which would stand up in any court, we notice that Jesus only appeared to *those to whom He chose to reveal Himself*. With the exception of Saul, there is no evidence that any Christ rejecters saw the living Christ. Further, even those who saw the risen Christ did not recognize His identity until Christ revealed Himself to them. Christ revealed Himself to those whom He had selected. His appearances were not indiscriminate.

As a reader or listener, you may be one of those who has resisted Christ, challenging Him to *prove Himself to you, as though you were some kind of special case deserving a special invitation!* Dear friend, Christ has already done that. He has given you the facts. The visible evidence of the risen Christ was recorded with abundance and accuracy. The *living evidence* of the resurrection may be seen in truly born again believers who are all around you! Be very cautious about waiting for an engraved invitation to come to Christ! John records:

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (Joh 20:29)

III. The Gospel Presented in Vain Vs. 9-10

It is this last witness in this list, Paul, which continues to hold our attention in verses 9 and 10:

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1Co 15:9-10)

We take great comfort in the words of these verses, and we also find great warning. Both the comfort and the warning find their expression in the same word, *grace*. John Newton, a reprobate snatched from the jaws of Hell by the resurrected Christ, wrote: *"It was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fear relieved."*

Read those words in verse 10 and be sure to notice *all* of them. There are many who are quick to quote the first ten words, who really need to pay more heed to the next dozen! There are many whom I have heard say, “*By the grace of God I am what I am!*” I even had a drunk say this to me one time. My words to him were “*I wouldn’t blame it all on Him!*” The point is that we can only *give* God’s grace the credit for what we are as we *submit* to His grace. Paul could make this bold statement because the grace of God has been bestowed upon a man who then labored more abundantly. God’s grace *can* be bestowed in vain!

In our last study we dwelt heavily on the danger of *believing in vain*. It is important to remind ourselves that, as far as this life is concerned, a man can also be *saved in vain!* What a waste – to live our lives in such a way that they amount to little or no eternal value. The danger here is very real and present. Paul did not want that grace to be bestowed in vain.

Consider some of the ways in which God’s grace may be bestowed in vain. These are ways in which believers can “run in vain”, (Philip 2:16).

1. We can have a vain entrance. We as ministers of the New Covenant can minister in vain. Notice 1 Thessalonians 2:1

For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: (1Th 2:1)

Paul went on to say that, even though he had been shamefully treated at Phillipi he was *bold in our God* to speak the gospel with *much contention*. The gospel properly presented will bring contention. When we appeal to the flesh when presenting the gospel, we have a *vain entrance*. Paul’s exhortation was not out of deceit or guile. He preached to please God and he refused the use of flattery and the pursuit of men’s praise. We are witnessing, at this very time, a plethora of misdirected witnessing, preaching and teaching.

2. We can run in vain when we have misplaced standards of behavior and separation.

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (2Co 6:1)

Paul continues here, to explain that because *today* is the day of salvation, his entire focus was set on *giving no offense in any thing that the ministry be not blamed*. He followed up his comments with an urgent and candid plea that these Corinthian believers *be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers*. Christian friend, you are unequally yoked when you refuse to come out from among them and be separate, you risk running in vain. Keep yourself separate and pure.

3. We can even disciple others in vain. As Paul reminds us in Philippians 2 to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling we are told to remember that God is working out *His will* and pleasure in our lives. When we arrive at verse 16 we read:

Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. (Php 2:16)

The goal is to hold forth *the word of life* in the *midst* of a perverse and crooked generation. The goal is not to appear as crooked and perverse as our generation looks in the hope of attracting them to Christ. The goal is to *hold forth the word of life*. If the end product of our ministry does not mature people in the Word of God so that they, too, are holding forth the Word of God, we have run in vain. Finally:

4. We run in vain when we are careless about our evangelistic efforts. Paul talks about one of his own *evangelistic endeavors*. He explains the great care which he took:

*And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.
(Gal 2:2)*

There are important considerations in this verse. We do not use the same means to present the gospel to all men. We *can* run amuck in our evangelistic efforts. We can be careless and thoughtless in the way in which we present the gospel. We can allow our *culture* to obscure our Christ. We *can* run in vain.

What is the gist of all this? What is Paul really saying in this Corinthian passage? Paul wants us to know that the stakes are high. The cost of the gospel is high. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the greatest feat ever accomplished on behalf of men. It was done for a *purpose*. It would then be a great shame and a tragedy to receive this gospel *in vain*. God has a great deal invested in us and it was never His intent that we demean or diminish this gospel by our careless presentation of it, by our lack of separation from sin, and by behaving in a way which detracts from the dignity which we have in Christ.

This provides an ideal occasion for each of us to take inventory and ask ourselves, just how much of our lives are being lived in vain.

*Only one life, t'will soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

Reasons for the Resurrection - I

We titled the first eleven verses of 1 Corinthians 15, **The Resurrection Declared**. We have titled verses 12-58, **The Resurrection Defended**.

As we approach these verses we will be asking seven leading questions:

1. Why do we need to believe in a resurrection? Vs 12-19
2. Why doesn't Christ's resurrection result in our immediate resurrection at death? Vs 20-28.
3. What happens when men reject the idea of resurrection? Vs 29-34
4. How can a dead body be raised up anyway? Vs 35-38
5. Why must we experience the indignity of death? Vs 39-50
6. What will it be like to experience the resurrection? Vs 51-56
7. What should all our response to this be? Vs 57-58.

Looking at verses 12-19, let's ask our first question:

1. Why do we need to believe in a resurrection? Vs. 12-19

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? (1Co 15:12)

Among the most foolish statements a man can make is the statement that there was no resurrection. To claim to be a Christian while denying the resurrection is like claiming to be a sailor while denying the existence of the ocean. It is the height of absurdity. When we read this verse we can only wonder what was going on at Corinth. Was it the influence of the pagan Gnostic-like philosophers surrounding this church which swayed these folks? Perhaps there were pagans right there within, infiltrating the church and leading these would-be philosophers down a primrose path. We cannot say what things were like, for sure, but we can say this: One can no more separate the doctrine of the resurrection from Christianity and expect it to go on than he can separate his own heart out of his body and expect it to live. The resurrection of Christ is the beating heart of Christianity.

Notice Paul's first response to this absurdity in verse 13:

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: (1Co 15:13)

Paul wants us to know the first and most important fact – If we deny the *principle* of the resurrection we also deny the *fact* that *any* resurrection will occur in the

future or that any has occurred in the past. When we deny this principle we also deny the fact that anyone has ever been resurrected, and most assuredly Christ has not risen. One cannot deny the possibility of resurrection in general without denying the resurrection of Christ, in particular.

But listen to the rest of what Paul has to say:

And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (1Co 15:14-19)

Consider the *cascading consequences* of denial. This is only the *first strand* of the threads which quickly unravel upon denial of the resurrection. If Christ be not risen, the preaching of the gospel is empty and foolish, faith in Christ is a foolish exercise, all of those witnesses of the resurrection are liars and frauds, and, worst of all, we are all still dead in our sins.

We can be tempted to behave like a small child at times and make outrageous statements while remaining oblivious to the true consequences of what we are saying. The person who dabbles in philosophy and suggests that such a physical resurrection may not be necessary is unaware that, in so doing, he has set in motion the forces of total cataclysm. No resurrection simply translates to no hope!

In such a case, the great preachers of the gospel are truly the great enemies of mankind, and the great heroes of the faith are a cloud, not of witnesses, but of fools. All the suffering, persecution, and shed blood have represented an investment gone sour. A waste.

Paul is *not* saying that the resurrection is true simply *because we believe it is true*. He is simply reminding us of the logical consequences of its denial. Nor should we assume that Paul is resting on human reason alone, because he employs simple logic at this point. Remember what was noted earlier. In the final analysis this resurrected Christ reveals Himself to whom He will. He is the One who, through His Spirit, convinces us of the resurrection. The honest seeker will find evidence everywhere.

So, the first thing which Paul has done has been to establish the foolishness of trying to imagine life without the resurrection. Without it, Christianity falls like a house of cards.

2. Why Doesn't Christ's resurrection result in our immediate resurrection at the time of death?

Another way to raise this question would be to say that if our resurrection is *truly linked* to Christ's, then why do believers have to wait for their resurrection *after* they die? Christ did not have to wait for His.

When we consider the mind of Paul we can understand why this would be the next logical issue to deal with. On the one hand, he has explained that our resurrection is intrinsically linked with Christ's. On the other hand, we are expected to accept this *by faith*. It would seem logical that we would be resurrected at the moment of death. The answer is found in the next verses:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. (1Co 15:20-28)

Did you discover the answer? Do you understand what is going on “*resurrectionally*” speaking?

The fact is stated in verse 20. Christ *is* risen. But an *additional* piece of information is supplied, a piece of information so fundamental to this truth that, failure to grasp it will make you vulnerable to any number of false ideas.

We will call this additional piece of information the *figure of the resurrection*. It is the imagery of the resurrection. Verse 20 not only declares Christ has risen, it declares that Christ has become the *firstfruits* of them that slept. This is the first of two agricultural metaphors which Paul is pulling out of his toolbox. We must learn that we cannot truly understand the resurrection unless we understand the concept of firstfruits. The word comes from the Old Testament. You may read about the firstfruits in Exodus 23 and Leviticus 23 as well as in other places. For example, consider Leviticus 23:10

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: (Lev 23:10)

Among the lessons which can be gleaned from this doctrine is the reminder that God deserves the best from us. He deserves the first of our increases, not the last.

More specific to this discussion is the reminder that there were seven feasts in the Jewish year. The *third* of these seven feasts was the Feast of the First-Fruits. On the first day of this feast, individuals were selected to mark out the spot in the field of grain from which the sheaf would be cut. On the second day, the sheaf was cut and brought into the sanctuary as an offering unto the Lord. On the third day the sheaf was presented unto the Lord. That sheaf represented the promise of home, the promise of a coming harvest.

When Christ was raised from the dead *on the third day* His resurrection stood for many things, but it stood especially as a promise, a promise of a future harvest. The harvest of this *one* resurrection is yet to come and, it involves you and me. So, what have we learned? First, we have learned that the idea of the resurrection can be understood by comparing it with the harvest. Secondly, we have learned that Christ is the firstfruits of that *one* harvest, an offering and a pledge to God on the one hand, and the promise of our coming resurrection on the other.

At this point, we must guard against a possible error. Some well meaning folks have looked at verses such as 18 and 20 and made a false conclusion. They have concluded that the soul of the dead believer remains in a state of sleep along with his body. When Paul speaks of "*those who slept*" these folks conclude that when believers die, their souls literally go to sleep to be awakened at the judgment day. They insist that they are interpreting the passage literally. It is not, however, an issue of literal interpretation. These folks do not understand that it is the *body* which sleeps, not the soul. It is the *body* which is under discussion in this context.

We must not fault anyone who tries to interpret God's Word literally, but we also have responsibility to take all the scriptures into account which address a given subject. In this manner we allow the scriptures to interpret the scriptures themselves. We know that the idea of sleeping is a common euphemism for death, just as is a term such as "passing on," but we also know that the doctrine of soul sleep is in error for several reasons:

- a. There are other passages in the Bible such as 2 Corinthians 5:8 which tell us that our absence from the body places us in the very presence of our Lord. Paul had a desire to depart and to be *with* Christ, (Philippians 1:23.) We must take these passages literally.
- b. The Lord Jesus pulled back the curtain of death just a bit in Luke 16. In this story of the rich man and Lazarus we discover both go into a place of immediate conscious existence. The Bible does not call this a parable, and even if it is viewed as one, it does not negate the reality that Jesus believed the souls of the dead were quite conscious. Parables, by the way, do not contain names of individuals, such as Lazarus and Abraham. It is interesting to note that those who insist on taking the word sleep literally here in Corinthians (as they should do) are

the same ones who say that the whole story of Lazarus is figurative. Why would Jesus invent a whole false existence in order to teach a biblical reality?

Why then *does* the Bible use the term sleep in reference to death? Clearly, it is because the Bible's description of what happens to the body, not the soul. We have seen the *fact* of the resurrection, and the *figure* of the resurrection (as the firstfruits). Now consider.

The Function of the Resurrection. Vs 21 and 22.

Verses 21 and 22 explain the *necessity* and *place* of the resurrection for us. The soul of man cannot just pop into heaven and check out a new glorified body like one would a pair of roller skates. It is my personal understanding that not even Enoch and Elijah will have been excepted from this process through which all of God's elect must go. The resurrection process consummates the redemptive scenario which began in the Garden of Eden. It cures the wound which Adam inflicted upon us:

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1Co 15:21-22)

We establish the *arena* in verse 21. This is an issue which pertains to *man*, not angels or visitors from space. This is a mannish issue. Death came by man. The resurrection, if it is to come, must also come by man.

We establish the *actors* in verse 22. They are Adam and Christ. Both are progenitors. Both are the first of their respective families. Adam is the first of the physical family of men and Christ the first of the resurrected family of men.

We must rush to identify another error which some have construed from verse 22. Taking the words "...even so, in Christ shall all be made alive," they have constructed the doctrine of universalism or universal salvation.

Not only do *other* scriptures contradict this emphatically, this very verse also contradicts it. You see, the verse clearly states that it is those who are *in Christ* who are resurrected. The event occurs *because* we are in Christ. Just as our guilt arises because we are *in Adam*, our expiation results from being *in Christ*. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation. So, we see the resurrection which Paul addresses is the resurrection unto life, not unto death. The latter is what the Bible simply calls the second death.

So, in a few short verses we have done away with numerous errors. Most of all, we are doing away with the idea that all religions lead to God. Any religion which does not lead a man directly to Christ is a false and vain religion. A man must be *in Christ* to benefit from the resurrection of Christ. You need this Christ if you would have this resurrection.

As we close this study we turn to one point of irony as we leave verse 21.

Now and then, we hear someone say, “Why should I believe in life after death? After all, no one has ever come back from the dead. Someone *has* done just that. The most truthful and reliable witness who ever lived came back just as He said He would. Prior to His death John records:

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? (Joh 11:25-26)

Believest thou this? It is hard for some to believe in the resurrection because we have only known death. We were born into death. We have never known anything but earthiness and death, though our greatest minds have tried to escape it and our greatest minds have tried to deny it. Have you considered that it was just as hard for Adam and Eve to conceptualize *death* in Eden as it is for you and I to conceptualize eternal life? And, do you remember what Satan said to Eve? He said, “*thou shalt NOT surely die.*” He told her death was a lie. Now, that same enemy of our souls has been saying, “Thou shalt not surely live!” Yet God says the opposite.

Jesus said that He has come so that we might have *life* and have it more abundantly, (John 10:10). Do not believe that waffling liar, believe the One who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the *life.*” And now that you understand a little more about the resurrection, you can also understand why Jesus said “...no man cometh unto the Father but by me...” John 14:6

Eternal life and resurrection life are one and the same. You may have this life today.

Reasons for the Resurrection – II

We titled the first eleven verses of 1 Corinthians 15, **The Resurrection Declared**. We have titled verses 12-58, **The Resurrection Defended**.

We have approached this second division using the interrogatory method. We have been asking *seven leading questions* in an effort to let the scriptures which are in front of us provide the answers.

The seven questions are as follows.

1. Why do we need to believe in a resurrection? Vs 12-19
2. Why doesn't Christ's resurrection result in our immediate resurrection at death? Vs 20-28.
3. What happens when men reject the idea of resurrection? Vs 29-34
4. How can a dead body be raised up anyway? Vs 35-38
5. Why must we experience the indignity of death? Vs 39-50
6. What will it be like to experience the resurrection? Vs 51-56
7. What should all our response to this be? Vs 57-58.

We are finishing our consideration of the second question, why doesn't Christ's resurrection result in our immediate resurrection at death?

Notice verses 20 through 24 momentarily:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. (1Co 15:24)

In verse 20 we have the **fact** of the resurrection.

In verse 20 we also have the **figure** of the resurrection, the analogy of harvest and firstfruits.

In verse 21 we have the **fitness** or appropriateness of the resurrection. It is a logical necessity. If death came by man, then life must also come by man. We are in a closed system.

In verse 22 we find the **federal heads** of the resurrection. Adam, the federal head of the human race, plunged all of us who were in him into death. Christ, the federal head of the spiritual race, brings life to all who are in Him. This is an ar-

gument of headship. There are many who shake their fists at God because they say they are not responsible for Adam's sin and they refuse to accept responsibility for Adam's action. They are, however, the most deceived of all because in refusing that fact they also refuse the solution. They refuse to be placed in Christ. These folks have no argument. To refuse Christ because you are angry that Adam placed you in sin is like refusing medicine because someone else gave you an infection. Sin is a contagion. Christ is the antidote. It is our identification with Adam (we were in him) which gave us this problem. It is our identification with Christ which gets us out of this problem.

1. Consider the matter of order in general.

Reread verse 23, keeping in mind the question we are considering. We are asking ourselves if Christ's resurrection is really the promise of *our* resurrection, then why aren't we resurrected at the moment of death? Why must we be forced to hold this doctrine by faith? Verse 23 argues:

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (1Co 15:23)

Paul is giving us pause to explore an important point. There is a purpose, a plan, and an order of events which God has established. There is a *formula* for the implementation of the resurrection. There is an order. Christ was the first fruits, but then we read, "...but every man in his own order."

It has been said by those who quote the pseudo book of Hezekiah that "cleanliness is next to godliness." And *if* we are willing to accept that truism we must also accept this: *Orderliness is the twin sister of cleanliness*. God is a God of purity and He is a God of order.

God runs His universe through *ordinances* and does so in an orderly fashion, from the subatomic level to the deep recesses of space. It all functions in an orderly manner. We do not break the laws of God in creation, we merely experience them.

