



"Divine Wisdom For A Worldly Church"
"A Bible Commentary On The Book Of First Corinthians"
"Effective Expositions For Life"

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Acknowledgements

It had been my privilege over my many years of ministry to write over 60 books and booklets. I enjoy writing, and I would just love to stay well enough to continue these endeavors for a long time to come. But, I know, especially during these days of old age and many health problems that I can do nothing without the grace and strength of God provided by His Son through the Holy Spirit just to keep on going after all of these years of ministry. Therefore, the first Person I want to acknowledge and express gratitude for this project is my Lord Jesus Christ, Whom I love with all of my heart. Jesus, not only saved me way back when I was nine years old, but He also called me to fulltime ministry when I was just eighteen years old. So, down through all of these years, He has blessed me with a tremendous amount of open doors, and He has met the needs for us to walk through those doors. Therefore, I just want to give my Lord Jesus all the praise for this project of writing this commentary on the Book of First Corinthians.

Also, I would like to say that this project has taken months and months of hard work, often times in the midst of physical suffering, and with many set backs. Yet, my wonderful wife, JoAnne, has been right here with me to wait on me during my times of sickness, to encourage me when I got discouraged, and always ready to proof read everything I write. This coming September, 2019, JoAnne and I will celebrate our 54th wedding anniversary, and no preacher, pastor, evangelist, missionary, or author could have ever been given a greater wife than God has given to me. Lord, thank you for the best helpmeet you could ever have blessed a man of God with. Truly, JoAnne deserves so much of the credit for all of the ministries we have carried on together.

The final tribute that I want to pay in this acknowledgment page is to Dr. Kenneth Ridings, who is now with Jesus! Many years ago, when I started attending the Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute, Dr. Ridings came from South Carolina to be our Expository Preaching professor. This dear man of God inspired me to love the Word of God, and he also taught me how to exegete the Scriptures within the context of the passage and other related texts. Because of this dear servant's influence, I learned to build expository sermons and to interpret passages of Scripture with a tremendous hunger to see what God is trying to reveal to us. So, the work that I have done on this Commentary of First Corinthians would never have been possible, were it not for Dr. Kenneth Ridings, my wonderful teacher and mentor. I keep a photo in my office of Dr. Ridings and his dear wife, Ann, just to remind me of his love for Jesus, the blessed Word of God, and the tremendous impact he made on my life and ministry. I will forever be grateful for how God used Dr. Ridings in my life.

Let me conclude by asking you to keep praying for me as I seek God's will on which book of the Bible, He wants me to write in the near future. I believe it might be II Corinthians, but I just want to be sure!

In the King's service,

Dr. Stan Frye

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Introduction

For quite sometime now I have desired to write this commentary on the Book of First Corinthians. I have wanted to do this because when Paul wrote the book, it was for the purpose of dealing with a large amount of problems in the Corinthian Church. It is believed that Paul wrote this letter near the close of his three-year ministry at Ephesus near A.D. 59, in order to try to solve a lot of the problems that were causing so much division among the Corinthian church members. In fact, the church just seemed to be divided over about everything.

The church was divided about who was the greatest preacher. Also, there was some division over the need for the preaching of the cross. Then, there were problems about some very important doctrines pertaining to the Christian faith. There were problems about the Judgment Seat of Christ, about the importance of servanthood, more problems about dealing with immorality in the church, and there were problems about one Christian taking another believer to court. Also, there were problems about the importance of sexual fidelity in the home, and there were questions Paul tried to answer about divorce and remarriage. In addition, there were additional problems about whether to eat meat that had been offered to idols. Then, Paul had to defend his apostleship because people doubted that he was really a genuine apostle. Also, Paul needed to deal with the matter of temptation and times of testing. And then, there were arguments about how the people were to conduct themselves in public worship, and even how to conduct the observance of the Lord's Supper. Going further, Paul had to address the subject of spiritual gifts and which were the best and most important gifts given by our Lord. There was so much confusion in the church over the use of the gifts that it had caused a big division among the people because of egos out of control and bitter jealousy. So, Paul wrote this letter to deal with these many subjects, plus the matter of genuine Christian love, and the importance of the resurrection of Christ to the Gospel message.

You might just say that the Corinthian Church was in a carnal state, and Paul knew that if he didn't tell how to deal with these strategic matters, then things could really get out of hand and do irreparable damage to this church which Paul had established. You might say that First Corinthians was Dr. Paul's prescription for helping the church to get better from all of its diseases.