God has also established man and the institutions which man needs in order to survive, such as marriage and the family. When men choose to break off from that order they experience in their own bodies and lives the natural consequences.

2. Consider the matter of order as it relates to Redemption and the Resurrection.

God is a God of order on many levels, but most important to us is the fact that He is also a God of *redemptive order* for this earth. He has a plan which begins in what we call eternity past and consummates at the end of the age. It is an *orderly* plan which runs in direct contradiction to plans and ways of that great anarchist and enemy of our souls, Satan. He is the champion of lawlessness and disorder.

Now, in this context, what is Paul saying to us?

- a. **First, there *is* a resurrection.** It was provided by Christ.
- b. **Secondly, that resurrection is just like a harvest.** Christ is the firstfruits.
- c. **Thirdly, that resurrection has *already begun!*** It began with Christ Himself.
- d. **Fourthly, every *man* will experience this resurrection *in his own order.***

The word *order* is the Greek *tagma*. It is a military term which references to the rank and order of a military enterprise. It is vitally important that we give our best attention to this truth. This verse is not merely a prophetic watershed, it represents the *great divide* between prophetic systems. It stands between us and the ungodly cults and it also defines us in contrast to those godly brethren in the Reformed tradition and other allegorical systems.

A. This verse reveals to us that the resurrection is first a single process which occurs over time. A man plants a field of grain in the spring or in the fall and he waits for the harvest. The day comes in God's timing when the fields are ripe unto harvest. He takes his firstfruits to the Lord as an offering. Is the harvest complete? No. He continues one day, two days, and maybe even weeks, until the harvest is complete. Now I ask you, *how many harvests are there?* There was only *one*, but the wheat was brought in in an *orderly fashion*. This harvest continues, probably very much in the order in which the grain was initially planted.

This is a vital fact concerning the resurrection. It is a single process which can be witnessed at more than one occasion. Now consider this second fact:

B. There are two aspects of this resurrection. Another way is to say that there are two types of seed being harvested. There is a resurrection unto life and there is a resurrection unto death. The book of Revelation separates these two aspects in Revelation 20:6, but to understand it properly we need to read six verses:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (Rev 20:1-6)

This single resurrection contains multiple aspects. There is the resurrection of the righteous. The Bible calls this the *first* resurrection. It is first in priority. By the way, *whenever* the Bible speaks of the resurrection of the righteous as opposed to the resurrection of unbelievers it is very specific. In the Greek it is always referred to as *ΕΚ ΝΕΚΡΟΝ*, the resurrection *out from among the dead*. The righteous are first resurrected out from among the dead. *Only* the unbelieving dead remain unto the end.

This resurrection of believers is called the first (πρωτος) resurrection. The Greek word can mean first in time *or* in place. In this case, it is both, but it is especially related to priority.

c. Do not be deceived by the doctrine of a general resurrection. By that, these folks believe that both the good and the evil will be raised at a single point and subsequently judged. Their favorite reference in this context is John 5:28-29.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (Joh 5:28-29)

They look at those words and say, “See, the hour is coming when *both* will come forth...” The answer, of course, is that there *is* an hour coming for both groups, but it is not necessarily the same hour.

But, do you remember what we just read in Revelation 20:5? The *rest of the dead*, (the unbelieving) are not raised for an additional one thousand years. The events of verses 4 and 5 will be interrupted by one thousand years.

So, what have we learned so far? We have learned that there is only one resurrection which occurs as an orderly process. One aspect of that is the resurrection unto life, and it is first in rank and priority. It is first in order. There is an ultimate and final resurrection unto damnation called the second death.

Now, turn your attention again to 1 Corinthians 15:23 and 24 as we list these things in their proper *order*.

We have said that the resurrection began with Christ, the firstfruits. We then said that the resurrection is ongoing and is not complete. Those who are Christ's will be resurrected at His coming. It is one and the same resurrection, but there is an appropriate order.

Please understand that Paul is not teaching a course on Bible prophecy in this chapter. He is only *summarizing* the main points of the prophetic process for the purpose of underscoring the resurrection.

d. When studying the details, do not miss its ultimate purpose.

We have learned that the *next in order* to participate in this resurrection are those who are Christ's, and that this resurrection *will occur at His coming*. Was Paul referring to the rapture of the church before the tribulation, the return of Christ to set up His kingdom, or was he referring to both events? The answer is *both* and then some.

- To begin, there will be a resurrection of the church. You may read about that in 1 Thessalonians 4.
- Secondly, there will also be a resurrection of Tribulation saints who are martyred for Christ. We read about that in Revelation 20.
- We must also deal with the resurrection of the Old Testament saints, just as the prophet Daniel spoke of in Daniel 12:2. It is possible that they could be included in the rapture, but it is more consistent to believe they will be raised with the tribulation saints.
- And then, during the millennium, folks will also die, and we need to consider that aspect of the resurrection as well.

All of these form the bases for other studies. The important thing for us to establish at this point is that the resurrection is a process, it is a harvest, and it ultimately has one purpose.

Let's conclude by asking the ultimate question. Why does this have to be? Why is the harvest spread out over such a long period? The answer is found in verses 24-28:

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And

when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. (1Co 15:28)

You may remember that the word *order* in verse 23 is a military term. In reality, this whole passage has a military connotation. Our Commander in Chief has outlined His entire battle strategy, right before our eyes. God has a strategy. He has an objective. It is not that God *needs* a strategy in order to win the war. That He wins the war was a foregone conclusion before the creation began. His strategy runs far deeper. The end will come when the Lord Jesus Christ has *delivered up* the kingdom to God, even the Father. It will come when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. He *must* reign.

In that strategy there is an order and in that order the *last enemy* which is to be destroyed is death. This happens after He has put down all things under His feet.

In this great conflict of the ages you and I may be thankful that we have even been allowed to be buck privates. Stand up for Jesus, the writer admonishes, the strife will not be long! This day, the noise of battle, the next, the victor's song!

Reasons for the Resurrection – III

We titled the first eleven verses of 1 Corinthians 15, **The Resurrection Declared**. We have titled verses 12-58, **The Resurrection Defended**.

We have approached this second division using the interrogatory method. We have been asking *seven leading questions* in an effort to let the scriptures which are in front of us provide the answers.

The first two questions were:

1. Why do we need to believe in a resurrection? Vs 12-19
2. Why doesn't Christ's resurrection result in our immediate resurrection at death? Vs 20-28.

We titled the first eleven verses of 1 Corinthians 15, **The Resurrection Declared**. We have titled verses 12-58, **The Resurrection Defended**.

We ended our last study with the glorious note and reminder that there *is* an order to the resurrection process which occurs in multiple events. We learned that, ultimately there is a great world *order* coming which will be ruled by a global King, the Lord Jesus Christ. This will all come about in God's time.

In this study, we add a third question:

What happens when men reject the idea of resurrection? Vs 29-34

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. (1Co 15:34)

Paul was not using tongue-in-cheek as a tool for exhortation. We have just read a broadside rebuke. Although he is addressing the whole group he has clearly targeted this small group among them who were saying there is no resurrection. And again, he is pounding on the same theme he has already introduced. If there is no resurrection, clearly all is lost and all is in vain. Everything is an exercise in vanity and futility and, even worse, insanity. One simply cannot make sense out of life once the resurrection is stripped out of the formula.

Notice the first argument in this segment of Paul's defense:

I. Consider the Error.

When men reject the idea of a resurrection, there is no longer a need for *perpetuity*.

A. Specifically, there is no need to perpetuate the Christian faith. It should be given a proper burial. Paul has already explained in verse 19, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men, most miserable. Paul now mounts one more piece of evidence for that claim. Look at verse 29 one more time:

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? (1Co 15:29)

What did the Holy Spirit intend in this verse? In our words, Paul is saying, why pay the price? For all those Christians who have died in Christ, all those who have been slain...why should new believers replace these martyred ones. There simply is no reason to perpetuate the misery.

Some have misunderstood this verse. The ancient Gnostics in general and Marcion, in particular, took the occasion presented by the wording of this verse to teach that we have a duty to be baptized for the dead.

In modern times, the practice is best observed in the Mormon cult, though Catholics are not far behind in their doctrine that masses may be performed on behalf of the dead. Both groups profit greatly by keeping these practices under the control of their priests.

1. What Paul did not mean. What about baptism for the dead? What did Paul mean by this term? As usual, it helps us to first understand what Paul did not mean. Paul did not mean to teach or imply that any believer could be baptized on behalf or in the place of any other human being. Here are some good reasons why this is so.

a. Simple logic would tell us that this was not Paul's intent. Consider it this way. If folks *can* be baptized for the dead, this means that there are now two avenues of salvation. It means that millions of souls now lost may still be saved. In fact, the future of untold millions and millions of lost souls are yet hanging in the balance. The fate of all these lost souls would be hanging in the balance on the basis of one verse which supposedly teaches this, a verse which mentions it almost in passing. There is not one other verse in all the Word of God on this subject. This is it, folks. There are no other instructions given. There are no limitations. There are no theological explanations as to how this fits in the redemptive scheme, no warnings concerning how this doctrine may be abused, and *no history* of the early church performing it until the days of these very Gnostic heretics which we just mentioned. If the apostles taught baptism in behalf of the dead,

the book of Acts would be filled with examples and the church epistles would have been loaded with both theological and pragmatic instructions.

We would be worshipping a strange God, indeed, who allowed the fates of tens of millions of souls dangle on the phraseology of one verse which happens to be right in the middle of an argument on an entirely different subject! Common sense tells us that we do not have that kind of God. Common sense tells us that if a religion is going to teach this doctrine, it is going to have to *make up other scriptures* in order to support its position, for none can be found in the Bible.

Having provided a logical reason, we remind the reader that we do not rely on logic or common sense in the final analysis. In reality, if only one verse in the Bible taught this doctrine, it would still stand. The fact is, the verse does not.

b. Basic doctrine provides a reason for rejecting this doctrine as heresy.

When one teaches that someone can be baptized for the dead he is teaching that an *act of baptism* can save someone. No one has *ever* been saved by being baptized. Baptism is the outward testimony of an inward experience. When a man comes to know Christ as Savior, the Bible says he has been placed into Christ. He has been baptized into His body. The Bible further argues that this is the manner in which we died, were buried, and raised again with Christ. You may read about this in Romans six. When a man is baptized in water he is simply testifying that Spirit baptism has already taken place. He has died and been raised with Christ.

Now, baptism *is* important. God commands it. In many areas of the world it is perceived as being true evidence of a man's conversion and it brings on the persecution and suffering associated with standing for Christ. However, baptism never saves, in this life, or in the hereafter.

c. Simple textual reasons provide a basis for rejecting the doctrine as heresy.

Look at the word *for* in this verse. "What shall they do who are baptized *for* the dead? Why are they then baptized *for* the dead?" That is the Greek word *ὑπερ*, (*huper*). It is a word which can be taken many ways. It can mean for, above, about, beyond, across, on behalf of, instead of, because of, and in reference to. It all depends on the structure of the text and its context. This is not hard for us to understand because our little word *for* in English behaves much in the same way. There is nothing in the text which requires us to believe that Paul believed living believers could be baptized as *substitutes* for the dead who were not baptized.

2. What Paul did mean. What then did Paul mean when he asked this question in verse 29? By reading the context and following Paul's simple argument we can understand exactly what he intended. Read the verses one more time.

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? (1Co 15:29-30)

Paul has been arguing the futility of suffering for Christ if there is no resurrection. Paul is asking why new Christians should rise up and *take the place* of those who have already suffered for Christ, if there is no *purpose* in that suffering. Why suffer for Christ if there is no resurrection, no hope?

In the military, when one row of soldiers falls in battle, the row behind them rises up and takes up the cause. Why? Why should the second row rise up on behalf of those who have died.

If there is no resurrection, there is no need for perpetuating the truth of Christ. Paul now goes a step further.

B. There is no need for propriety. Vs. 31-32. There is no need for order, or for productivity.

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. (1Co 15:31,32)

There is irony in these words because this band of shade tree philosophers which have invaded Corinth and who are arguing that a resurrection is not necessary are probably among the philosophical Gnostics. Paul is throwing their own philosophies back in their faces. When Paul says, *let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die*, he may have been quoting Isaiah 22:13, but it is far more likely that he is throwing the famous quote of the Epicureans right back in the teeth of these Corinthian sophists. The words “Eat, drink, and be merry” comprised the Epicurean motto.

While the Epicureans were more altruistic than the Hedonists, they simply represent the ultimate failure and depression of philosophy. They were at the end of a long train on unproductive philosophical inquiry. In reality, philosophers should be depressed, as should all who reject the resurrection.

This same reasoning puts the humanistic evolutionist on notice as well. There is no intelligent basis for morality or meaning in life that can be found in the evolutionary hypothesis. There is simply *no intelligent reason* why men should hold values of any sort. In fact, if anything, evolution teaches the opposite of morality. The fit survive, not the weak. If death does not matter, life does not matter.

II. Consider The Admonition

We have dealt with the logic, but we still need to deal with the problem of denial.

If simple logic demands and calls for the resurrection, how then could some folks at Corinth have been persuaded that Christ had not risen from the dead? How can anyone be talked out of it? For that matter, how can so many other false ideas persist and perpetuate themselves – ideas which have no correspondence to fact or reality? What is in man that makes him so willing to play the fool? Paul addresses this in verses 33 and 34:

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. (1Co 15:34)

Be not deceived? Evil communications corrupt good manners? Whatever is Paul saying? Paul is saying, do not be fooled. When you keep bad company you return home with bad behavior. You are influenced by those with whom you keep company.

Do you remember how your mother knew you were hanging out with the wrong crowd? She knew because she sensed a change in your behavior. This is the nature of the beast. When we run with the worldly wise of our day, their thinking will eventually cloud our thinking, and that will eventually affect our behavior. You cannot maintain strong relationships with disobedient men and disobedient philosophies without having them affect you. We call this dynamic modeling.

Flattery is at the core of all deception. It is on our natures to desire approbation and approval. That primal need for acceptance and recognition will often drive us to tuck reality way into the back of our minds. We are creatures of denial. We learned it from our first mother and father.

Do you really think that all of Hitler's Germany believed Hitler's lie? Do you really think it was his logic which won over his countrymen? His pride of race? Thousands of ordinary folks were brought into the Third Reich because they simply chose to be deceived. They could not bear the thought of standing alone or the consequences of what that meant.

We are no different than these Corinthians. Our need to be accepted has caused many of us to capitulate to corrupt worship and evangelistic practices. For others, we have chosen to kowtow to legalistic regimes in our churches. For others, the power of peer has led to doctrinal corruption, even to the point of doubting the inspiration of scriptures.

Jesus said:

How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (Joh 5:44)

Concerning Christ, John said:

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: (Joh 12:42)

They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Wake up! Wake up! Paul said.

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. (1Co 15:34)

Wake up! I believe Paul is rebuking these Corinthians because they had unbelievers right in their midst, men who denied the resurrection, men who had *not* the knowledge of God. Instead of seeing them as lost souls, they were treating these men with the same respect and honor as they were treating the Apostle Paul himself.

All around us today we are seeing the same thing. We are seeing Christians who give the same respect and authority to unbelievers and heretical teachers as they do genuine believers and teachers. Do not let the world form your philosophy. Do not let unbelieving minds tell you how to think or how to shape your values! Do not let your unbelieving classmates dictate your behavior. You can never rescue them from their despair while you are intimidated by their flattery and your need for approval.

If there *is* a resurrection, much of what you will hear on the network news and commentaries is wrong. If there is a resurrection, much of what you will hear at the university is wrong.

If there *is* a resurrection, everything you read in this book is right! There is sanity. There is meaning. There is a reason for perpetuating the gospel. There is intelligent life in this universe. There is purpose. There is meaning. There is direction. It all hinges on the resurrection!

Where do you stand today?

Reasons for the Resurrection - IV

We titled the first eleven verses of 1 Corinthians 15, **The Resurrection Declared**. We have titled verses 12-58, **The Resurrection Defended**.

We have approached this second division using the interrogatory method. We have been asking *seven leading questions* in an effort to let the scriptures which are in front of us provide the answers.

The seven questions are as follows.

1. Why do we need to believe in a resurrection? Vs 12-19
2. Why doesn't Christ's resurrection result in our immediate resurrection at death? Vs 20-28.
3. What happens when men reject the idea of resurrection? Vs 29-34
4. How can a dead body be raised up anyway? Vs 35-38
5. Why must we experience the indignity of death? Vs 39-50
6. What will it be like to experience the resurrection? Vs 51-56
7. What should all our response to this be? Vs 57-58.

We now approach the fourth question, the object of this study:

How can a dead body be raised up anyway? Vs 35-38

Paul introduces the equivalent of this question in verse 35:

*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?
(1Co 15:35)*

Please understand that this is not the innocent question of a child. This is the certain attack of the scoffer. These men are not asking for the sake of finding truth, they are asking this question in order to mock the truth and make believers in the resurrection look foolish. This much we concede, the superficial person who does not consider *carefully* what God has to say about the resurrection, can become convinced that it is a foolish idea.

Perhaps you have heard someone tell the story of a person who has been buried, obliterated, or cremated with his ashes spread from here to kingdom come. The statement is then made, "See, there could not possibly be a resurrection!" The apple tree grows over the buried body, someone else eats the apple. Now, a part of the original body is in the second body, and so forth, and so on. Typical

evidences like these are often offered to argue against the impossibility of the concept of resurrection.

The Bible doesn't offer much wiggle room for this kind of detractor. It calls such men *fools*. They are simple, arrogant, stupid ones. They are trifling children playing with high voltage wires. You may read the charge yourself in verse 36.

The Bible tells us that a fool answers a matter before he hears it (Prov. 18:13). Most unbelievers who are quick to mock the doctrine of the resurrection do not even know what they are talking about. The next ten verses will provide *three basic concepts* which will help us understand the resurrection, lest we fall into the trap of the fools.

We have introduced three key words to connote these concepts: **Transformation, Differentiation, and Implementation**. Do not let their size intimidate you. They represent very basic truths. Notice first:

I. The Concept of Transformation.

Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: (1Co 15:36)

The lessons of God in His creation are abundant. The Lord Jesus Himself used many of them and we rejoice with David who declared:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. (Psa 19:1)

However, we do not often grasp the full meaning of those words. It is not just that creation argues for the *existence* of God, it argues for the *intelligence* and the *ways* of God. Summer, winter, springtime, and harvest are all textbooks from which we study along with a thousand other volumes which witness to God's glory *and* His ways.

God has revealed His resurrection *in the planting and sprouting of a seed*. In fact, a whole ocean of spiritual truth is embedded in this concept of seeds and harvests. They are God's eloquent evidence of the concept of *promise*.

I have never lost the wonder and amazement which I experienced when I first planted a little seed in a cup of dirt and watched the miracle of life arise before my childish eyes. It was a miracle to me then and it is a miracle to me now. Now, I *do not understand* the miracle, but I can *observe the process*. That is all God asks of us regarding this miracle of resurrection. Consider some of the things we *can* understand:

A. We understand that the old must die.

Paul said that which we sow is not made alive unless it dies. Jesus, speaking of *His own death* and our death in Him announced:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (Joh 12:24)

There is *no fruit* without the death process. Our bodies are all seeds in God's seed bag, hovering around each other, trying to do everything in our power to void being planted! The fact remains, the old must die before there can be fruit.

B. The new life takes new form. Vs 37

The new life which comes from the seed takes on a new form.

And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: (1Co 15:37)

This is no small matter with Paul. Why do we expect of God *in the resurrection* what we do not expect of a plant *in germination*? When a man places a kernel of corn into the ground he does not expect to see that kernel again. He will not find it because new life takes on new form.

This truth, realized, does away with some foolish notions. The ancient rabbis were confused on this point. They had read the words of Job:

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: (Job 19:26)

They then concluded that we will all be raised from the dead looking *exactly the same way* we were when we were buried! Perish the thought! They meant well, but neither Job nor God agrees with them. Job was simply arguing that he would have a resurrection body, a body of *flesh*. Notice, however, Job did not say he would have a body of flesh *and blood*. The point is that this new body will take on a new form. It will be as different from the old body as a stalk of corn is from its mother kernel.

This puts an end to a whole lot of nonsense. It reminds us that God does not need or require the whole body to accomplish His purpose. That is of very little significance to our God. After all, when one thinks about it, we do not bury the whole stalk of corn when we plant it, do we? Now, if God so pleases to scrounge up every atom of the body one has at the time of his death, He can do so, but it makes more sense to align ourselves with scripture. Paul says it is foolish to think that God would do such a thing. It is enough to know that there is a *seed* planted, however large or small it is. If one feels led to donate his organs for transplant he needs to know that he will not need them in his resurrection body anyway. They are excess baggage. If it is in your power to extend someone's

life in the hopes of giving them time to receive eternal life, prayerfully consider doing so.

On the other hand, this presents a good opportunity to talk about another misunderstood subject. The trend toward cremation among believers is increasing. In terms of the *mechanics* of the resurrection it does not matter to God whether you are burned or buried. It is of no consequence to one who believes in a sovereign God. However, in terms of testimony, believers should think this through carefully. The Bible places great stock in the symbolism associated with our acts. When one has his ashes spread over the sea, he is effectively saying, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. I came from the earth; I return to the earth, and that is it. It is all over." A great number of the early participants in the Neptune Society, for example, chose cremation as a *symbolic statement* regarding their view concerning the resurrection. Historically, atheists, not Christians, have advanced the practice of cremation. Many of them have done so as a statement of defiance. They wanted to *symbolize* in their deaths what they believed in their lives. Now, God will find them, wherever their remains end up, as Rev. 20:13 states so eloquently. There is no hiding place, even for those whose remains are blasted into space.

Christian friend, Christians have chosen burials, again, for *symbolic* purposes. They have chosen burials for the lessons that burial teaches. When the body is placed in the grave, the Christian knows it is placed there in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. The unbeliever walks by and he knows that the Christian was looking forward to the day God would raise Him. Take a stroll though a cemetery and notice how profoundly the headstones witness to the lives of those buried there – both Christ lovers and Christ rejecters.

I want my body to be, in death, a testimony to the resurrection. I do not need or desire an airtight casket, but if you would kindly place my remains in the ground you will help me carry on my testimony in death that I embraced in life. And you might just place a trumpet off to one side of the headstone as a reminder of what this decayed old body is waiting for.

Now, we have said that *the old must die*, and *the new life* takes on *new form*. There is a third thing about which we may be sure.

C. The new growth is still intrinsically related to the old seed.

Our new bodies will be related to our old bodies. The old kernel will never rise again but the old kernel will be remembered and recognized by its presence in the new plant. One kind of grain brings forth one kind of plant and another grain, another kind. We must not fear the *loss of our identities* any more than the corn kernel loses its identity in the corn stalk. Corn is corn. I do not know *how* I will recognize you in the resurrection, but the fact that I will is indisputable. This is

wonderful, good news for those of us who do not desire to be raised up looking like the shriveled old corn that went into the ground.

It has been said that every cell in the body is replaced every seven to ten years and that none of us really have the same body we had in childhood. Yet, even though we look different than we did then, we have not *lost* our identify. As these notes are being typed, a man has just wakened from a seven year coma. He immediately recognized his sons.

The first concept surrounding the resurrection is the concept of *transformation*. As we transition to the second comment be reminded that some of us will not *sleep* in death. That is, our bodies will not be laid in the ground or decay in the sea. Those who are raptured will experience death *instantaneously* in the resurrection. We may not all sleep but we will all be *exchanged* or *transformed* (1 Cor. 15:51.)

II. The Concept of Differentiation

We broached this concept in verse 37, so we need to read this verse again along with verse 38.

And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. (1Co 15:37,38)

Focus on the words "...but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him..." Do not envision resurrection clones. It appears that Paul is teaching two things here:

A. We will be different from *each other*.

We will be custom made, so to speak. Just as God decided my present looks, He has decided my future image in my glorified body. Our God has made that decision sovereignly. All I know for sure is that I will, in some way, be recognizable. The blessing arises from the knowledge that God will participate, I believe personally, in this process of giving me a *unique* glorified body, just as He participated personally in giving me my present body, (Psalm 139:14.)

There is another strong point which Paul appears to be making:

B. Our new glorified bodies will be different from our earthly bodies in their present flesh.

This is the real thrust of verses 39 & 40

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. (1Co 15:39,40)

1. Just as the *flesh* of men differs from the flesh of animals, so the *flesh* in our glorified bodies will differ from the flesh in our mortal bodies.

Science is presently doing a great deal of research in cross-species transplantation. In effect, science is discovering yet another barrier which the evolutionist must cross. The nature of the flesh of fish, birds, cattle, and men are entirely different. The amino acids are unique to each type of flesh, leaving the creationist with the legitimate question, "When did these acids reconstruct?" Evolution is not merely missing a link, it is missing the whole chain.

Notwithstanding, keep the basic thought in mind, the glorified body *will be flesh*. You *will* have flesh in your glorified body. The Lord Jesus returned *in the flesh*, albeit, flesh with different properties. He was still Christ in the flesh. So, the flesh of the glorified body will be different.

2. The new glorified body will be different from the earthly body in its glory.

Just as celestial bodies (sun, moon, and stars) differ from earthly bodies, so the glory of our heavenly bodies will far outshine the glory of our earthly ones. I believe Paul is saying "As great as the stars are in contrast to the earth, so great will be the difference!" Of course, that is my opinion.

I am certain that Paul is also speaking of capabilities here. Bible expositors generally assume that our bodies will have the same properties as our risen Lord's. We will not be restricted by the ordinances which govern this creation as we know and understand them. As tantalizing as that thought is, it pales in the light of what it really means to be *glorified!* That is truly the ultimate difference! That is what captures our hearts.

God has already given man a small amount of His dignity and glory and we have, accordingly, stripped it off ourselves just as we would strip off our clothing. We, who were made in the image of God, have chosen, rather, the images of four-footed beasts for our models. Modern man despises this dignity and the holiness of our God, and gladly exchanges it for witchcraft, paganism, animism. The religion of the American Indian and the values of the voodoo priest are given more respect on television than simple biblical truth.

Man wants nothing to do with God's glory, even though he may give some sort of lip service to a divine being. The Christian, on the other hand, longs to be *clothed in white*, and he waits wistfully for the day when the holiness and glory of God will be reflected in our very smiles. We'll walk up to one another on the streets of glory and do a double take! Is that really you, Jim Steel? This is a *real*

makeover, not a Hollywood glamour attempt. I'm sorry to say that I have seen some folks come out of these makeover programs who look far worse than if they had never entered. When God finishes making us over we will be something to behold!

We inject a concluding thought. Earlier this author noted that he wanted to symbolize in death what he believed to be true in life. The reverse is also true. If we would symbolize in life what we believe about death we will seek to honor our bodies now and use them for the sole purpose of glorifying our God, in whose image we are made. Does your body – the way you use it, dress it, and respect it, honor the God in whose image it was made? Does it *glorify* God? The time will come when God will glorify us. Now is our time to glorify Him in these bodies.

When we respect these bodies, clean them, clothe them, and groom them, we *dignify* them. As Christians, we do not focus on our bodies as the world does, but we *dignify* them. It is one more way we stand out in stark contrast with this world.

If you are reading this without Christ, you need a healthy fear of dying. You will not be raised with a glorified body. You will be raised. You will be raised with a body which will not die. You will be raised in *indignity* and *shame*. We invite you to step out of the darkness and into the light of God's glorious Son. We invite you to come to Christ and appropriate His forgiveness which is provided on the basis of His sacrifice on Calvary and His resurrection. He is ready to give you new life today – resurrection life!

Reasons for the Resurrection – V

Intro: Our previous study led us to questions 4 and 5:

4. How can a dead body be raised up anyway? Vs 35-38

5. Why must we experience the indignity of death? Vs 39-50

In that segment we introduced some concepts which are important to understand when considering the resurrection.

The first concept was TRANSFORMATION. Here we observed an analogy from nature as we saw how the seed enters the ground and dies and emerges as an entirely new plant. The old must die, the new life takes on new form, and though it will not look like the old, it will be intrinsically related. Our bodies will experience a unique transformation in the resurrection.

The second concept was DIFFERENTIATION. Here we focused on verse 38 as we reminded ourselves that God will sovereignly control how we look. We meditated on the fact that our glorified bodies will be vastly different than our earthly ones.

Before we address the third concept, take a final glance at verses 39 and 40.

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. (1Co 15:39-40)

Clearly, Paul is arguing that our glorified bodies will be different from our former earthly bodies. That is the principle of differentiation. We have covered that.

We do need to inject a small side bar here, because of the presence of false teaching in our community. We need to point out an error which the Mormon church makes in respect to this passage.

The word *celestial* means *heavenly*. That is all it means. The word *terrestrial* means *earthly*. Again, that is all it means. The Mormons, however, have built an entire doctrine on this verse. They have taken the two terms, *celestial* and *terrestrial*, and have manufactured a third term, *teles-tial*. They have then decided, based on this passage, that there must be three levels in the eternal state! They are the teles-tial level, the terrestrial level, and the celestial level. Of course, this passage contains no reference to such imaginations. Paul was talking about the kinds of glory which are evident in God's creation, not the eternal state.

Returning to our study, we introduce the third concept:

III. The Concept of Germination.

As we look at verses 42 through 49 we see at least eight stark contrasts laid out before us by Paul. There are eight matters relating to our resurrection.

A. The Contrast of Durability Vs. 42

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: (1Co 15:42)

God warned Adam about eating the fruit of that tree. He said “...*in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” God meant business and He kept His word. We begin dying the day we are conceived, much less born. We live with corruption all of our lives and we finally surrender physically to what already happened spiritually. It just takes some of us longer than others. The biblical authors who grappled with this subject were quick to see themselves as *dust*. Then and now, it is the best way to describe our dilemma. In the words of Solomon, all go to one place and we are of the dust, and turn to dust again, (Ecc. 3:20).

Solomon's father, David, said:

For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. (Psa 103:14-16)

God knows our frame. God remembers that we are dust. God reminds us that our days are like grass and the wilting flowers of the field. God understands this. We are the ones who have a problem grasping this. We are the ones who cannot face this reality. It will not be so in our resurrection body. This perishable body will be gone forever.

B. The Contrast of Dignity Vs. 43

Verse 43 reveals the second contrast:

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: (1Co 15:43)

Another biblical poet named Job iterated:

And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. (Job 1:21)

We do not enter this world in a dignified manner and we certainly do not leave it in one. We begin with someone feeding and cleaning us and we often end up the same way. When we do manage to cheat death for a few more years we shrivel up like old prunes hanging on crooked twigs. And still, Job says “...*blessed be the name of the Lord.*” Why could Job say that? He knew the end from the beginning. He knew that after this body is sown in *dishonor*, it is raised in *glory*.

Be assured my friend, there is no dignity, honor, nor glory in hell. Even Satan himself, the Bible says, will be looked upon and scorned by the residents of hell who will wonder how such a pitiable weak representation of a being could have caused so much turmoil.

Contrast that to the dignity and glory and purity of heaven and you have one of the great benefits of heaven.

C. The Contrast of Ability. Vs. 43

It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. Gill wrote:

It is sown in weakness; it comes into the world in great weakness; what is weaker than the body of a new born babe? It cannot move, nor help itself in any respect; and how weak and defenseless is the body of a man when adult; as he is subject to various diseases and disorders, which weaken his strength in the way, and is surrounded with natural infirmities, arising from hunger, thirst, nakedness, labour, &c. so he is not armed, as many other creatures are, for defence and offence; nor can he resist and overcome many things which do him hurt, much less can he resist death, or retain his spirit then: and through weakness at last dies, and is devoid of all strength, and as such is laid in the grave, where this no work he can do: **but**

“it is raised in power”; it is raised by the power of God and with great power in itself; being able to subsist without food, and of moving itself from place to place, with great agility; and capable of the highest services before God and the Lamb, without weariness; nor will it ever be more liable to weakness or death; death shall have no more power over it; nor shall it be encompassed or attended with any infirmity whatever.

Now, I ask you, dear friend, would you deprive your loved one of that? Then do not fear this coming hour. Welcome it!

D. The Contrast of Operability. Vs. 44

It will function in an entirely different sphere of operation.

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (1Co 15:44)

Our physical bodies are limited by our physical world. We are very much like rats in a box. We can only function within the predefined and prescribed limits of a

physical world. The body of the Lord Jesus, on the other hand, was put on display for our benefit. That day when He appeared to the disciples and doubting Thomas, He gave us a peek; just a little one, but a peek nonetheless. We had a glimpse of how the spiritual body functions. For example, we know by reading that Christ materialized in front of the disciples behind closed doors. He explained that he was *not* a spirit because spirit does not have *flesh and bones*. And, he partook of their food, not because He needed to, but because He chose to.

You may imagine wings on your resurrection body if you choose, but I rather doubt that you will need them. Why, the first day we experience those resurrection bodies will make all our childhood Christmas' pale with absolute boredom.

5. A Contrast in Psychology. Vs 45.

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. (1Co 15:45)

Remember, we are not simply comparing Adam and Christ in this verse. Do not lose the thread in Paul's argument. Paul is *contrasting* the earthly body with the heavenly body. The earthly is corruptible, it is dishonored, it is weak, and it is natural. As though this is not enough, Paul says it is *soulish*. The Bible says that God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of lives and man became a living soul. The Bible tells us both in Genesis and Job that all living things have souls. Only man, however, had the breath of lives breathed into Him.

The Hebrew *soul* or *nephesh* is the life force of the physical body. Personally, I believe that when one observes physical death he only observes the departure of a man's soul, his life force, and that his *spirit* has already departed. That is, of course, a personal opinion.

When we speak of our physical bodies being *soulish* we are talking about their *nature*. It is the nature of the physical body to survive, to preserve its life force. That is because it is soulish. I am confined by my soulishness. I must eat, preferable a few times a day. I must drink. All of the systems of my body are designed with one goal in mind, survival. This, by the way, is my only connection with the animal world. Animals have this same focus. No bird drinks without looking around first. Survival, and the laws of survival dominate us because we are soulish. If you don't think you are dominated by soulishness, just hold your breath for a few minutes. You'll see who is the boss. You are in bondage to your body. This survival instinct represents only one aspect of our soulishness.

This is not so with the *spiritual body*. It is NOT soulish. The spiritual bodies which we receive will not contain the *breath of lives*. They will not be handed down to us genetically through Adam. They will be *spiritish* and will be governed by the laws of our new federal Head, Jesus Christ. This means that our whole *psyche*, our psychology will change. We will not be survival oriented and we will

not be driven by our present natures. Instead of being flesh driven, you will be *spirit* driven. You will have a body of flesh and bones, but you will not be soulish. You will have a different table of instincts. This was the Gnostic error. They could not conceive what the resurrection was really arguing.

E. A Contrast in Priority. Vs. 46,47.

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. (1Co 15:47)

As a rule, it is assumed that the first of anything which appears on the scene is first in rank or priority. The firstborn outranks the second born. Adam was first created, and then Eve. But Paul says that the opposite is true with respect to the resurrected body. Even though it was not the first to appear it is first in priority.