May I say to you that today in our modern contemporary church we have major problems as well. And therefore, we need to go to this great book to discover how we too might deal with some of the terribly critical issues that are pummeling the church of today. Churches are viciously fighting, strongly dividing, and even violently splitting everywhere we look. We need to learn from the truth of Paul's words on how to deal with these many problems, or we are going to see a further demise of many formerly great soul-winning churches. Thus, I felt emphatically drawn to First Corinthians as my next commentary writing project. It is my sincere prayer that God might not only instruct you from this writing project, but that He might use the content and your application of the content to help heal many of the church problems that are so rampant today. I invite you personally to let this study bring you some Biblical light, and then take this light and ask God to help illuminate the enormous darkness that is dwelling in many of our churches.

I have entitled this project, "Wisdom For A Worldly Church," because truly that is what we find in every verse of this book if we will learn how to be wise, and then how to apply it to the bad circumstances we find in many of our churches. The work of God and the future welfare of the churches in these last days are at stake. We must never forget that we can know the will of God of what to do, but if we don't have the wisdom of God, we will not know how to apply the knowledge we possess. Knowledge is knowing what the will of God is, where wisdom is knowing how to put into practice the knowledge that God gives us. Then, understanding is knowing when to carry out in the proper way what God has told us we need to do. So my dear friends, I pray that this long project will be a tremendous blessing to every person who reads this book and then tries to apply the truth to your churches where Satan is running rampant trying to destroy the good that God has given us. Let's get busy now with our Bibles in one hand, and hopefully, this commentary in the other hand, or maybe on the desk or table where you are working. Let's see what my dear hero, Paul the Apostle, gives us under the inspiration of the Divine Holy Spirit.

Chapter One

"Called To Be Saints"

Scripture: I Corinthians 1:1-9

Introduction

In these first nine verses of this section of Scripture, Paul begins his writing by addressing the people of Corinth with a introductory salutation which was customary in those days. Of course, in some of Paul's epistles, the salutation may be at the end of the letter. But here, we see Paul beginning the letter by telling the people immediately who he is, and he graciously greets them. Let's take a good look at these verses and glean much from what God is trying to show us.

I. PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S AUTHORITY. v. 1

In verse one, Paul begins the text by talking about his authority as a God-called servant of God. He will soon move to the call of God for the other saints at Corinth, but he begins here with his call to let the people know that he is speaking to them with much authority because of the One to Whom he belongs. You see, in and of ourselves, we have no authority, but because God has saved us as He did Paul on the Damascus Road, we do have the anointing of God upon us if our lives are clean and righteous. Therefore, the only credibility for us proclaiming the truth of the Gospel is because of the One Who died on the cross for us in order to save our souls, and He arose from the dead to give us eternal life. So, the validity of our message is in the One Who lives within us, and in the authority of the inerrant Word of God which we proclaim.

A. Paul's authority is based upon God's call. v. 1a

Just like God takes the initiative in our personal salvation by convicting us of our sin and showing us our lostness, He also chooses us by His sovereignty as He wills. Now, when I say this, I am not talking about God predestinating people to hell because He does not. But the word predestination in the Bible never talks about a lost man being predestinated, but it is used to talk about how God calls each believer because He has planned a personal will for his or her life. So, in the first part of the verse, Paul is honored to have been chosen as a servant apostle called by God to be His Kingdom representative to the Jew first, but more so as the apostle to the Gentiles.

B. Paul's authority is based upon God's choice. v. 1b

Now in the second part of this verse, Paul tells the Corinthians that God did call him to be an apostle through his own choice. This is a little repetitious with what I said in the previous paragraph, but I believe it bears mentioning again because God does have a specific will for every born-again child of God. You see

folks, God could have selected any one from the multitudes of believers, but because He already knew through His foreknowledge what a great servant Paul would be when he got saved, then God graciously selected Paul to be what I believe was the thirteenth apostle after Judas Iscariot committed suicide. Now, I know that Peter and the other disciples rushed ahead and cast lots and selected Mathias. But don't you think it is rather significant that Mathias was never again mentioned in the Bible or in all of other credible Christian history. I sincerely believe Paul was God's choice, but Peter and his colleagues ran ahead of God.

May I remind all of us that when God saves us, He already has a call and a perfect will for our lives if we will only totally and completely surrender to His invitation in order to discover and then develop this call. And, we need to remember that our authority is not in our ability, our education, or even in our resume, but it is only in the power and anointing of God's supernatural call and plan for our lives.