Why is the spiritual superior to the natural? Why does it outrank the natural? The reason is that the natural man is earthy, that is, he is earth-built and earth-bound. He is of the earth. Brigham young said, "Adam is our God and the only God with whom we have to do." Brigham had an earthy god. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

The spiritual body will have *no dust* in its makeup. Instead, it will be directly created by the Lord of heaven. The writer of Hebrews, quoting the Psalms, reminds us that we were made a *little lower* than the angels, (Heb. 2:6). Literally, we were made *for a little while, lower than the angels*. This will not be true after the resurrection. You will then be *higher* than the angels. Why? You will be *in Christ* throughout all eternity. You will outrank the angels.

F. A Contrast in Integrity (or Image). Vs. 48-49

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (1Co 15:49)

An image is a *figure* or a *likeness*. The Geneva Bible notes say, regarding this verse:

(b) Not a vain and false image, but such a one as indeed that the truth within it.

We put a great deal of effort into imaging. We want to present ourselves in the best light. Hollywood specializes in it. We can take the homeliest person and turn her into a beauty contest winner ~ at least for a while! You understand that this would have never happened if it were not for the fall of man. We were then created in the image of God, but since that fall, have had to make the best we can of ur image of the earthly. There is no *integrity* in that image. It is a blem-

ished image. One day it presents us in a good light, the next day, in a bad one. There is no consistency. We all do fade as a leaf.

This is not so regarding the image of the heavenly!

Now, let us consider *the conclusion of the matter*, to quote Solomon. We have seen a great contrast brought about by this *germination* which the Bible calls the *resurrection*. We have seen:

A contrast in Durability – one is corruptible; one is incorruptible.

A contrast in Dignity – one is sown in dishonor; one is raised in honor.

A contrast in Ability – one is sown in weakness; one is raised in power.

A contrast in Operability – one operates naturally; one operates spiritually.

A contrast in Psychology – one is soulish; one is spiritual.

A contrast in Priority – one is related to Adam; one is related to Christ.

A contrast in Integrity – one bears a fading image of the earth; the other the image of Christ Himself.

There is one more contrast.

G. A Contrast in Destiny. Vs. 50

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (1Co 15:50)

Imagine how *out of place* the unbeliever would be if he *could* go to heaven without salvation. He would still be earthy! He would still be soulish! His passions would still determine his ways! He would be weak and corruptible, a vain and primitive yahoo in a culture of refinement, perfection, and beauty.

If you would participate in *this* resurrection and enjoy the kind of transformation we have been learning about, it must begin with your conversion to Jesus Christ. You must be made into a new creation here and now. It may be that you have seen this “gospel train” at the station all of your life and that you are so used to being offered this free gift that it has been cheapened in your mind. Be aware that one day you will look up and see that the train has departed and you have missed the most exciting event of all, the resurrection of those who are in Christ. Do not hold off on this decision for even one more day. As the author of Hebrews urges:

While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. (Heb 3:15)

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (Heb 4:7)

Today, dear friend, is the day of salvation.

Reasons For the Resurrection - VI

Intro: We have titled the second half of 1 Corinthians 15: **The Resurrection Defended**, and we have asked five questions:

1. Why do we need to believe in a resurrection. Vs 12-19
2. Why doesn't Christ's resurrection result in our immediate resurrection at death? Vs 20-28.
3. What happens when men reject the idea of resurrection? Vs 29-34
4. How can a dead body be raised up anyway? Vs 35-38
5. Why must we experience the indignity of death? Vs 39-50

And now, we ask the two remaining questions:

- 6. What will it be like to experience the resurrection? (Verses 51-56)**
- 7. What should our response to all of this be? (Verses 57-58)**

So looking carefully at that sixth question - **What will it be like to experience the resurrection?** found in verses 51-56 I would like to title this whole group of verses under the heading:

The Trumpet Mystery

I have chosen five words which you may wish to write in the margin of your Bible to help you grasp the concepts. We will be dealing with:

Revelation - in verses 51 and 52

Certification - in verse 53

Consummation in verses 54 thru 56

Exaltation in verse 57, and, finally

Consecration in verse 58

Each of these words should make sense as we walk down this path together. We will only deal with Revelation in this study. Let's begin with verses 51 and 52 which we shall call:

I. Revelation

1Corinthians 15:51. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

This marvelous passage has been the source of comfort and strength for many believers who have stood at the grave of a lifelong companion and friend. Its message of hope and inspiration should encourage the spiritual vitality of every believer who walks with Christ - as we look for and long for the blessed appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. But, while we cling to this precious hope in our hearts, we must not be derelict in our duty to truly understand it in our minds.

First, I want you to see:

A. The Mysterious Nature of this Revelation.

"Behold, I show you a *mystery*.." We have, of course, encountered this word *mystery* before in our study of Corinthians, but we deferred its full discussion until now. It is an important Bible word.

1. What is a mystery? A mystery is a hitherto unrevealed secret. It is a *hidden* or secret thing. For the believer, a mystery is a hitherto unrevealed *truth*.

2. Why does God use mysteries? One answer can be found in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 13:11-13 where the Saviour is explaining the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The disciples had asked Him why He spoke in parables. He replied:

Matthew 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

In short, God controls the dissemination of His truth. Some truth is withheld from *all* of us until the appropriate time, and some truth is withheld from Satan and his angels. Do you remember what Paul said earlier in this book?

1Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, [even] the hidden [wisdom], which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known [it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

3. How does Satan respond to this? You must remember that Satan is a great counterfeiter, but he is not very original. He wants to be *like* the Most High. It has been said that imitation is the greatest compliment of all - and in that regard Satan has paid the greatest compliment to God in his desire to be *like* Him. Unfortunately, however Satan only wants to be *like* God in power and authority - not in purity and righteousness.

But my point is this, Satan, the great counterfeiter who lacks true creativity, can only counterfeit the ways of God. So, because God has *his secrets* - Satan likes

to promulgate his own store of secrets. He has done this through, for example, the world of the occult, in general, the mystery religions, in particular, and even the modern lodges which are satanic in their roots.

In ancient times, the *Gnostics*, concerning whom you have already read a great deal in our study, were one such *mystery religion*. They had various *levels* or *echelons* through which the initiated would go in their pursuit of higher levels of awareness. This is not unlike the false religion associated with Karate and Kung Fu.

In modern times every discerning Christian knows that the same basic doctrines taught in the ancient mystery religions are what is taught at the heart of Freemasonry. The average person looks at the wonderful work which the Shriners do in caring for little children, while he is totally unaware that they make clean the outside of the cup and platter while the inward side of Freemasonry is full of abominations and wickedness.

Personally, I believe that when Paul issues these words "Behold, I show you a mystery...." He is saying to these believers "You silly Corinthians who have been duped by the philosophic heresies of the Gnostics, don't you know that they are only false imitators of the true? Don't you know that the *mysteries of God* are far more precious and true? Why do you let Satan intimidate you? You are already a member of the world's greatest *secret order!*

4. What are some of these *mysteries of God*? I have produced a chart to help you understand them, but if you can get your hands on a Scofield Bible, you will find a wonderful summary of them in the footnote under Matthew 13:11.

(See Additional Visuals)

When Paul says, "*Behold, I show you a mystery.*" There are two things we want to keep in mind. **First**, the word *Behold* is in the imperative, that is, it is a command. Paul is saying, "*Pay attention now!*" **Secondly**, when Paul shows us a *mystery*, he is *revealing* a new truth to us - a truth which had never been revealed before the day when Paul penned these words. And what a marvelous revelation this is.

5. What is the mystery which Paul is about to reveal? It is the mystery of the rapture. And here are the elements:

a. We will *not all sleep*. It was important that Paul inserted this here, because there would have been great potential for misunderstanding if he had not. You see, Paul has just finished telling us what appears to be ***the very opposite***. Paul has been saying that *we must all die!* In other words, he has just argued that death is necessary in order to bring about the resurrection, just as the seed falls into the ground and dies before it can bring forth life, so the believer must

die before he can receive his resurrection body. If Paul had stopped there, some could have easily concluded that there *could be no such thing* as a rapture. Paul wants us to make no mistake, there will be a group of us *who will not sleep*.

However, I do want to make an important point here. I do not believe that Paul is saying the raptured believer will not die. That is not what Paul is saying. He is saying, the raptured believer's body will not sleep in death. One of the most enjoyable messages about the rapture which I heard in my youth was titled: "*Millions Now Living May Never Die!*" That was not correct. The correct title of that message should have been: "The Bodies of Millions Now Living May Never Sleep in Death!"

What is the mystery? We shall not all sleep.

b. How can this possibly be? we ask our teacher and he explains: "*but we shall all be changed*". Probably, a better word is *exchanged*. Our corruptible bodies will be made incorruptible. This has been the slogan of church nurseries ever since: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed!

Frankly, the parallelism may be closer than we realize. For in that day, that glorious day when this occurs, we will never once, even for a second, look back longingly for these old decrepit and defiled bodies.

c. Who will be changed? Those who are *in Christ*. These words are reserved for those who know Christ intimately as their Saviour. Oh, and please notice, Paul said: "*...we shall all be changed*." - not just some of us. Every now and then, someone takes another look at the book of Revelation without doing their homework and they come up with another cockamamie prophetic scheme. And more often than not, it results in the doctrine of a *partial rapture*. They hold that only the true and faithful will be raptured, and the rest of the soiled Christians will have to go through the tribulation in order to be purged or cleansed - or to somehow make up for their sins which were already paid for on Calvary's cross. Don't you believe it!!!

Paul did not say "*...and the best and purest of us will be changed*", no, Paul said We shall **all** be changed...every last one of us!

d. How will this occur? It will occur *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*. One minute you're in the garage working on the car, the next moment you will be in the presence of Christ. One moment sitting before your television set - the next moment standing before Christ. One moment, perhaps in church with a few of God's people, the next second, in church with *all* of God's people. I can live with that!

Of course, if you do not know Christ, even if you are not *sure* you know Christ, you must not delay another second because the change could occur *in a second*.

We would all like to imagine our rapture scenarios. Some of us think it will be in September in order to correspond with the firstfruits. Some of us like to think it will be morning in the eastern skies - our night time here. Personally, I am hoping that it will be when some humble preacher or Bible teacher somewhere in the world is speaking on this very subject, and that trumpet will sound! Just like that, it will all be over!! What a day, glorious day, that will be!

And that does bring us to another important word in this verse. Paul says "...at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound." Someone asks:

e. Will this be a public rapture or a secret rapture? It will be at the sound of the trumpet of God! That doesn't sound very secret to me. Seventh Day Adventism, more than any other cult, tries to make a mockery out of the rapture. They are constantly circulating literature which makes fun of Christians who believe in the rapture. Instead of dealing honestly with the scriptures at stake, they prefer instead to make Christians look like ignorant children who are somehow expecting a *secret rapture*. Now, my friend, there is no such thing as a *secret rapture* and the main stream of fundamental Christians have *never* taught such a thing. But the Adventists keep beating on their straw man.

Let me tell you why that rapture will not be secret. Let me explain why I believe that trumpet sound will reverberate throughout all the earth! I believe it will shake the world to its roots. But THAT is the substance of our next study.

Next time, we will finish this study, that is, *if there is a next time for us*. Next time, we will talk about the *importance* of that trumpet in scripture. That is *if there is a next time*. And next time, you can be sure we will give you another opportunity to receive Christ as Savior. That is *if there is a next time*.

For, my dear friend, if ever the pieces of the prophetic puzzle were coming together... If ever the mysteries of the end times were becoming clear, it is this very day, this hour.

In the days of Noah there was a man named Methuselah. His name meant "*after this, the judgment*." He lived longer than any man who ever lived - and as best as we can show, the day Methuselah died was the very day the judgment came - the day of the flood. Unbelieving friend, I would not gamble on one more second, much less one more day or one more week. Today is the day of salvation.

Reasons For the Resurrection - VII

This Lion Has No Teeth

I have chosen five words which you can write in the margin of your Bible -- to help you grasp the concepts.. We will be dealing with:

Revelation - in verses 51 and 52

Certification - in verse 53

Consummation in verses 54 thru 56

Exaltation in verse 57, and, finally

Consecration in verse 58

I. Revelation Vs. 52 (Continued from the Last Study)

A. The Mysterious nature of the Resurrection. [Covered in the last study.]

The Trumpet Mystery

In our last session we introduced the Trumpet Mystery in verses 51 and 52. In verse 52, we learned specifically that we shall not all sleep, but we shall *all* be *exchanged*. We learned that we will *all* be changed. It will not be a *partial* rapture. We learned that the exchange will occur instantaneously, in a moment, and in the twinkling of an eye.

Taking special note to those words in verse 52 once again, we are reminded that the *symbol* of this mystery is a trumpet:

1Corinthians 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Now, please notice carefully what Paul has said, so that there is no misunderstanding.

1. The general subject of chapter 15 has been our resurrection.

2 The argument has been that we must all die in order to be raised in the incorruptible image of Christ instead of remaining in the corruptible image of Adam.

3. Then Paul explains that for some of us, specifically those of us living at the time, there will be an instantaneous exchange of our corruptible for the incorruptible. In other words our death and translation will occur so quickly, so swiftly, that there will be no *sleeping* of our bodies in death.

At this point it would be wise to observe a small distinction. Paul did not say that the *rapture* would take place in a split second. He only said that the *exchange* will occur in a split second. Personally, I believe the event will occur very quickly, but not necessarily in a split second. Only the *exchange* occurs in a split second. The rapture itself will likely take just a little longer.

There *will be* the sound of the *trumpet*. The Bible says we will be *caught up* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Jesus, when He ascended was *received* into the clouds, and the disciples observed the process. He told us in John 14 that we will be *re-ceived* unto Himself. I believe it is most consistent to believe that our ascension will be very much like His ascension. I do believe that worldlings *will* hear the archangel shout, hear the trumpet, and, where circumstances allow, will observe the ascension of believers.

We can only speculate what their response will be and I will let the prophetic speculators speculate on that, though it is fun to establish our scenarios.

B. But what about that *trumpet*?

In this verse, Paul calls it the *last trump*. In 1 Thess. 4:16 it is called the trump of God. Listen to this verse:

1Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

The Lord *Himself* shall descend from heaven.
He will descend with the archangel's shout.
He will descend with the trump of God.

So, what about this *last trump*? this *trump of God*? What may we learn by these two descriptive designations?

a. What is meant by the term *last trump*?

Paul is not suggesting that this is the *last trumpet* which will ever be blown.

1. This trumpet has *no connection whatsoever* with the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation, chapter 11. These trumpets will be sounded at a later date. How do we know these trumpets are different? Simple logic makes it clear.

In Revelation 4 and 5 the church is *already present* in the throne room *observing* as the Lamb which was slain before the foundation of the world (the Lord Jesus Christ) takes the Seven Sealed Scroll. He is the only one worthy to take this scroll. We are there when He does it, singing Worthy is the Lamb!

Then we read that the seals are broken. The seventh *seal* then leads to the blowing of the *seven trumpets*. The seventh *trumpet*, in turn, leads to the out-pouring of the *seven vials* of wrath. So, in a nutshell, if the church is already in heaven *observing* the breaking of the seals, it is not likely that she will rush down once again to earth in order to be ready for the blowing of the *seventh* trumpet.

It is also noteworthy to notice that the seven trumpets in Revelation are blown by angels. The rapture trumpet is called the trump of God.

Now, that was a 30 second summary which really requires 30 minutes. I will be pleased to go into this more deeply with any of you who desire. But understand, that this is not the seventh trumpet.

2. So, then, why is it called the *last trump* if it is not the last to be blown?

One simple answer is that this *is* the last trump as far as the church is concerned. For those of us who are careful to respect God's separate programs for the church and Israel, we are well aware that we will not participate in any way in the Seventieth Week of Daniel. Those seventy weeks were determined upon God's people Israel and upon the city of Jerusalem itself according to Daniel 9:24. They do not relate to the church.

There are two common explanations relating to the term *last trump*.

a. One relates to the Jewish feasts. In the case of Israel you will recall the *feast of trumpets* which called Israel together for worship. You may wish to read Scofield's notes associated with Leviticus 23:24 in this regard. In this case, the blowing of the last trumpet would signify the convocation to worship. What is the first thing we see the church doing upon the event of the rapture? She is seen (alongside the four and twenty elders of Rev. 4 and 5) in a great holy convocation of worship. In effect, this is *our* feast of trumpets. It should not go unnoticed that the Bible *nowhere* fully explains the true purpose of this feast. As in the case of all of Israel's trumpet calls, there were a series of soundings, the last of which indicated that the feast was to begin.

b. The other explanation relates to the marching practice of ancient Israel, and, similarly, to the marching practice of ancient Roman armies in Paul's time. In the case of Israel there were three trumpet blasts. **The first blast** assembled the leaders, the **second was the call** to strike camp, and the **third**, called *the last trump*, was the actual marching call. The practice was similar for Roman armies and, probably for that matter, most armies. We have already seen that in the resurrection every man is raised "*in his own order*" - (vs. 23) - a strict military

term. Paul is most likely continuing the military analogy. The church is, after all, being called up to the side of her great Commander who will return to lead her victoriously at Armageddon.

This is why I believe the rapture will be no secret matter. At this exact point in time, the role of the church in her identity with the suffering Messiah will be completed and fulfilled once and for all! She will *never again* be intimidated, persecuted or abused. She will be with her Commander who will very soon set in motion the military campaigns of the book of Revelation. The trump will sound.

We called verses 51 and 52 Revelation. Paul has *revealed* a mystery to us. A secret. And what a secret it is!

II. Certification Vs. 53

1Corinthians 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality.

Paul is *certifying* that this **must** happen. The corruptible **must** put on incorruption, the mortal **must** put on immortality. It **must** happen.

What is death? Death is not cessation of existence. Death is separation. When a man dies he is simply separated from his own body.