C. Paul's authority is blessed with God's companion. v. 1c

Now, I am not talking about a companion here for Paul like God gave me when He gave me my dear wife, JoAnne. But, I am talking about the man Sosthenes who was obviously with Paul in Ephesus at the time of this writing. We need to remember that in **Acts 18**, Sosthenes had been the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, but obviously he had become a believer in Christ, and because of this he was beaten by some of the Jews before the Judgment Seat in the market place of Corinth. This seems to imply to me that Sosthenes had probably fled Corinth not only just to be an assistant to Paul and ministry in Ephesus, but he must have left Corinth with Paul in order to keep from being killed by the rabid Jews who had beaten him.

II. PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S ADDRESSEES. v. 2

After Paul speaks to the Corinthians about his authority for writing to these believers, he moves on in verse two to talk about the Corinthians to whom he was writing. In this continuing salutation, Paul gives much respect to the recipients of the letter, and he insinuates that because of their relationship with Christ, they should be ready to receive the truth that he would be sharing with them. So, let's take a close look at this verse and learn about the kind of people the Apostle was addressing.

A. First, Paul addresses those who have been saved. v. 2a

In this verse Paul addresses the people as the "church of God which is at Corinth." Now the word for church here is the Greek word, "ecclesia", and it is referring to the called out assembly of saints in the city of Corinth. It is without doubt referring to the fact that these people whom Paul was writing were truly born-again believers who probably had been saved under the ministry of Paul when he established the church at Corinth, and stayed there eighteen months in order to help the new believers grow in grace and also, to help the church get structurally

organized. So, if these people to whom Paul was writing were truly saved people, then it only stands to reason that they should have received the truth he was writing to them, and put into action the practical answers he was sending in this letter. There should have been no rejection of the truth he was writing. Why? Because they were the evident fruit of Paul's ministry while he was there with them establishing the church. If nothing else should have given Paul's message credibility, then the change in their lives by the power of Jesus Christ through the preaching and teaching of Paul should have brought complete credibility to the content of what he was going to write to them.

B. Secondly, Paul addresses those who have been sanctified. v. 2b

Now, it is very important for us to understand when Paul said in this verse that he was addressing the church of God which was at Corinth, he was indicating that those in the church were not only saved people, but that God had set them apart as sanctified or separated individuals, implying that they were His and they should be holy or different. The word sanctified here comes from the Greek word, "hagios", and it refers to being holy. So, Paul was addressing people who claimed to be saved, and when they had gotten saved, God brought them out from the world and placed them in a separated place is positional godliness, and now it would be their responsibility to live a separated life practically before men, described in other places as righteousness. If we have godliness, we are rightly related to God. And, if we have righteousness, we are rightly related to men. Therefore, if these Corinthian professing believers were genuinely saved, then they should have no problem hearing and responding positively to the truth that Paul would give them in this letter.

C. Thirdly, Paul addresses those who have been selected. v. 2c

Paul indeed writes those who have been saved and sanctified in Christ Jesus, but he is also writing those who have been called or selected to be saints. He is simply saying that like all people in every place who get genuinely saved, the Corinthians have been called by God to a sanctified position, and they have the same responsibility to live a holy life just like every other believer, including Paul himself. Paul even mentions to them that if the people in Corinth were truly saved, then not only did they have the same Savior as him, but they would also have the same Lord over their lives as Paul did. So, Paul is presenting the truth of who the Corinthians really were if they were truly saved, but he was also reminding them of their responsibility to adhere to the truth that he was about to give them in the letter. Saved and called people should respond the same way, whoever they are.

Folks, there is a great truth here for us as well. If we are truly born-again saved believers, we should have a teachable spirit which accepts truth, pleasant or confrontational, with an attitude of teachableness and a willingness to change without getting angry. I remember distinctly what Paul said to the Galatian believers in **Galatians 4:16**, when he said, **"Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"** This is a great question for all of us to ponder because if we get angry

when some man of God, or even the written Word of God itself confronts our sin and demands a changed life, then we better check out our salvation to see if we really are saved. Saved people will want the truth, and when they get it, they will not respond negatively. It is like us taking medicine which the doctor might give us. We might not enjoy the taste, but if we take it according to the doctor's instructions, then we will more than likely get better. The opposite is very evident.

III. PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S ADDRESS. v. 3

As we continue studying this text when we move to verse three, we see that Paul changes from the people he was addressing to the greetings that he shares with the people in Corinth. He is using kindness and some diplomacy to get the attention of the people before he begins to deal with all of the problems in the church at Corinth. You might say that Paul is trying to connect with the people before he moves on to presenting the truth that they must hear and heed if they are going to solve all the problems that were present in the church at Corinth. There is nothing wrong with being kind and courteous to people we need to tell the truth, but we must never let our desire to please the people to get in the way of telling them the truth that God wants us to give them.

Let me just interject something right here. During all of my 53 plus years of preaching the Gospel, I have been told by some people that I needed to tone down the message so as not to offend people. Of course, I know where this idea comes from (straight from Satan himself), but just because we want desperately to not offend someone, we must not compromise the message of God to accommodate the twisted understanding of the Gospel presentation from a preacher with the prophetic gift of crying out against sin. I have decided that I would rather offend the entire world by telling them the truth from God's Word, rather than to offend the God I love and the One who saved my soul by not telling the complete truth. We God-called preachers must continue to sound forth the truth of God in a spirit of love and never be found guilty of watering down the truth in order to not offend some carnal believer or wicked lost person. This is what Paul was trying to do by getting the people ready for the truth by his salutation of love.

I would like to share a true story with you to illustrate what I am talking about. Many years ago a very respectable preacher came to me with what I believe was probably a good motive and he told me that if I didn't tone down my preaching style that the day would come when no one would want to listen to me preach. Yet, after this warning, my wife and I started a church with 42 people and we grew to two thousand church members in just eight years. And yes, this happened without me changing my style of preaching one bit. Of course, the primary thing was and still is not the style of my preaching, but it is all about the anointing of God and genuine sincerity of the preacher's heart when he declares the truth of the Gospel. I sincerely believe that the greatest compliment that any one ever paid me was many years ago when a well-known preacher introduced me to some people as just simply the real deal! I would rather be known as the real deal than to be applauded for climbing the religious ladder and becoming a well-known pastor or missionary. It is

really not the praise we get here, but all that really matters is the rewards we will receive when we kneel before Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Now briefly, let me mention two thoughts about the content of Paul's initial greetings to the Corinthian Church here in this epistle.

A. Paul's address was an encouraging address. v. 3a

Paul simply says in verse three, "I greet you with the grace of God." Of course, greeting someone with grace was usually a Gentile greeting, while greeting someone with the word peace was usually a Jewish greeting. So here, Paul uses both of these words because more than likely there were both Gentiles and Jews in the church at Corinth. Of course, both of these greetings would bring encouragement to any believer or group of believers. Why? Because if we are truly saved, then it only came about because of God's saving grace. Then too, if we are genuinely saved, we must have the peace of God down in our hearts, and there is nothing that can bring peace like the personal contentment that Jesus brings. So, we must see that Paul wanted very much to remind the people of how good Jesus Christ had been to them, and he no doubt was hoping that these peaceful and grace-filled believers would respond to the truth that he had to tell them in order for them to solve the problems in the Corinthian Church.

B. Paul's address was an eternal address. v. 3b

I sincerely believe we cannot move on to the next verse without mentioning that because Paul told the Corinthian believers that he was greeting them with grace and peace from the Lord Jesus Christ, there was an eternal aspect of what he was going to tell them. You see folks, when we get saved, we get an eternal peace with God because of the saving grace of God. And therefore, our salvation and our Source of grace and peace will last as long as Jesus Christ does, and that is truly forever. I just believe Paul was just reminding the people that any problem they might be having in the church at that time was just temporary compared to the eternal salvation and relationship with Christ which they had. They needed to look at their problems just like that, and so do we today as well.

IV. PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S APPRECIATION. vs. 4-9

As we continue our study of this lesson on "Called To Be Saints," we need to move on to verses 4-9, where we discover the truly appreciative heart of Paul the Apostle. As he continues on with his discourse with the Corinthians, he just begins expressing his sincere gratitude to God for everything He had done for, in, and through the believers in Corinth. Paul understood the value of having a thankful heart, and beyond this, he also saw the importance of expressing this thanksgiving readily and publicly. I do pray that we can learn much from these short verses, and hopefully, we might come out of this study with a heart full of new thanksgiving and praise. Let's now look at these verses.

A. Paul expresses his appreciation for the divine work in the believers' lives. v. 4

In verse four, Paul does a wonderful thing. He unashamedly expresses his gratitude to God for the divine work that He had done in the lives of the Corinthians. I say unashamedly because of the problem that the Corinthians were having in the church, and yet, Paul was remembering the good and gracious things God had done in their lives, instead of just mentioning the problems as he will later on.