What is immortality? Does immortality mean *to exist eternally*? No, it does not. Every person who was ever born will now exist *eternally*. Immortality is not *eternal existence*, it is *eternal life*. Some men will exist in a state of *eternal death*. They will exist eternally separated from God, from Christ, from all that is good. There is much debate today about whether or not there is real fire in hell. I certainly believe there is. But there is a touch of irony in this debate. What will make hell, hell is not that there will be hell fire. What will make hell hell is that neither God nor His influence will be there. It is a state of eternal separation from God. It is eternal death.

Eternal life, on the other hand, is just that - not that heaven will be a wonderful place. It *will* be a wonderful place. But what will make heaven is that there will be *no more death*, no more separation from God, His presence, and His influence. What a day that will be!

However, in order for it to take place this corruptible must *first* put on incorruption. This mortal must *first* put on immortality. This will occur at the rapture.

III. Consummation Vs. 55-56

1Corinthians 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory?

56 The sting of death [is] sin; and the strength of sin [is] the law.

Finally, there will be an end! Finally, there will be an end to death! Finally, the death angel will lay down his harvesting tools! Finally, the power of sin will be nullified! Finally the grave will lose its power! Finally, there will be nothing left but victory!

I hate reading a book or watching a story which has no conclusion. I don't like *slices of life*. I like real stories with real problems with real conclusions and real endings, and I like it when the good guys win. That is the stuff of every good story. The same old formula works over and over and over. The characters are introduced, the tension arises, the conflict comes, and then there is resolution, and everyone lives happily ever after. Depart from that formula and folks lose interest. Why do we demand this? We demand this because it is in our very instincts, our very natures, to demand resolution. We need consummation. We need conclusion. Every piece of good poetry needs it. Every symphonic piece needs it. It is in our blood. It is in our breath. The human race needs it too.

The church needs consummation too. The story has gone on long enough! We all cry out, "Oh, Lord Jesus, how long? how long? ere we shout the glad song? Hallelujah, Christ returneth, Hallelujah, Amen!"

This issue *will* be put to bed. This sermon, written on the pages of time, will soon end. This old enemy, death, like the bee, implanted and lost its stinger in Christ. While, it is still in our nature to fear the bee, his ability to hurt us is over! This lion may roar, but he has no teeth! His day is over!

Doesn't this call for verse 57?

IV. Exaltation

1Corinthians 15:57 But thanks [be] to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Amplified Bible reads appropriately enough: "*But thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory -- making us conquerors -- through our Lord Jesus Christ*" You see, the military imagery is still there.

Every trip to the cemetery, every service in the funeral home, serves as its own amplification of this wonderful verse. This is soon going to be over! Grave stones, markers, coffins, burial plots will soon be history. Motherless daughters, fatherless sons will be shouting for joy! What a day! What a glorious day that will be!

Finally, what are we to make of all of this? We call it:

V. Consecration

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"

Therefore! It is not enough to project ourselves into that future moment. It is not enough to sample these future pleasures. We are to take the information we have learned in these pages and return to the reality of the moment, determined now, more than ever, to make our work and service for Christ count.

We must make it count because we *know* it counts. We know that our labor is *not in vain* in the Lord. We know that what we do *for* Christ and in the *name* of Christ does count! We know that Satan's tactics - that his little arguments that our little part doesn't matter -- is a lie! We know that his efforts to make us think that we are *unworthy* to serve Christ - is a ruse.

Here we have the sure and steadfast promise that our labor is *not in vain* in the Lord.

But please understand this is *more* than a promise; this is a command! We are to *abound* in the *work of the Lord*.

You say, "I attend church each week." I am glad. Don't confuse that with *abounding* in the work of the Lord. The believer who abounds in the work of the Lord is the believer who cannot get his mind off of it and his hands out of it 7 days a week! He is the person who says, Lord, you own the rest of my life, what can I do for you today? And then, he is the kind of person who *doesn't wait for an answer, but* rather, determines that he will set his hand to do whatever he can find to do and he will do it with *all his might*, for Jesus' sake. He does so because the time is short! The night is coming when no man can work!

Oh, Christian friend, what is your life amounting to? What are you doing in preparation for this grand and glorious day?

And unbeliever? Are you ready to spend eternity experiencing the sting of death? Why not step from darkness into light - from death into life - this very moment?

About the Offering

Intro: The network news carried the story of a young college student in the East who has decided to challenge the constitutionality of the open container law. He purposely placed a non alcoholic beverage in a beer can and flaunted it openly on the streets in order to get arrested. Before long, the police obliged and he was taken to court where the judge, in the inimitable style of our justice system, dismissed the case because the law forbidding open containers of alcoholic beverages failed to somehow properly define the relationship of malt to beer.

The whole incident serves as an example of the depravity of human nature. It was the clear and stated intent of the people of his state that they do not want public consumption of alcohol on the streets. It was the young man's clear and stated intent to defy the law. But the truth is, that men would far rather concern themselves with legal technicalities, and definitions, than they would the rightness or wrongness of a given practice.

The Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier [matters] of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

The Lord Jesus did not say that the technicality of mint, anise and cummin should have been ignored, He said that these issues should not have replaced the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. He was teaching us an important lesson. He was explaining that:

I. Giving Is A Matter Of Principle

Here is the point I wish to underscore. The heart of man prefers rules. Not only do we like the *security* of rules, we like the *challenge* of reasoning our way around them. In short, we would rather argue about the malt content of beer than we would enforce the open container law. And, we Christians are just as guilty.

When a Christian comes up to the pastor and says, "*Pastor, how much money should I give?*" he finds great security in the instructions of a pastor who says - "*You need to give 10%, my child!*" He then can go home and argue with himself about whether it is 10% of the gross or 10% of the net and he can struggle with whether the feeding of his widowed grandmother counts in as part of that tithe or

whether or not the extra gas he consumes picking up the kids on Sunday should also count.

The apostle Paul, however, is not so kind to us. Nowhere in the New Testament does Paul, or any other apostle, even *hint* or suggest in any way that Christians should give 10% of their monies to the Lord's work. Instead, the scriptures simply *lay down principles*.

You understand the difference between a principle and a law, don't you? Obedience to the law is a matter for the hands and feet. I obey the speed limit, not because I agree with it, but because I must. Obedience to a principle is a matter for the head and the heart.

1. Take, for instance, the words of the Lord Jesus on giving. He said:

Matthew 6:19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

That's just a good investment principle. "*Only one life, 'twil soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.*" Buy the house if you need it, buy the clothes if you need them. Buy the car if you need it - but remember, the house will fall, the car will rust, the clothes will wear away. What you put in eternal savings, on the other hand - will *be* eternal.

2. Or consider the fact that the Bible teaches us that the giving of our substance is a *priestly offering* for the believer. It is one of our sacrifices which we offer to God. It is a priestly principle.

3. Also, Paul in 2 Corinthians, teaches us that giving is a *grace* in which we are to abound. That is, it is a *spiritual* principle.

4. Other New Testament passages declare unequivocally that it is our spiritual *fruit*.

So you see, while it *is* our duty to give, it should not be seen as a duty. It should not be seen as a law. Giving should be seen as an *eternal investment*, as a *priestly act* of the believer, as a grace which God teaches us and as the fruit of our holy walk with God. Giving is a positive and wonderful privilege.

II. Giving Is A Universal Practice In The Church

Look at the verse which we have in front of us in 1 Corinthians 16.

1Corinthians 16:1. Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

When Paul introduces the discussion of giving he is never embarrassed to do so. If you are the sort of person who believes that teaching on giving is simply a ruse that pastors use to feather their own nests and that all that churches want is money there is little I can do to help you except to acknowledge that there *has* been much abuse in this area. The Jimmy Bakers and their fraudulent behavior (all the while being a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Responsibility) are a black smear on Christianity. Little demagogue preachers who take the offerings into back rooms and count it themselves are a shame and blight on Christianity. Churches which teach you will lose your salvation if you don't tithe are blind leaders of the blind. But the abuse of charlatans does not alter the fact any more than the abuse of morals by fornicators alters its pure beauty, pleasure, and joy for godly believers.

Giving should be seen as a pleasure and a joy by all of God's people. No one has ever come to me and said, "*Pastor, how often am I required to kiss my wife?*" It is just as foolish to say, Pastor, how much am I *required* to set aside for eternity? How much am I *required* to give to Christ? Such a question simply does not hold water.

Notice thirdly:

III. Giving Is To Be Done With Purpose

Paul says "*Now concerning the collection for the saints...*"

Paul's collection was a part of a grand project which he had undertaken throughout all of Macedonia over the course of a year. His focus was on the poor brethren in Jerusalem. Historically, it appears that this city had simply overgrown its capacity to support itself. In difficult times it is not uncommon for rural folks to make their ways to the city in hopes of finding jobs or help. Jerusalem, however was overloaded. In addition, she saw many travelers coming through for the religious feasts - and most of these folks depended on friends for food and sustenance while there. Probably, most significantly, however, was the fact that Christian believers themselves were being persecuted. Many of them had lost their livelihood simply because of their stand for Christ. These were dark days.

It does not surprise us that we are responsible to meet the needs of others, but we do well to bear in mind a few important points.

1. There should be a purpose in our giving and that purpose should *always center around meeting the needs of others.*

2. Secondly, that purpose should especially focus *on meeting the needs of God's people.* Paul reminds in Galatians 6:10

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all [men], especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Our *first* duty, not our only duty, is to the household of faith.

3. Thirdly, it is good to *meet the physical needs of those who meet our spiritual needs*. This is good and proper. Romans 15:27 teaches us..

Romans 15:27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

In this passage, Paul is again taking up this same offering for the poor in Jerusalem, reminding the Gentiles that they owe their very salvation to these suffering believers. It is a small thing to minister to them in carnal things.

4. When we *do* share with other believers the ***act is seen as being so intimate that Paul calls it fellowship***. In 2 Corinthians 8:4, among other places, we read:

2Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and [take upon us] the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

Ministering to the saints is called *fellowship* or *partnership*. When we attach our hearts to a cause, we give to it and when we give to a cause we attach our hearts to it. We are partners under the same yoke.

You do want to notice that *fellowship* is different than *charity*. *Charity* is a one-way street. *Fellowship* is a two lane highway. It implies that both the giver and the receiver are participating in the problem *and* the solution. Both have placed themselves under the same yoke. Very often, the man standing on the corner wants *charity*. He does not usually want *fellowship* or *partnership* in addressing his real needs.

A good example of fellowship or partnership in giving can be found right here at most fundamental churches. In a typical week a pastor will prepare two or three messages, develop lesson materials, counsel and visit folks, work in evangelism and outreach, and perform the general administrative tasks of the church. When the church family places money in the offering, part of it meets the pastor's needs so that he can meet the needs of others. Part of it meets the needs of foreign missionaries so that they can do the same.

Do not be a foolish idealist. There are dreamers who think that because water is free it should be piped for free to their homes. The gospel is free and should never be offered for price, but its distribution at home and around the world is not free. We have *carnal* issues to deal with. We are not yet in our glorified bodies.

Again, because some *abuse* these things is no excuse to absolve ourselves from our responsibilities. Lately, for example, it is in vogue to oppose building church buildings. Church buildings are the source of terrible expense and many short and long term problems. Furthermore, the worldly materialistic emphasis which is placed on buildings has resulted in the foolish diversion of many dollars into fancy buildings which could have been better used. There *is* a modern trend which I personally applaud. More and more new churches are building multipurpose buildings in place of sanctuaries. And where possible, many churches open their facilities for Christian schools and other ministries.

The *purpose* of giving is to become *partners* or *fellowshippers* in the needs of others. Now be instructed that:

IV. Giving Is To Be Done With Careful Planning

1Corinthians 16:1. Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first [day] of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as [God] hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

A. The plan is a personal plan. Paul says.. *even so do ye..*

We are not excused because we have little to give. Early believers gave out of their *poverty*. Not out of their wealth. Paul commended early believers when he said:

2Corinthians 8:2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

Their affliction produced joy, their deep poverty produced riches in liberality. Thank God for poor people. God's work would have long since ground to a halt without them. Poverty, not riches, abounds unto liberality!

B. The plan is to be precise.

The believer is expected to lay aside the appropriate amount weekly. He decides each week what he should give. This benefits the *giver* because it teaches him discipline. It also benefits the *body* of Christ as we decide to make long term commitments to carry on the ministries of the assembly. Many *well meaning* Christians tell themselves that as soon as they get out of their present bind they will begin giving more faithfully. They forget the words of the Lord Jesus who commended the poor widow woman living in abject poverty, who threw in her two mites:

Mark 12:43 And he called [unto him] his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44 For all [they] did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, [even] all her living.

It is commendable to cast in of our abundance. It is spiritual to cast in of our very living. The Christian gives to God what first belongs to God.

C. The plan is to be proportionate.

We are to give "*as God has prospered us.*" Of course, this is the great cop-out of the anit-tithers. This means that we cannot pass the subject off with a comment such as "*give as you feel led.*" Giving as God has prospered to most modern Christians means that we give a portion of our *discretionary money* which is available after we have paid our bills. Of course, we are the same group of Christians who wonder why our finances are always under the disciplining hand of God.

When a man gives as God has prospered he starts at the top of his check and says, Lord, how much of this will you *allow* me to give to you? He is the man who gives *out of his living*, not out of his abundance. He is the man who defers the purchase of goods and clothing purposely in order to give to Christ. He is the man who, by the way, does not let all of his substance get eaten up in interest by charging his credit cards to the limit. I hate to think of how much of the Lord's money is in the hands of the Visa and MasterCard people. I shudder when I know that the average American devotes half of his wages to paying on loans - and the average Christian is no different.

If you need some wise financial counseling, let us point you to some of the folks in our church who have shown by their lives and testimony that they are disciplined in this area. They will help you. And then get straightened out. But, in the meantime, *start giving to Christ* what belongs to Christ. That is the *first* step in the healing process, not the *last* step.

I want you to see one more important point.

- I. Giving is a matter of Principle.**
- II. Giving is a universal Practice in the Church**
- III. Giving is to be with Purpose**
- IV. Giving is to be done with careful Planning.**

Now see

V. Giving is to be done with Propriety

1Corinthians 16:2 Upon the first [day] of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as [God] hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by [your] letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

A. The giver exercises propriety with his part. He *lays by himself in store*. What does that mean? Is he supposed to make a decision every week on the Lord's day to set aside a certain amount of his funds in a shoe box and store it up?

No, that is not in keeping with the text at all. The next words "*that there be no gatherings when I come*" would make no sense at all, if that were the case. There would still have to be a *gathering*. The secret to understanding this is to understand the word *store*.

This word, in the Greek is (2343) τησαυριζο {thay-sow-rid'-zo} and it means to lay up treasure or to keep in store, just as it occurs in English. But the interesting point is that this is the very word which was used uniquely in both Greek paganism and in Judaism in reference to bringing funds into the temple treasuries. So you see, it appears, though we may not carve it in stone, that Paul assumes Christians will gather their gifts together into the common treasury in advance of the need.

Now, some have started off with this simple verb and have made some tremendous leaps in logic. Many groups teach that all giving must be in the form of tithes brought into the storehouse and that Christians are to rely on the church to distribute all of their gifts to the Lord.

Sometimes *I wish* this were the case when I see how easily Christians can be duped by charlatans. My heart is saddened, especially when I see older Christians giving ignorantly to unworthy causes, wives giving to causes their husbands disapprove of, and similar circumstances.

But keep in mind, there is no biblical or historical basis for such a leap. Neither the scriptures *nor* ancient Christian practice teaches such a precedent. If anything, Peter told Ananias that, while the money was in his control he could do anything he pleased with it.

The passage also shows us, by example that:

B. The administrators are to exercise propriety on their part.

Notice how careful Paul is in this discussion. Paul says, when I come, he would send the *pre-selected* emissaries to Jerusalem. And if, and only if, they so desired, he would accompany the messengers. This local assembly was to have total control over the management of the finances.

Paul did not say "*After all, I am an apostle, you will just have to trust me to handle the funds.*" You need to know that there are many pastors, some in our own community, who teach this. You have no biblical basis for allowing your pastor to count the monies and to "*escort them to Jerusalem.*" Not even Paul took that prerogative. Funds need to be handled with proper procedures and propriety. There should be no room for question.

And the distribution of those funds should be managed. In properly run churches we expect the missionaries we support to be in communication with us, after all we are in *partnership* with them. Missionaries who do not communicate with us are in risk of losing our support.

In properly run churches we only support missionaries which meet rigid standards. This does not mean that you cannot support missionaries which do not meet *our* standards. It means that you can *count on us* to manage your offerings wisely. We do not want you giving in vain.

In properly run churches the pastor handles very little money and does not concern himself with who gives. This is not to say that I do not have a right to know what folks give. It is to say that I do not believe it is wise for him to be distracted with such matters. That way, he can treat all folks with equality.

In properly run churches the whole body decides on the major budgetary items and the deacons handle day to day affairs. You are the ones who *approve* by your *letters*, so to speak, the affairs. The evidence of wise handling of funds is found in the monthly financial statements which are left for distribution.

Together, you and your leaders and the missionaries you support are *partners* in a great cause for Christ.

Paul *thanked God* for those who came alongside and supported his ministry, and he wasn't above thanking the givers personally, either. Pastors thank God for folks who give so faithfully.

There are some things you need to remember, however.

You need to know that all the national trends are showing that per capita giving is down while Christian spending and indebtedness is up, and this has done great harm to the cause of Christ.

You need to know that younger Christians are not even tithing, much less giving proportionately and generously. Within a few years, it will require 250 regular attendees just to field one full time staff member because giving has dropped so terribly.

You need to know that even in many sound, Bible teaching churches, we are greatly hindered with current and potential outreach ministries because we simply do not have enough faithful givers.