Later on in **Philippians 1:3**, Paul expressed something similar to what he is saying here to the Corinthians. In verse three of Philippians one, Paul says, **"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."** Every time I read the verse in Philippians, and yes, even this passage in First Corinthians, I often stop and wonder if there might be any one who is thanking God for my life as a believer and as a servant of God. I sincerely pray that there might be some people doing this after over a half-century of ministry, and yet only heaven will reveal in the future if this is true.

Friends, may I ask you this question, "Do you believe there might be some person somewhere who might be offering praise to God for the impact that He has done in their lives because of your faithfulness?" I truly hope and pray that this might be true for you, as well for myself. It is truly a wonderful day when God uses any dedicated believer to make an eternal impact on someone else's life through the devoted efforts of that individual. Paul told the Corinthians that he was constantly thanking God for the divine work that He had done in their lives through his ministry at Corinth when he came there to plant this church.

B. Paul expresses his appreciation for the divine wealth in the believers' lives. v. 5a

Folks, have you ever stopped to honestly thank God for the riches He has given to someone else? Now, I know this is very hard in this terribly selfish and greedy age in which we live, but yet, this is what Paul is saying in the first part of verse five. Paul was so glad of the way God had enriched the lives of the Corinthian believers since they were truly born again under Paul's previous ministry there in Corinth on his second missionary journey. Paul was just ecstatic that the Lord had been so gracious to the Corinthian Christians, although he had not been there to daily observe their growth and appropriation of God's eternal riches.

C. Paul expresses his appreciation for the divine witness in the believers' lives.
vs. 5b-6.

As we look even more closely at verse five, we notice that Paul not only thanks God generically for the spiritual riches in the lives of the Corinthian believers, but he becomes very specific by mentioning his gratitude for the Corinthians' special gift of sharing the truth of God through preaching and teaching, and probably just through personal testimony as well. Without a doubt, through the witness of many people, maybe even Chloe (I Cor. 1:11) who had told Paul of the bad things going on in Corinth, Paul had learned of the unique gift that many of the Corinthian Christians had for preaching, teaching, and testifying of the truth of God.

I just believe that what Paul was saying was that he had been so blessed to hear about the great ability of some of the Corinthians in proclaiming the truth of the Gospel message. Paul was so elated because of this that he just offered up praise and thanksgiving to God. And friends, I can relate to Paul's feelings here because I have had some very faithful and dedicated people come out of my years of ministry who are quite eloquent in preaching and teaching the Gospel. I truly believe that any servant of God will be very proud and thankful for some other believer who has learned to follow the example of his or her mentor and has become very fruitful in winning other people to Christ. This is the way Paul obviously felt, and it is truly the way we should feel as well.

It is very worthy of noting here that in addition to Paul being thankful for the speaking abilities of some of the Corinthian believers, he was just as grateful for the way God had gifted some of the believers to be able to discern the will of God and the plan of God for the lives of the individual believers, as well as the church collectively. In the early church before the complete Bible was in written form, God did give the spiritual gift of special knowledge for some people to discern the deep things of God, and I believe that this could very well have been how the early believers received the divine revelation which was written down in the Word of God by these people who received it. Now of course, we don't need this special sign gift, but we do need people with special discernment in interpreting and writing out the truth of the written word of God. Hopefully, this commentary might be an expression of this gift to discern divine truth or knowledge. Paul was really grateful that God had endued some early believers in Corinth with the gift of speaking the truth of God's Word clearly and eloquently. And, he was also very grateful for those who God had invested with a special discernment of the knowledge of God's Word and will. Both of these special gifts are so needed in the body of believers.

Before moving on to another thought, let me just mention verse six. In this verse, Paul mentions the fact that the testimony of Christ was truly confirmed in the Corinthian believers' lives. These dear spiritual children of Paul the apostle were giving proof to the power of the Gospel in the way their lives had been changed. They were a living confirmation of God's power and endowment of the Holy Spirit. Truly, the testimony of any of God's genuinely born again believers will provide evidence of real conversion if these believers are living properly.

D. Paul expresses his appreciation for the divine wholeness in the believers' lives.

v. 7a

In the first part of verse seven, Paul continues his thought of appreciation to God by telling the Corinthian believers that he is so thankful for how far the believers have come, but that he has the desire that they might become all that God wants them to be. He prays that they will receive all that God has for them, and I believe Paul is telling them that he desires for them to reach their full potential. Yes, Paul is so thankful for the progress the people have made, but he doesn't want them to miss out on anything that God has in store.

E. Paul expresses his appreciation for the divine waiting of the believers in their lives. v. 7b

In addition to the fact that Paul is so proud of the progress the Corinthian believers have made, one of the greatest things he is grateful for is that they were living in view of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have called this divine waiting because of the way God had blessed the early Christians, but yet, the best was and still is to come in the return of our Lord when He comes to rapture out the church, the bride of Christ. What a wonderful day that is going to be. We should learn from the examples of the Christian believers. We must develop fully, work hard, and we must keep our eyes on the Eastern sky until Jesus comes again. When He gets here, we will indeed confess that it surely was worth the wait!

F. Paul expresses his appreciation for the divine warranty promised to the believers when He comes. v. 8

I don't know about you folks, but when I purchase something, I like very much to know if there is a warranty with the item I have purchased. Well, in our case as believers, it is not about what we have purchased, but it is about what Jesus has purchased for us on the cross of Calvary. In verse eight, Paul tells the Corinthians that he is so appreciative of the fact that when Jesus comes again, He will reward the believers with His stamp of approval or word of confirmation if we have been faithful and stand there unblameable. So you see, the main thing that we need to concern ourselves with at this point in time is whether we will be found faithful at the Judgment Seat of Christ when He comes to inspect us. Paul is actually saying here in verse eight that he is very grateful that one day Jesus is coming again, and He will try our works to see if they are precious gems or stones, or if they will be like hay, wood, and stubble, and be burned up by the radiance of Christ's glory. We should surely be faithful now, but the thing we need to dwell on is the future rewards or lost, that we will have when Jesus comes again. Doing the proper job as the Corinthian Christians were trying to do is one thing we need to concern ourselves with, but the main concern should be the time of inspection when Jesus returns to this earth again. Don't forget, God has given us a great warranty for the best that is yet to come, and this fact should keep us being faithful and serving Him until He comes again very soon.

G. Paul expresses his appreciation for the divine worth God has given to the believers in His family. v. 9

Every Sunday morning in our church here in North Carolina, our choir director leads us in a course entitled, "The Family Of God." We sing this together, and then we move around through our auditorium shaking hands with other believers. We do this because I can think of nothing that is as important as our fellowship in God's family down here on earth. Yes, we are certainly to love our earthly families, but the family of God is much more important. So, when Paul told the believers in Corinth that they were worth much to the Kingdom of God, he

wanted to offer praise on their behalf that they were brothers and sisters in Christ. And, according to **Ephesians 1:5**, God has predestined that we as born-again believers should be adopted into His family with the irrevocable inheritance which God has promised to us. And, because we have been adopted, it is impossible for us to lose this inheritance. In other words, when we get saved, we are saved for eternity. So, one moment I was a lost sinful person, but then when Jesus saved me, I was adopted into God's family, and there is no way I can lose this adoption or lose the inheritance. This is a tremendous promise, and Paul gladly told the believers in Corinth what they had and how much they were worth spiritually. Truly, God used Paul to set the stage in a kind and compassionate way for the people before he had to address the problems in the church at Corinth.

Conclusion

Well folks, we have just concluded our study of the first nine verses of this wonderful letter from Paul to the believers in Corinth. The summary of these verses is that God has called all of us to be His children or saints, and that because He saved us and called us to serve Him, He has some wonderful things in store for us. Every one of us should be rejoicing over who we are, and what we have in and through our relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul reminded the Corinthian believers of this, and by our study of this text, he has reminded us as well. As we continue on with this great study, may we be reminded over and over of the position we have in Christ, and the privileges we have to serve Him faithful. Therefore, let us resolve to go make a difference for Jesus until He comes again. We are truly blessed to be in His Kingdom.

Chapter Two

"Beware Of Preacher Religion"

Scripture: I Corinthians 1:10-17

Introduction

As we move further in our study of First Corinthians, we need to take a serious look at verses 10-17, because of the problem that was present in the church at Corinth. Obviously, Paul had received word from Chloe, one of the dedicated members of the Corinthian church that their church had become divided over "Preacher Religion." What do I mean by preacher religion? I mean the church had some prominent preachers and teachers whom the people had decided to choose up sides and follow. In order to do this, evidently, they had decided that one of their leaders was much more right with the doctrine that he was teaching, and that the others had to be wrong. Therefore, a divide was growing in the congregation.

The division in the church evolved around Peter, or Cephas, Paul, and Apollos. Then, there was this super-spiritual crowd that affirmed they followed no man, but instead they would only embrace Christ, but in a condescending way to others. So, there were those who chose Peter, and we are not even sure if Peter had been to Corinth, or if the people following him had just chosen to follow him because they heard about his success at Pentecost in Jerusalem.