We are all tickled with the story of the Emperor's new clothes. We would all like to think that if a church is truly spiritual and righteous, it should not have to concern itself with carnal matters such as money. But Paul says no. We still have to deal with such things.

Finally, I cannot urge you strongly enough to be careful in your giving. Be faithful. Be disciplined. No, be daring! Give off the top, not off the bottom. Give from the heart, not from a percentage. Give weekly, give sacrificially - and demand accountability. Together, as partners, we'll accomplish the task to which God has called us.

Now, if you are without Christ you need to know that not only does God not need your money, He truly does not want it. It is not our purpose to insult you. We just don't want to *confuse* you. There is any *price tag* associated with your salvation which has not already been paid. Jesus Christ invites you to take of the water of life freely and without price or cost.

God's Work - God's Way

Intro: In the normal events of life, as the Lord would have it in His sovereignty, He usually balances the gifts He gives to us in a manner which will keep us from becoming too proud or impatient with others. Highly intelligent folks are usually very impractical. Some folks who have very beautiful faces and bodies have very empty heads. There seems to be a balance between our strengths and weaknesses.

In the case of the Apostle Paul, especially as he gives us the inspired Word of God under the direction of the Holy Spirit, He seems to have been gifted with two strengths which are not often found together. **On the one hand**, he is a highly intelligent, articulate theologian, and superb debater, the likes of whom have rarely been seen in any other man. **On the other hand**, he is full of practical advice, horse sense, and common, every day wisdom. This is truly a marriage which is rarely observed.

Our case in point is, of course, the sixteenth chapter of Romans. As we come down off the great theological masterpiece of chapter 15 (where we find the finest thesis on the resurrection which has ever been written) we find ourselves squarely in the middle of every day details, and every day ministry. So, we learn that, if the resurrection *truly* causes us to *abound in the Word of the Lord*, we will see it in Paul's life, too. And we surely do.

We talked about the collection in our last study. We found that Paul's teachings here as well in other passages, was clear and practical. It was full of good wisdom.

In this study, the emphasis takes on a different color as we see Paul doing God's work, God's way. There is much we can observe which will aid us as a church, aid us in the workplace, and even aid us in our homes.

We gain insight into how Paul conducts himself and how he carries out his ministry as we start reading with verse 5. Specifically, our goal today is to make some important inferences about the matter of plans and planning.

1Corinthians 16:5. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

The first thing which we see is that:

I. Paul does have a ministry plan. Vs. 16:5

Do not fall into the common traps and truisms which are prevalent in Christian circles today.

On the one side, we have the *growth by objective* folks who teach us the gospel of *church planning* and *organization*. On the surface, some of these folks with their slick presentations are as convincing as any infomercial. They salt their presentations with plenty of scripture, and lay their concepts on you with such enthusiasm and authority that you walk away feeling like you are a backwoods hick if you don't lay your money down. It doesn't take the careful observer very long, however, to see that there is a *fleshly, and even materialistic* side to all the hoopla and noise. You see, planning becomes *fleshly* when it centers on the *wrong goals* and when it uses the *wrong tools*.

On the other side, we have the *growth by neglect* folks. These are the folks who would like us to think that *all planning* and *all programs* are unspiritual and fleshly. They are commonly found among the cell church advocates, and among older Christians who have reacted to the fleshly nonsense of the growth-by-objective hawkers. An example of this mentality can be found in Ralph Neighbour's writings on cell groups where he characterizes traditional churches as *program base design* churches which really only exist to perpetuate the paid clergy. But, when one looks more closely at the movement one finds that they rely on *planning* and *organization* just as much. When God's people do not plan they do not move forward.

So, in an effort to avoid these extremes, we try to pattern our ministry style as closely to the style of the apostles and the first thing we see is that *Paul did have a ministry plan*. He was always *cooking*, looking forward to the next step.

But looking closer, and still looking at the same verse, I want to infer one more emphasis. When Paul says:

1Corinthians 16:5. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

He reveals one more important truth:

II. Plans require vision

Spiritual plans do not start with the brain, they start with the heart. Paul said in Romans 1:13:

Romans 1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

Plans start with *people* not with growth objectives. Plans *end* with people. Paul did not want to go to Macedonia, or Rome, or for that matter anywhere else because he wanted to set up an ecclesiastical system. He simply wanted to *bear fruit* among them. The changed life was always his goal.

Please do not confuse Paul with modern pastors who try to change lives *relationally*. Paul's method for bearing fruit was to change lives *doctrinally*. He always taught folks doctrine and then he said in effect "...if you believe this doctrine, this is how you will behave."

The doctrine, the theology, changes the life. Modern preachers think they can change folks *relationally* all the while casting the image that doctrine and theology are irrelevant to real needs.

But the point is, the *plan* requires *vision*, and for Paul, that vision was *always to bear fruit*. Real *fruit* among real people.

By rights, much should be said at this point about the fleshly extremes we see in planning today. When planning becomes an arm of the flesh it will become evident because, while attendances may rise, real fruit will begin to diminish. Interestingly, the same phenomena occurs when there is *no* planning. Our God is a God of planning and order. Create plans, use plans wisely, but never rely on your plans and your programs. Let the engine of your growth in ministry always center around the ministry of the Word. Do not be calendar driven, do not be purpose driven, do not be goal driven. Be biblically driven, always centered around extolling and glorifying Christ. When you do so, planning will remain in proper perspective.

Plans, then, require spiritual vision and true passion to see lost souls won to Christ. Notice verse six:

1Corinthians 16:6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

Paul says, "*And, it may be that I will abide, yea, winter with you..*"

III. Plans require permission by the Holy Spirit.

That little phrase "*and it may be*" blasts a whole lot of charismatic nonsense right out of the water. For all of us who believe that we can always know God's will for sure, take a good look. Not even Paul could always be absolutely certain of what God was doing with his plans!

At one point Luke said of Paul and his team:

Acts 16:6,7. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

Sometimes, the will of God was made absolutely certain to Paul through the direct *intervention* of the Holy Spirit. But the truth of the matter is, most of the time, Paul had to rely on the same things we have to rely on when determining God's will.

Sometimes, Paul's plans never came about. Sometimes, Paul had to make apologies for cancelled engagements. Sometimes, Paul had to rewrite the itinerary. Later, you will see, the Corinthians will be accusing Paul of being fickle and vacillating because he didn't *keep* his plans. Paul was simply being obedient.

Everybody needs a failed plan. We all need to fail. I need to fail now and then. Churches need to fail now and then. You need to fail now and then. It is the only thing which separates fantasy from reality. It keeps us from being so arrogant and cock sure of ourselves. It gives us patience with others whose plans and goals have had to change drastically. The important thing we must *never* lose sight of is this, a failed plan which was made in obedience to the Lord is really a revised plan, a plan which has been revised by the Lord. It is really an evidence of success, not failure. God never promises us that He will *reveal* all of His plans to us when we make *our* plans.

When Paul's plans did fail, he never played any mind games. He never said, "Oh, I must not have prayed hard enough about this!" He never said "Oh, that must have been fleshly, because God did not honor it!" He simply said that God had other ideas.

There is one other thing I like about these verses. I like the *wording* of verses 5-8:

1Corinthians 16: 5. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

I continue be humored by a little sign I once saw on a workstation at work. It said: "**No Techno Babble!**" Techno babble is not spoken here! Christians love jargon. We love to be able to throw in spiritual sounding phrases and clichés, and hopefully, quote just the right scripture at the right time to really show how we are with the program.

Notice how *plain vanilla* these verses are. Folks, I want to come, and maybe even winter with you. I won't see you now, but I hope to stay a bit with you later, if the Lord allows. There is no *super spiritual tone*. No high sounding talk. Just ordinary plans. Ordinary language. No presumption. No agenda. No games. Just plain old, plain vanilla Paul. No wonder folks loved him.

Submit to the control of the Holy Spirit in your plans, and then, just be ordinary. Don't make it sound like you had a revelation. You may find you'll have to talk your way out of one, and that's tough!

We have one remaining study on Corinthians and we will include the remaining point of this study in that lesson:

V. Plans require partners

But for this particular study, we will settle briefly with one more idea:

IV. Plans require perseverance

Look at verses 8 and 9:

1 Corinthians 16: 8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and [there are] many adversaries.

This grape has a lot of juice to squeeze and it has been the stomping ground of pastors and teachers for years and years. It is a great place to begin your meditation on the ways of God and the will of God and the servant of God.

A. First, we gain insight into the mind of Paul.

1. We see, of course, a man who sees the rose on the thorn bush, not the thorns on the rose bush. That is, we see a man who is healthy in his spiritual walk. He sees the potential for ministry, but, unlike so many moderns with their twisted world views, this great man of God was also an *opportunist*. He knew that the victory would not come without a struggle.

What about you? What about me? What do we see first? Like the shoe salesman going to Africa, do we wire home and say "*Take me home, no one wears shoes here!*" or do we say "*Send me all the shoes you have, everyone in Africa needs shoes!*" Notice that I did not say that Paul had a *positive* mindset. Rather, he had a *spiritual* mindset. He was not an idealistic optimist, he was not a negative pessimist. He was not even a realist! He was simply an *opportunist* for Christ.

2. Secondly, we see that Paul was a pugilist. He welcomed a good fight. Notice what Paul did not say. He did not say, "...and there are many obstacles. He said there were adversaries. They may have been human adversaries, they may have been demonic, but Paul was in a war with the opposers of righteousness. Real people. Real personalities. Real issues.

The notion that we should separate names and faces from issues is not found in the Word of God. When the work of Christ is resisted it is resisted because *people* resist it. Take your stand like a man, line up with Christ and let your name be known with His name. And don't be afraid of the adversaries.

When we read this verse, it is almost as though Paul *relishes* the idea that he is going to be in a contest! And why shouldn't he??

A while back a some friends and I spend part of an evening with some cultists. After a few minutes at the table, they wanted to leave. We had to keep begging them to stay and talk with us. They wanted no part of a real scriptural battle. They had no heart for the fray. We had to keep saying to them, "*Why are you so nervous? Why are you afraid? Why won't you stay and confront these issues with us?*"

Listen, Christian friend, when all you feed on is spiritual junk food you will never develop any muscle tone for the work of the ministry and for the battle. Feed on this Book, welcome the challenge, welcome the battle and welcome the fray! Take your stand for Christ like true men and women of God. We are in warfare. We are in the great battle between light and darkness, between truth and lie. The enemy is not embarrassed to argue his point - blatantly. Stand up and be counted.

3. There is one more insight I gain into Paul when I read this verse. Paul was an opportunist. He was a pugilist. He was a survivalist. This is something I have mentioned many times in the course of my ministry. What I love about Paul is the fact **that he was not twenty years old** when he wrote this verse. He was a seasoned veteran of the ministry and he still had a stomach for battle! He still had vision! He still had his stuff! None of this "*I have taken my lumps, now, Timothy, it's your turn!*" Paul envisioned and planned and schemed for the cause of Christ - he welcomed the challenge, as far as we know, to his dying day!

So you're retired. I'm glad you're retired! But please, my friend - never nurse the idea that you now have permission from God to run around in your camper for the next ten years because *you've earned it!* General Motors or IBM may muster you out of their military, but you are still on duty for Jesus Christ!

Then, notice in closing:

B. We gain insight into the mind of God.

We Christians have some crazy ideas about how God leads. Some of us like to think that He speaks to us in a dream or vision. Others of us have concocted other plans or formulas. Clearly, there is no time to address all of these issues.

Just don't miss the point. Don't miss one of the important criterion which Paul used in his decision-making process. It is so simple we can stumble right over it.

Paul says in effect, *"I am going to stay at Ephesus because there is an open door."*

There is a truism running around today which has *never* made sense to me. It is probably because I don't understand it. The saying goes this way:

"When God closes a door, he opens a window."

I think, in truth, it would be wise to say that *"When God closes a door it is because he wants you to go through another open door."*

Opportunity should not be the only determiner which helps us know the will of God, but it should be a great determiner. Christ told the Philedelphian church in Revelation:

Revelation 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

He was talking about the door of opportunity! And He was speaking to the sixth of the seven churches of Revelation - the church which best represents the godly fundamentalists who stand for Christ in this dark Laodicean day. I love that letter to the Philedelphians, because our Savior quickly acknowledges that this is the church of *little strength*. It is highly unlikely that fundamental Christianity will rise to dominate world thought, much less *Christian* thought. But, we do not focus on our *little strength*, **we focus on the open door** which **no man**, no government, and no association of churches can ever shut!

Christian friend, stand true for Christ. There is an open door of ministry and service for you. We must close - but not without leaving these final words, found in the same group of letters, only to the Laodicean church. It is the invitation to fellowship, yes, and to salvation as well. Jesus said:

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Before God ever opens a door for service, *you and I* must open the door of *salvation* and *fellowship*. Where is Christ standing?

Living Lessons

Intro: In the school of **humanistic psychology** the unifying position is one which holds an aversion to systematic theory and places, instead, an emphasis on experience as the source of knowledge. An important working tool has been what we call **sensitivity training**, a session, in which a humanistic psychotherapist guides group activities and observes interactions between members as they actually occur. Because experience is *not* the source of knowledge or reality, sensitivity training can only fail.

But, in the Christian realm, I would like to introduce you to a form of sensitivity training which is not only Christ-honoring, but is patterned for us by the Apostle Paul. In this closing chapter of 1 Corinthians we gain another insight into the *personal, relational* side of Paul. We learn how he deals with people. We learn how he tailors and tempers his comments *about* people - so that you and I may learn to do the same thing. Have you ever known folks who just *blurt out* whatever is on their minds - paying no attention to the ears on which their comments will fall. Have you ever been the victim of their *insensitivities*? Such individuals expose their own lack of love and compassion by their unwillingness to weigh their words. To avoid this trap, let's watch the Apostle Paul at work...especially as he deals with that most important resource of all - people. There is wisdom to gain for the wise observer.

Let me introduce our cast. In verse 10 we find **Timothy**, and in verse 12 **Apollos** enters. In verse 15 we have the **house of Steph'anas**, and in verse 17 we group **Steph'anas, Fortunatus, and Acaicus**. Then the **churches of Asia** along with **Acquilla and Priscilla** and the **church that is in their house** can be found in verse 19.

In some cases, we can speak somewhat intelligently about the history of some of these folks. For example, Timothy is no stranger to us. In other cases, we do not know too much about the servants Paul mentioned, but by looking at the group of them, and the little notations which Paul makes in the *contexts* of their names, we can build a bit of a case and, perhaps, learn a few lessons.

So let's have a little biblical sensitivity training. Let's enjoy some living lessons.

I. Timothy the Apprehensive Vs. 16:10

We read in verse 10:

10. Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also [do].

11 *Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.*

Every one of us carries two suitcases. One includes all of our gifts, our strengths, and blessings. The other includes our disabilities and vulnerabilities. You are no exception. I am no exception. Paul was no exception, and neither was Timothy.

We cannot say for sure, but it *appears* to us that Timothy may not have had a "Type A" personality. Circumstances may have contributed to this. His father was a Greek and his mother a Jewess. This, of course, means that he was a part of two cultures and probably, not fully accepted by either. In addition, he spent his young years in the shadow of a great servant of Christ, and spiritual giant, Paul.

So, we are curious to see how Paul handles his son in the faith. In one place, he admonished Timothy - "*Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example to the believer...*" In other words, Timothy was not to take a back seat because he was young, but rather, he was to be an example to older brethren. Paul never *excused* Timothy for his character traits. He worked with Timothy and molded him into a great pastor and leader.

I have to say, at this point, that each of us need to be tempered by others. As dearly as I love my earthly father and cherish him for the fine attributes he tried to pass down to me, I am as deeply indebted for the influence of my wife's father on my ministry. We all need the discipleship and influence of others. We all need to humble ourselves under the leadership and guidance of others. This accountability process in our modern educational system is often so spread out among various teachers, that our young pastoral students rarely have the privilege of being mentored.

What interests us here is that Paul *makes room* for Timothy at Corinth. His instructions are explicit:

- *See that he may be with you without fear.*

What is he really saying to these Corinthians? He is admonishing them to be sensitive to Timothy's emotional needs. He wants these Corinthians to create the kind of environment around Timothy which will make him flourish. Sooner or later, we will add someone to the staff at our assembly. He will probably not be the finished product. It will be incumbent upon him to accept our discipleship. It will be incumbent upon us to create the environment for him to grow in ministry. If we prepare ourselves now, we will be ready for the task

I am sorry to say that there are a group of folks whose self esteem is so low, that the only way they can make their way through life is by pointing out the chinks in the armor of others. They need to lower others to their level - before

they feel safe. So, they watch when new folks come into their lives - and when they sense weaknesses or vulnerabilities - they are the first to point them out. Like boxers pounding on an open wound, they relentlessly magnify the weakness. Oh to God that God's people would surround our brothers and sisters in Christ, warts and all, and create the kind of environment where they can minister and serve among us without fear. After all, someone accepted you and me with our warts.

And why should the Corinthians be diligent to do this? They were to be diligent on Timothy's behalf because he was as much of a servant of Christ as was Paul. Paul wants these believers to know that there is no competition between the servants of Christ, and that it is Timothy's *work*, not his position, which qualifies him for respectful treatment at Corinth.

- Let no man therefore despise him

You and I understand the word despise to mean *hate*, or *abhor*. That is not the biblical intention. Biblically, it usually means *to set something at naught* or to *give it little or no esteem*. The servant of Christ is worthy of respect by virtue of the task he performs.

If a man walks up to you on the street and says "*Please open your mouth wide, I want to examine your tonsils...*" it is not likely that you will submit to him. As a rule, you reserve that privilege for doctors. And, by the same token, if you do not *give the doctor* that privilege, you are, in the biblical sense, *despising* his profession. When a young man like Timothy comes along, he cannot minister to you if you do not *esteem* him as a bona fide servant of Christ. Remember, he is already apprised of his weaknesses; it is our task to defend him.