Then, there were the followers who had chosen sides with Paul who had come to Corinth and planted the church there. And of course, he had spent eighteen months there, his second longest stay in any city where he had started churches. Therefore, these followers of Paul had an affinity for Paul because he had begun the church there. And I might just say, that if I would have had a choice to follow any of these first three preachers, then Paul would have been my choice. But, the indication here in the passage is that their choice of preachers had turned into a fight because they chose sides, when in truth, they should have been working for unity in the flock of believers.

Going further, we find that the third group had developed a liking for Apollos, because he came over as a very learned eloquent speaker. And, if there were some very educated or elite people there, then this would probably be the people that would have gravitated to Apollos.

So, we had the church divided over three different good men, but then, there was this super-spiritual neo-charismatic-like group that decided they were holier than the others, and thus, they would not follow any of the three preachers chosen by the others, but instead, they would just pride themselves on following Christ. They just felt like that they had just a little more of Jesus than the others, and so, they would not lower themselves to just follow either of these preachers.

Therefore, the church was truly divided, and the rift must have been growing, and so Chloe, a very much unknown lady who must have loved Jesus and the entire church body, decided to send Paul word that things were in a mess and just getting worse and worse. So, this is the situation when Paul wrote this First Epistle to the Corinthians. And before we get into the text itself, just remember that this one

problem over preacher religion was just the first problem among many more which Paul had to deal with throughout the rest of the letter. Truly, the Corinthian people who were members of a church that had been planted in a wicked mercantile city, had many problems, and they needed help to solve them from the man of God that came there with God's love to make the sacrifices to begin the church. And, this would be a good time for me to say that presently in the time that we live, there is so little respect for the true men of God in the world, even those that God sends to a community to open a new church. Having been a pastor of eleven churches over 53 years I can say that the worst hurt my wife and I have ever experienced down through these years, has been the damage done when people we have given our lives to in the churches where we have served just simple walk away with no explanation or reason known to us. Yet, we gave them our best, but they reciprocated by giving us a lot of confusion and hurt. The people in Corinth were divided, but truthfully, they should have just been loyal to the one, Paul, who had given his life to them for 18 months just to see them saved, and begin to grow in the Lord.

Well, I have given you enough introduction. Now, let's get down to the verse-by-verse study of this passage and see if we can discover some practical truth that we might glean to use in our churches for the glory of God. Pray much as we look at these blessed inspired words from Paul the Apostle.

I. FIRST, PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S REBUKE FOR THE CORINTHIANS. v. 10

In this age when we have tried to take the sting out of the Gospel so as to not offend anyone, and of course, always remain politically correct, it is quite revealing to see Paul start out with this stinging rebuke of these Corinthian misfits. He pulls no punches, and he tells it like it is. And folks, this is truly what we need to day, but a new type of Christianity is swirling all around us saying that we better not offend anyone with the Gospel message, and for God's sake, let's not make anyone feel guilty about their sins. Yet, that is what Paul does in this section of Scripture, and I want to say, "Paul, go to it! They desperately needed it, and so do we in this generation of spoiled rotten professing Christians." Now, let's look at verse 10.

A. Paul's rebuke is a special rebuke. v. 10a

The first thing we notice about this stern rebuke is that it is special because it is directed to the brethren. Excuse me! For the brethren! Yes, my beloved friends, Paul's rebuke was directed to the brethren who claimed the name of Jesus and professed that they were in the family of God.

What Paul was doing was like a parent does to a child, when he or she uses verbal discipline on his or her children. And from all indication, they rightly deserved it, and they definitely needed it. We too need to stop coddling our spiritual babies who should have grown up a long time ago, and keep on protecting them, when by now they are still acting like kids. This is exactly what Paul later says in **Hebrews 5:11-14**. Please read these verses carefully, and see if you have grown in the Lord, the way you should have. **"Of whom we have many things to say, and**

hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:11-14). I suppose that we might just say, "its time to grow up!"

And my friends, it is truly relevant for this age when there are so many brethren and sisters who just never seen to grow up and move on to greater things. And, it is truly evident that when a group of child-acting professing believers don't get their way, they will ultimately cause problems and divide the family of God.