- *but conduct him forth in peace*

Some of my sweetest memories and greatest encouragement came from my *first* church where I started with about 50 constituents, half of whom were over sixty. Sixty, seventy, and eighty year old saints who *humbled* themselves and sat under the ministry of a 21 year old pastor. When God called me away, they conducted me forth in peace.

And whereas many young men simply walk away from the ministry after two or three years of putting up with the nonsense, this humble little body of saints prepared me for it.

In contrast to Apprehensive Timothy we now see:

II. Apollos the Autonomous Vs. 12

1Corinthians 16:12 As touching [our] brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

Apollos was a man with a mind of his own. Please do not misunderstand me. His mind seems to have been surrendered to Christ. It appears he was obedient to Christ in every way. But Apollos did not *need the support* of others when it came to doing God's will. He was not like Barak who had to have his Deborah. He was not like Moses who had to have his Aaron. This man was autonomous.

We gain our first glimpse of this the first time we see Apollos in scripture. Even before he truly understands salvation we find him boldly proclaiming the Word of God and standing for the things he knew to be true. The Bible says, in Acts 18:25 that he was *instructed in the way of the Lord* and *fervent* in spirit. And there, we find him *boldly* standing alone.

But, when we commend Apollos for his bold independence, we must be quick to point out that he was not stubborn and unteachable. Aquila and Priscilla were quick to notice this. Instead of writing him off as lost cause, the Bible says they took him under their wing and *expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly*. This says something for Apollos and it says something for Aquila.

Some of you know that I make a practice of trying to seek out cultists. My prayer is that I may one day find an Apollos among them...someone who truly wants the way of God expounded unto them more perfectly. If Aquila had written Apollos off we would have lost one of the greatest men of God the early church knew.

So, when I say that Apollos was autonomous I do not mean that he was unteachable and close minded as so many independent minded folks are today. I mean that Apollos did not need any kudos, any slaps on the back. He was able to make up his own mind and to stand alone, boldly and brilliantly for Christ. My how I love men and women of God who *stand alone!* And you, my dear friend, have truly been impoverished if God has not brought one of these dear saints across your path!

So we are not surprised at all when we see that Apollos was not minded to come to Corinth at this time. Nor are we surprised at Paul for not insisting that he come. Unlike modern denominations and mission boards, we have no evidence anywhere in the New Testament that church leaders told the servants of Christ when and where to go. We often see organization and cooperation. But in the final analysis, each servant of Christ must obey God, not man.

There are some who think that verses 13 and 14 are just sort of *stuck in* by Paul at this time in a potpourri of closing comments. Paul says:

1Corinthians 16:13. Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

14 *Let all your things be done with charity.*

Personally, I choose to believe that the famous "*five imperatives*" listed here are the results of Paul's thinking on Apollos. That is, as he thought the virtues and strengths of Apollos, whom these Corinthians knew, these were the admonitions which came naturally to his mind. Apollos was the example, the mirror, so to speak, off of which Paul was reflecting.

Because these *imperatives* are so imperative, we will return to them in the next study. For now, we'll turn from Apollos, with this final thought. Do you remember that we said concerning Timothy, "*It is easy to abuse the humble*" and that we must be careful to provide a wholesome growth oriented environment for the timid servant? We need to know that just as "*It is easy to abuse the humble*", so too, it is *easy to accuse the autonomous*. God has not made us all the same. Some of us lean too much upon each other. Some of us do not lean enough on each other. When you encounter a freestanding servant of Christ who does not "*visit Corinth*" when you think he should, give him a little room.

We have seen Apprehensive Timothy and Autonomous Apollos. Move along with me to:

III. Stephanos, the Addicted Vs. 15,16

Verses 15 and 16:

1Corinthians 16:15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanos, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and [that] they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with [us], and laboureth.

Stephanas and company were addicts. They were not in bondage to a substance, they were devoted to servanthood. You know their kind. When they take off for vacation everything seems to fall apart. They are always filling up the holes, quietly, unobtrusively, but just as sure as the sun rises, they will be there. We have had this Stephanos and his kind in every one of our churches.

I have memories of many such servants during the course of my ministry. I remember Venita Howe, for example. Most church folks never noticed it, but Venita was always sneaking around with everything from scrub brushes to paint brushes in her hand, slipping in quietly, doing her task, and slipping away. She was just one member of the household of Stephanas. There were others.

It is the commands which Paul gives us concerning these servant types which really piques our interest. He says:

You know them. You know their track record. Someone has said that "five minutes of demonstration is worth one hour of talk"! The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Yet, why is it -- that these very servants who are under our noses are often the ones who get the least respect and support?

I remember when we had occasion in one of our churches to call a youth pastor right from among our own assembly. To make matters worse, he was the son-in-law of the chairman of the board of deacons. Folks said, "Are you sure you want to do this?" I said every man carries two suitcases. I know this man. I know what is in his suitcases. Why would you want me to gamble on a man whom I don't know? Who knows what we'll find in his suitcase!

What is my point? My point is this. The prophet is not without honor except in his own country. And that includes servants. Some of the greatest examples of godliness and servanthood can be right within our own ranks.

But that is not really the thrust of this passage. The important thing to note is the nature of Paul's command regarding these folks who had addicted themselves to the ministry. Paul said:

...submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with [us], and laboureth.

Place yourselves under rank. Place yourselves under the authority of the helpers and laborers. In the body of Christ, the ruling class should always be the servant class. Pastors, deacons, and all leaders, should lead by virtue of their ministry and their servanthood. The very word deacon means *one who serves*, one who waits upon others! The only purpose for deacons meetings is to coordinate our *service* for Christ.

The happiest step a church can take is to make qualified servants our rulers. Break this rule, establish an elite board of men who are not active in the ministry, and disaster will strike.

I said earlier that it is easy to *abuse the humble* such as Timothy. Then I said that it is easy to *accuse the autonomous* such as Apollos. We need to see that it is also easy to *depreciate the importance of the servant*. Don't overlook the four leaf clovers, look them over. They are right here among us. Quoting Paul: *Acknowledge them as such.*

Do you want to have a happy church? Look no further than your own assembly. Be sensitive to the timidity of Timothy. Give Apollos some the space he needs to do his ministry for Christ. Place yourself in rank under the servants of your own assembly. Be sensitive to those whom God has placed around you. However different they may be from you - each one has a gift to bring. Timothy, Apollos, and Stephanos. We need them all. We need you.

If you are without Christ you need to know that that is the most important issue of the moment.

But, if you are a believer, we want you to know that the body truly does need you. We need you as a friend, as a brother or sister in Christ, as a Timothy, as an Apollos, as a Stephanos or Achaicus or Fortunatus. We need you.

"Quit You Like Men!"

Intro: A number of months ago I broke down and changed computers. I was pleased with many of the new technological improvements which have come out such as the computer's ability to literally put its components to sleep when it is not in use. The hard drive and monitor turn themselves off in order to save energy. One day, however, I noticed that the computer actually woke itself up, processed some data all on its own, and went back to sleep. Much to my surprise I discovered that the machine does some of its own file maintenance on its own, without bothering me. It does this in order to improve performance. Later I discovered that it also does other self tuning.

Says I to myself, *"That is a good lesson. Would to God that we could all wake ourselves up spiritually and tune ourselves up now and then!"* This really is, you know, what God *commands us* to do. In the passage before us, 1 Corinthians 16:13 and 14, God gives us some tools for tuning up our souls. These are simple commands, simple reminders, but when they are heeded they greatly increase our performance and productivity.

We actually have listed in these verses, the Famous Five, the Five Imperatives which Paul leaves these Corinthians at the end of his letter:

- 13. Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*
- 14 Let all your things be done with charity.*

We see five, short and pithy words, five brief commands which are quickly read, and even more quickly ignored. Yet they are the stuff of success, the stuff of life and the stuff of the Christian walk.

Let's begin with the first imperative. We'll call it:

I. A Word of Caution Vs. 6:13

- 13. Watch ye,*

This is a call to attention. A call to be on guard. In the natural world it is not in my nature to be on guard. I am too trusting or too self confident. I have no natural concern for locked doors on cars or houses. I have had to be trained to do those things. I have had to face the reality that this is not a perfect world. I have been taught to watch the back seat of my car when I get into it, to keep those doors locked when driving, and to always watch the garage door close behind me at night so that no one slips in behind me. And the list goes on and on. I

must give my wife some of the credit for this good training and I must be quick to acknowledge that some of these procedures have paid off.

I am sorry to say that, in the spiritual world, it is not in my nature to be on guard. I am too oblivious to the pitfalls. I am too flippant about what could happen to me, to my soul, to my walk with God. I am too quick to run out into the street chasing the balls of life and not watching for the traffic. What did Paul mean when he told us to *watch*?

The word *watch* is the Greek:

1127 gregoreuo {gray-gor-yoo'-o} - AV - watch 21, wake 1, be vigilant 1; 23 1) to watch 2) metaph. give strict attention to, be cautious, active 2a) to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one

The animal world serves as a good example for us. Each species has its own responsibility to protect itself. The bird gradually approaches the seed you leave on the patio. The deer slips down to the water before dawn. But species homo sapien, particularly species homo sapien Christianus, goes blithely on his way, oblivious to the great enemy of our souls. What calamities of the soul do we guard against?

The scriptures teach us to:

A. Be on guard against Satan:

1Peter 5:8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

I once saw a National Geographic documentary entitled "Underwater Nasties." One of these denizens of the deep buries himself in the sand with just his eyes peeking out, picking and choosing his dinner at will as it swims *unwittingly* past him. Most of the calamities and disasters which befall us befall us because we have a false sense of security. You *do* have an enemy. Someone *is* watching your house. Now, I know you have security lights outside your home. Have you built in any spiritual security system to protect yourself and your loved ones? We must not only watch for Satan's wily tactics, we must:

B. Be on guard against the world, its charms and its snares. This is, of course, an extension of Satan's personal activities. He has a whole kingdom, a whole enterprise, focused on bringing you down. He prints billboards, newspapers and TV commercials, all geared with one goal in mind, to show the beauty and desirability of sin and to down play its consequences.

Jesus said to His disciples: "*Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*" How many times, folks have said to me, Pastor, if I had only known. I walked blindly into this. There it was and I wasn't prepared. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If you have a weakness for ice cream - don't get a job at Phipps.

C. Be on guard against false doctrines and false teachings. Peter warned:

2Peter 2:1. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Ignorance is not bliss. Are there any false teachers creeping in today? Christian friend, there has *never* been a day when there have been more, or a day when believers have cared less.

In those two words "watch ye" there is first, the imagery of a man standing guard, just as a soldier on duty stands on guard for his own protection and the safety of his country. There is also, implicit in the command, the idea of waking up! Wake up! Paul is saying! Wise up! The enemy is right under your very nose!

So, we have seen a word of caution. Now, let's notice:

II. A Word About Conviction Vs. 13

stand fast in the faith,

Stand fast *in the faith*. By now, you have noticed that little word "*the*". Paul is not suggesting here that *your* faith should be strong. Paul is admonishing you to be strong *in the faith*.

I had a friend in one of my churches who used to love to go to the Catholic mass first, and then attend our service each Sunday morning. When I asked her why she did that she said it was because she loved the way we each served communion and she didn't want to miss the beauty of each service. She meant well. Some might even say that she had strong faith. But she was not *strong in the faith*. She did not know that she was participating in idolatry and heresy.

I had a friend who was a Lutheran. When she came to our church she said, "*I could never worship here!*" When I asked her why, she said that our walls were too bare and there was no color in our church and that she needed the vestments and the liturgy in order to be able to worship. She was not *strong in the faith*. She had no convictions on the Word of God. She had no position on theology. Her faith was based on emotion and experience, not on *the faith*. When the storms of life come upon us, dear friend, our vestments and our liturgy will not be a refuge. Only the solid rock of the Word of God will protect you.

As a young person, swimming was my sport. One of the very few foolish things I did as a youth occurred one time when I dove off a highway bridge into a flooded river, oblivious to the real danger I faced. Now, all was well until the time came to *get out* of the river. This is always the way it is with sin and its bondage. The secret of escape was to float on your back in the direction of the current, work yourself to the edge of the river, and then plant your feet for all they were worth. As you rose to your feet the river fought you all the way.

Christian young person, that is what Paul is admonishing here. Plant your feet, not in the mud of a river bank, but on the solid rock of the Word of God. Determine to withstand those currents which work at you every day. Say, by God's grace, I am going to stand for Christ. *The eyes of the world* are upon you. *The eyes of your family* and loved ones are on you. *The eyes of the angels* are on you. *The eyes of God* are on you.

When you get to the university (and even some so called Christian schools) you are going to be told to *open your mind* to new ideas. Just as Eve was admonished to leave her closed system in pursuit of the knowledge of good and evil - you are going to be told that the real badge of courage for young men and women is to forsake the faith of their fathers in pursuit of true honesty. When that day comes, take a good look at that professor who is trying to dismantle *your* system. Ask yourself where *his system of beliefs* has carried him! This blind professor, leading the blind will fall into the ditch. And you, if you do not know *now* just *what* you believe and *why* you believe it -- may well fall into that same ditch! Stand fast in the faith!

A word of Caution - Watch!

A word about Conviction - Stand fast in the faith!

III. A Word About Contending Vs. 13

quit you like men

Sounds kind of gender biased, doesn't it? The term "*quit you like men*," and the term "*play the man*" were biblical and historical admonitions for the Israelites to rise up and *defend* their country from their enemies! It is the first role of the *man* to defend his family, not the woman. It is the first role of the *man* to defend his nation, not the woman.

A. The first thing we need to see is that conflict *can* be righteous.

Consider the subtle changes which are occurring in our society. When a conflict occurs (between persons or nations, it doesn't matter) the normal process is to *negotiate* a solution. After all, the Bible does say, blessed are the *peacemakers* - does it not? But here is what happens. Implicit in the negotiation process is the assumption that there is wrong on both sides. This, by the way, is because, fun-

damentally, we do not believe in absolute truth. Consequently, the arbitrator gets each side to accept some responsibility in the conflict and, on that basis, challenges each side to offer a gesture of restraint. It's all so beautiful. But it *can* be very wrong. It can be very wrong because one contender in an argument may be righteous and the other disobedient.

Take a current world event as an example. For years Israel has been terrorized by radical Palestinians from Lebanon. In the last year alone many innocent men, women, and children have died at the hands of these terrorists. The media recorded the events, almost in passing. So, Israel goes up and fixes their clock. Now, the media is screaming for an end of this senseless loss of civilian life. Now that there is "wrong on both sides" a peace can be negotiated.

The goal is to convince the world that there is no such thing as righteous conflict. What occurs politically occurs spiritually. We have been conditioned to respect the enemy and to remember that we do not have all the answers. We have laid down our arms. It scares some folks silly the way I mention false doctrines and false teachers from the pulpit. And it should, *if there is no absolute truth*. But the Bible looks at it differently. Jude wrote:

Jude 1:3. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort [you] that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once [LITERALLY, ONCE FOR ALL] delivered unto the saints.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:4

2 Corinthians 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

When Paul talks here of pulling down strongholds and casting down imaginations he is not talking about your personal fantasies, he is talking about the strongholds of false teaching, the doctrines of demons. He is talking about casting down the imaginations of Pastor Russell, Joseph Smith, Ellen White, and Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy.

Can you do that? Are you *contending* for the faith or do you leave that for the pastor??? There *is* a right. There *is* a wrong.

Look again at that phrase: *quit you like men*.

B. The second thing you need to see is that conflict is manly. It falls especially in the department of the *man* of God. Sorry, gals. While I am not suggesting for a minute that you are free to dabble in false doctrine or that you should not defend the faith, the task of defending the faith is primarily a military task assigned to men. It is a mannish task. When my family is under attack it is my du-

ty to move first, not my wife's. When the faith is under attack it is the duty of the man of the home to defend it first.

Now, don't you believe the media, it's really good to be a man! It's good to be strong. It's good to be athletic. It's good to be brave. It's good to be courageous! It is good to have muscles! It's good to get dirty and work with your hands. It's good to sleep in the snow. It's good to go hunting and fishing, to wear levis and big belts and big boots and ride horses. It's good to work on cars and drive trucks. It's good to love the sound of a Harley. It's good to build buildings and houses and cut down big old trees in order to do it. It's good to bear arms when necessary. It's good to be in the military. It's good to plant your feet and say this is where it stops! It is good to be a man.

We must be absolutely clear about what mannishness is not. It is not good to be an *immature* man. This is what young people need to see today. A mature man knows he is strong and doesn't need to prove it. He is controlled. A mature man restrains the use of his power and channels it for good. The young man is too quick to get into the fight, to burn the rubber off the tires. He has to sort out the feelings. He may still be afraid to show compassion because someone has told him it is not manly. He may be prone to excesses because he thinks that his mannishness is somehow equated with how late he stays out or how much he drinks or how he can gain advantage over a girl. Those are not the traits of mannishness. These are not godly traits. It is not mannish to be a Neanderthal. It is not mannish to be crude.

Biblical manliness always implies maturity. Paul instructed the Corinthians in 14:20:

1Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

But keep in mind, society wants to masculinize the woman and feminize the man. Society wants to feminize Christ. Society wants to feminize the church. We need men. Men who will stand for Christ. Men who will take the lead. Men who will stand for what is right. Men who will come to our side and set the example for our youth.

Thank God for those who will rise to the cause of Christ and *quit like men*.

A Word of Caution - Watch

A Word about Conviction - Stand Fast in the Faith

A Word about Contending - Quit You Like Men

IV. A Word About Competence Vs. 13

Now, the words: *be strong*.

Be strong! At first, it looks almost like it is a repetition for the sake of emphasis. Quit ye like men, be strong! But there is more to it than that.

It is the Greek word which speaks of the strengthening process, both inward and outward. For instance, John the Baptist *waxed strong* in spirit. He was not *born* strong, he *waxed strong*. Paul prayed regarding the Ephesians believers:

Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

It is *this strength* to which Paul refers here. It is strength in the inner man. It does not surprise us that this command in our verse is in the passive mood. "*Be strengthened...*" Paul commands us. The soldier of Christ must not rely on his natural strength in the manner of Sampson of old. He must rely on the strengthening of his spirit by the Holy spirit of God. Sometimes, we men imagine ourselves to be stronger than we are. It is a boyish trait in us. Sometimes we fail in the contest because we have not strengthened ourselves. Sometimes, we believers are not as strong as we think ourselves to be, and in the day of the contest, we fail because we have not been nurturing and strengthening ourselves in the things of Christ.

How are you standing, friend? Are you true and tall for Christ, or are you weak and vulnerable? I got a bang out of a quote I read which said:

"When 40 million people believe in a dumb idea, it's still a dumb idea."

How strong are you? Do you cave in to the peer pressure around you? Do you swear because your fellow workers swear? or are you *strong*? Do you laugh at off colored jokes because they do? or are you *strong*?

When the winds of adversity assail are you strong? When Edison was flat broke developing his battery and his only income was coming in through the movies he had invented, he was aroused because of an eight alarm fire which destroyed his entire film production operation. As the buildings went up in flame he shouted to one of his sons:

"Where's Mom? Go get her, son! Tell her to hurry up and bring her friends! They'll never see a fire like this again!"

That is simple human courage. Human strength. How much more we soldiers of Christ should be able to look upon our losses and setbacks, and with a wave of the hand, dismiss them as the unimportant incidents of life they really are - all the while refocusing on our great tasks for Christ! Be strong! Consider our own great roll call of faith:

All of the apostles were insulted by the enemies of their Master. They were called to seal their doctrines with their blood and nobly did they bear the trial.

Matthew suffered martyrdom by being slain with a sword at a distant city of Ethiopia.

Mark expired at Alexandria, after being cruelly dragged through the streets of that city.

Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece.

John was put in a cauldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterward branded at Patmos.

Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downward.

James, the Greater, was beheaded at Jerusalem.

James, the Less, was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death with a fuller's club.

Bartholomew was flayed alive.

Andrew was bound to a cross, whence he preached to his persecutors until he died.

Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies.

Jude was shot to death with arrows.

Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded.

Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death at Salonica.

Paul, after various tortures and persecutions, was at length beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero.

Such was the fate of the apostles, according to traditional statements. Do you suppose we can manage to put up with a little ridicule from the world this week in the lunch room and the locker room?

V. A Word About Compassion Vs. 14

14 Let all your things be done with charity. or love.

Watch? By all means! Stand fast? Absolutely? Quit ye like men? Always! Be Strong? in every confrontation!

But in it all, let the love of Christ be shown! For when it is not, our striving is in vain. When love is absent the giving of our bodies to be burned is a study in futility. Only the man who is gripped by the love of God can warn of the wrath of God! This is the magic key which reveals true biblical manliness and separates it from the world's false conception of what manliness is.

The man who cannot tell his wife that he loves her and cannot hug and squeeze his kids 'til their eyes bulge, the man who cannot express love, must never confuse his problem with his identity as a man. The man of God weeps with Jeremiah, he intercedes with Abraham, he cajoles with Paul, and he leans on Jesus'

breast with John, and he finds that with all those experiences, he is *more* the man, not the less!

No man can be truly manly in every area of his life until he knows Christ. No woman can truly be womanly. When we are complete and fulfilled in Christ and our identity is secure in our relationship with Him we can begin to bloom and grow into all that true manhood and womanhood is!

A Word of Caution - Watch! Be on guard!

A Word about Conviction - Stand in the Faith

A Word about Contention - Quit Ye Like Men. No pansies needed.

A Word about Competence - Be Strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

A Word about Compassion - Let it All be Done in Love.

When all of the above can be done in love you know you have matured into a man of God.

May God give us men.

"The Holy Catholic Church"

Intro: We have just a little bit more to deal with before we can walk away from the last chapter of 1 Corinthians. Come with me to chapter 16 and focus with me on three remaining thoughts.

At the time of year when we celebrate both Mothers Day and Fathers Day it is not unlike us to meditate on the influences of our respective parents on our lives. In our home as a child, my father placed a great emphasis by word and example, on being *analytical*. He had in insatiable love of knowledge, an almost photographic memory and an uncompromising passion for sound doctrine. My step-mother, on the other hand brought something else to the table. She was the one who tried to teach me how to relate to people. How to be sensitive. How to observe and respond to different personality types. Above all, she was very intuitive.

I have since learned over the years that it is difficult to blend those traits. The analytical are, by nature, insensitive, and frankly, the sensitive, are, by nature, rarely analytical. Yet, *both* traits are required of us in the word of God. The secret of Paul's great success, as I have noted before, was his great strength in both of these areas.

We have before us in these last verses of chapter 16 a lesson, not in doctrine, but in *sensitivity*. It is a lesson in relationships; a lesson in behavior. If you would like a lesson in sensitivity look no further, for though the commands are not stated in so many words, we find them here, by *example*, and we shall abstract them from the text. Here are the three commands I find, beginning with verse 17:

- I. Be a Benefactor Vs 17**
- II. Be a Blessing Vs 18**
- III. Be a part of the Brotherhood Vs 19-24**

Hopefully, this choice of these words will be clarified as we browse through the text. Let's begin, then with verse 17:

I. Be a Benefactor Vs. 16:17

1Co 16:17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. (AV)

The historic information is at best, sketchy. Stephanas is, of course, named in 1Co1:16 and 16:15, and we have discussed the servanthood of himself and his

household. He is the *servant* type. The other two are not named elsewhere but it is generally understood that, along with Stephanas they brought to Paul the letter referred to in 1Co 7:1 and probably returned with this present letter.

It is no surprise to us that it is generally the *servant type*, not the *teacher type* who is first to see and perceive the real physical needs of others and the first to respond accordingly.

Take, for example, a benevolent need. When we *teacher types* are confronted with a benevolent need our first response is, "*Does this person meet the criterion for having his need met? Is he being responsible with his monies? Is he working? Are we setting any precedents which will get us in trouble when we help him? What about the I.R.S. rules in this respect?*" The *servant type* says "*Bologna with all that nonsense!*" and takes the man out to dinner or slips him some cash on the side. And, he even knows that in some cases folks will take advantage of him.

These Corinthians represented a *third* type. In general, they were neither teacher types or servant types. They were just *selfish* types. They were careless and insensitive about meeting the physical needs of those who met their spiritual needs. Paul is obviously rebuking them here when he says: "*...for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.*"

Now, what is the lesson here? The lesson is this. Someone else is dependent upon you. In the immediate context, your pastors and the missionaries you commend are dependent upon you. They should not have to initiate financial discussions. They should not have to make up for your *lack* somewhere else.

How thankful Anne and I have been to God over the years for Elijah's ravens who have cared for us and met our needs when no one else perceived them. Personally, I believe that one of the reasons why God has blessed our respective assemblies is because we have known so many people who have always been sensitive to the needs of Christ's servants. As pastor, I have never had to use the words "*...for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.*"

But, there is *still* a lesson to learn, a point to make. Someone else is dependent on you. Be it your children, your aged parents, your employees, the teachers of your children, or whomever. Be sensitive to the material needs of others, especially those who are humbled by having to ask for help. Don't just assume that someone else will meet the need. Do your part. Be a Benefactor.

II. Be a Blessing Vs. 18

Paul continues with his comment:

1Co 16:18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such. (AV)

This terrific trio had not only met Paul's physical needs, but they managed to *refresh* this foot weary, battle weary servant of Christ. It could be, that just by the gift of provisions which they brought along they refreshed Paul's spirit. But, I think there was more. I think what really encouraged and refreshed Paul was the thought that there were folks who were *sensitive* to him and to his needs. Folks who really cared about *him* as a person.

When I read this verse, my mind went immediately to an obscure passage in the Psalms which has caught my imagination so many times. In Psalms 84:5-7 the psalmist wrote:

Ps 84:5 Blessed [is] the man whose strength [is] in thee; in whose heart [are] the ways [of them]. [Who] passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, [every one of them] in Zion appeareth before God. (AV)

There are some folks, dear friends, who, *passing through the valley of Baca*, always seem to be able to *make it a well*. They are the *fountains* along the roadway of life. These are the folks who make the desert a blessing. They are not Pollyannas. They are not idealists. They are not optimists. They just know how to bless and warm and refresh others on the dusty road of life.

You know, there are some people I know who don't seem to do all that well in the school of theology, but I know when I am around them I will walk away encouraged, refreshed, and comforted in the Lord. These folks have mastered the skill of sensitivity. They know just the right questions to ask and they genuinely care. They are wonderful listeners. They are nurturers. Instead of complaining about the drought, they dig wells. We have so much to learn from them, so much to emulate.

Be a Benefactor. Meet the material needs of others as God gives opportunity, but be sure to Be a Blessing as well. Make yourself a committee of one to refresh the hearts of Christ's servants. Then thirdly, I want you to see the important emphasis the rest of these verses combine to teach:

III. Be a part of the Brotherhood Vs 19-24

You and I are a part of the holy catholic church, the greatest brotherhood on the face of the earth. Look at the scope of this brotherhood in verse 19:

The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. (AV)

A. Holy Unity Vs. 19

Take a look at that little grouping. I do not think it is there by coincidence. *First*, we have *the churches of Asia* - that is *regional* in scope. That represented a broad territory. *Then*, we encounter our friends Aquila and Priscilla. Here we have *individuals* who are maintaining fellowship with this church. *Thirdly*, we have *the church that is in their house*, as well. Another, single assembly.

We are not a little kingdom to ourselves in our respective assemblies. We are a part of Christ's great church and we are careful to teach, preach, and pray to that effect. We pray for all of God's people everywhere. Our obligation is from individual servants of Christ to other local assemblies to whole regions of churches. Ephesians 4: 3 instructs:

Eph 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [There is] one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all. (AV)

There is only one body. One church. Every local congregation, every individual is part of that body. Because we are one we are to behave as one. Our Savior prayed in His high priestly prayer of John 17:20:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

That, dear friend, is God's intent. That is God's design. Do not ever lose sight of that. We are a part of a holy brotherhood. We are to be known for our mutual love and our unity.

Let me repeat what I said earlier, we are not a little kingdom to ourselves. We are a part of Christ's great church. It disturbs me greatly when someone comes along and says, "*you folks think you are the only ones who have the truth.*" That is nonsense. Because we *defend* the truth does not imply that we are the only ones who have it. *Nor are we closed to fellowship* from folks who do not agree with us or who differ with us doctrinally.

But, at the same time, unity is not our only goal. The same Savior who prayed that we all might be *one* in this great prayer of John 17 is the Savior who, prayed in verse 14:

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Our unity is to be centered around the Word of God... and He continued in verse 17:

Joh 17:17 ¶ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (AV)

Unity must never come at the expense of the truth. Love and truth are Siamese twins.

But, this we must concede, the issues *are* more difficult, more grey, more clouded for our generation than for any other. Satan wants to break down the walls of righteousness and he is accusing the biblical fundamentalist of being the bad guy who is hindering true Christian love. In an effort to *boil this issue down* so you can see exactly where I stand, I have prepared a chart.

When all is said and done, there are only three things which divide churches. The first is the issue of *authority*. The second is the issue of *interpretation*. The third is the issue of *obedience*.

Regarding authority, as long as you believe that Christ established an earthly organization, a church which is governed through lines of succession, you are divisive. No such thing can be proven from scriptures. Even some Baptists are guilty of this nonsense as they try to trace their authority through baptism all the way back to John the Baptist. Dear friend, the body of Christ is divided because of both apostolic succession and baptistolic succession. Neither are taught in God's Word.

Regarding how we interpret our Bibles, and the doctrines we espouse, there really are only two groups. There are those who take God's Word literally and add nothing else to it. These folks always end up coming to the same conclusions, with very minor differences. Then, there are those who mix literal interpretation with various amounts of allegorical interpretation or the writings of their founders or their church fathers. Dear friend, the body of Christ is divided because of these folks who insist on adding to or taking away from the simple, literal truth of God's Word.

Regarding obedience, we live in an age when doctrine has been set aside in favor of unity. Effectively, it does not matter what one teaches as long as we all share the love. In reality, this is the most divisive lie of all. It is a confession that there is no absolute truth and where there is no truth there will never be any real unity. The body of Christ has never, in its history, despised its birthright to the truth of God's Word as it has now.

These three elements, and only these three elements are the reason why churches are divided today.

So, what are we to conclude?

1. Our goal is ALWAYS to have unity among the brethren.
 2. We will not compromise the Word of God to gain that unity.
 3. We will not confuse the Gospel with disobedient activities or careless approval of those who are untrue to God's Word, but withdraw from such.
- Do not be intimidated by those who would like to lay the responsibility for division in the body of Christ upon us. It is this book which divides men. It is this gospel which sends a sword among them.

But, Mr. Biblical Fundamentalist, don't lose *your* bookmark. Don't lose your place. You are still a member of the body of Christ.

B. Holy Kisses Vs. 20

1Co 16:20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.
(AV)

All the brethren greet you, the political left, and the political right, the Jewish brethren and the Gentile brethren, the new babes in Christ and the sages. The church at Berea and the church at Thessalonica. The church at Ephesus and the church at Antioch and the church in Jerusalem. Each church with its own style -- and probably already differing polities... but all in Christ.

But, what about the Holy kiss? We think we understand what the practice was. We think we understand why the practice was dropped. But, why was the practice commanded? What did it connote?

The practice was originally Jewish and was probably similar to the peck on the cheek which is often seen in European and third world cultures today. Originally, however, it was men with men only and women with women only, and it was the men in particular who emphasized it.

It *appears* to have died because it gave occasion to the pagans to exaggerate their lies about Christians during those years when the Christians met in secret. Communion was said to be a ritual in human sacrifice. Holy kisses were said to be part of a perverse ritual. In other words, the meeting of Christians in secret left all their practices at the mercy of Satan who lost no time spreading his lies. In many areas of the world, the practice continues. In our culture, however, Western men feel uncomfortable kissing other men and they are quite satisfied to settle for a handshake.

There is a problem however. For, you see something is lost in a handshake. Something which was connoted by the holy kiss which is not connoted in a simple handshake. We have lost something precious by giving up this precious, biblical right. Let's ask ourselves:

Why was the practice commanded?

1. First, you need to understand it was a *salute* more than it was a greeting. In fact, this is how the word is rendered in Romans 16:16 - "salute" the brethren. You see, a salute is a greeting, but a greeting is not necessarily a salute.

Why do men in the military salute one another? What good is accomplished by it? Military men do not salute civilians. They only greet civilians. When one military man salutes another, he is sending a communication. He is indicating to that other person that he knows him by his uniform - he recognizes him. He submits to his rank. It is a privileged communication between two men with a common cause.

When we shake hands we simply greet folks. No other communication is intended. There is no recognition of a common brotherhood - only by common birth into the human race. So, you see, the holy kiss was a *kiss of pride!* It was a kiss of fraternity! It was the kiss of common cause and common purpose. And it quietly argued to those who used it that they were already one in Christ, so that hopefully their subsequent speech and behavior would bespeak their common brotherhood.

It is a sad thing that every off- the-wall lodge and every neighborhood gang has its salute of one form or another, but you and I who are in the greatest of all brotherhoods are afraid to use this holy greeting which makes us unique!

Would you like to know what I suspect? I have never been convinced that this practice was dropped just because of a few false charges made by our persecutors. I believe it was dropped because too many Christians were embarrassed to express their common brotherhood in the world amidst unbelievers. It's just a thought. You see, the goal now is to obscure our uniqueness, to hide our common identity. The holy kiss connoted brotherhood, loyalty, and common cause.

2.) Secondly, the holy kiss connoted love and unity. In fact, Peter alters its usual name when he commands:

1Pe 5:14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace [be] with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen. (AV)

Greet ye one another with a kiss of love. That love extends beyond the four walls of your fellowship.

I close with a little humor as I include the words of an old Methodist Hymn, published by David Mintz in 1805. Read and smile. Smile at the Methodists, and then smile at yourself a little too.

I am a soldier of the cross,
I count all earthly things but dross;
My soul is bound for endless rest,
I'll never leave the Methodist

For a better church cannot be found,
their doctrine is so pure and sound;
One reason that I'll give for this,
The Devil hates the Methodist.

They pray the most, they preach the best,
They labour most for endless rest;
I hope my Lord will them increase
And fill the world with Methodist.

The world, the Devil and Tom Pain
Have try'd their best, but all's in vain;
They can't prevail; the reason's this:
The Lord defends the Methodist.

Now, it's not likely that we're going to be able to bring back the holy kiss any time soon, though it would be a delight to me to see it return. But is the sum of it:

1. If you are without Christ you need to know the issue is not Methodist or Baptist, the issue is what you have done with Jesus Christ.

2. And, Christian friend, take your stand. Take it right alongside with your local, fundamental Bible expositing pastor. Let your position and your voice be heard. But through all the smoke and heat of the battle, if not with your lips - at least with your smile, your hand clasp, and your heart, greet the brethren - all the brethren and one another - with a holy kiss.

Additional Visuals

These materials are inserted as Appendix A

Hair Today
Understanding Pnuematikos,
A Comparative Chart of the Spiritual Gifts
Gifts Related to 1, 2, or ,
Three Important Questions
Scotfield's Mysteries
The Trumpets

For additional information concerning these materials, feel free to contact:

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