B. Paul's rebuke was a spiritual rebuke. v. 10b

Paul moves forward with his rebuke of the Corinthian believers by telling them that his rebuke is based upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, the rebuke is not just coming from Paul, but it comes from Jesus Christ through His true servant. Now here, let me say once again that there are those that think that Jesus never rebukes people and makes them feel guilty. However, this text is a great passage to negate that rotten non-biblical belief. Just like a parent has to discipline their children in order to show love and concern for these kids, so does our Lord Jesus Christ. A person who never rebukes or chides a child for improper behavior for the good of the child, doesn't really love that child. Paul said it vividly in **Hebrews 12:8**, **"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."** In other words, if a father doesn't chasten his child when he needs it, then that child really doesn't belong to this father, because a non-disciplinarian father is a father that doesn't love his kid. But, a true father will love and protect his child or children to prove that the child belongs to him. Thus, if a professing child of God can act the way the Corinthians were behaving without rebuke, then they were probably not even saved. Pretty serious don't you think! Serious rebuke for God's kids is a spiritual rebuke from God the Father, and also from our elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Paul's rebuke was a singular rebuke. v. 10c.

In the third part of verse ten, we find the following words. **"that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you;...."** This phrase is truly an admonition from Paul that the people needed to get their act together and become unified with a singular purpose. Paul wanted the people to not be arguing, but instead, be speaking the truth about the Word of God which he had taught the people. They were not to be comparing one preacher with another, but they were to have one singular goal in mind, and that was to present a unified front in proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Folks, don't you think the problems in the Corinthian church seemed so much like what is going on in many of our churches today. Rather than being single

mind and united, the churches are arguing and debating Calvinism and the Emerging Church concept, plus, they are trying so hard to unify the church under the principle of Ecumenicalism, rather than under the banner of world missions and evangelism. It is nothing more than self-centered narcissistic ego-centric, and selfishness which is causing all of the arguments in the church today, just like it did in the Corinthian church during the days of Paul.

What our motive and purpose should be within our churches is not trying to become number one, or be in the center of attention. But, our goal and purpose should be to get together and take the Gospel message to a lost world. If we will get busy with this task, then we will not have time to choose sides and fight one another.

D. Paul's rebuke was a sane rebuke. v. 10d; Phil. 2:5.

In the last part of this verse 10, Paul instructs the people to grow up and live with perfect or complete love for one another having a sane mind about what they were supposed to be doing. It is the same type of thing that Paul told the Philippians in chapter two, verse five. Please notice these words. **"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5).** In other words, every born again believer should have the mind of Christ, and as I have stated many times, we should have on our minds what Jesus has on His. And truthfully, the implication here is that if you don't have the mind of Christ, you are not really saved and a part of the family of God regardless of the preacher you follow.

The child of God with the mind of Christ is not a person who wants to compare their preacher to other preachers, but this true child of God is a person who works hard to keep unity in the flock and to keep the flock centered on winning others to Christ. And, when this true child of God has the mind of Christ, then this person will make wise judgments about all of life, including what preacher to follow. And, this person with a sane mind will keep a level head when it comes to discerning who is a genuine and authentic preacher of the Gospel, and will follow the true servant of God for the right reasons.

II. SECONDLY, PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S REPORT FROM CHLOE. vs. 11-12.

Now, you might say, "Who is Chloe?" Well, the truth is that we don't know much about this woman, other than the fact that she seems to have been a strong and respected woman in the Corinthian Church. It seems that her house was truly a Christian home, and it is evident from Paul's respect for her and the message she sent to him, that she was an outstanding leader in the church. Therefore, Paul believed her when she sent him word that things were not too good in the church, but that the church was truly divided, and it just seems that she sensed that things might indeed even be very critical. I say this because for a person to put their name and testimony on the line in order to divulge problems, that person had to have a lot of credibility. So, let's take a hard look at the problems Chloe revealed and see if we can learn how to deal with some of the problems that we face today in our modern

churches. I would say, "please give us some Chloes who will tell the truth in order to solve serious problems.

A. First, Chloe's report was a sure report. v. 11a

I say that this report was a sure report because Chloe was specific about what the problem in the church really was, and it was so credible that Paul didn't even question it one iota. He obviously respected and trusted Chloe, and Paul didn't even have to ask were her words the truth. Therefore, her report was a sure or certain report.

Based upon this example of how Chloe revealed the problems of division in the church, we surely learn some lessons from this occasion. First, we need to have a testimony of integrity and credibility so that when we need to point out a problem, people will immediately believe us.

We don't know how Chloe got the message about the problems to Paul, but more than likely it was probably through another written letter sent with one of Paul's friends. Thus, as soon as Paul received the letter, he trusted the bearer of the letter, and also, the content of the letter. Thus, Paul responded by writing to the Corinthians to try to help solve the "preacher religion" problem, along with many other problems which we will look at in this letter.

B. Secondly, Chloe's report was a separating report. v. 11b

There is no doubt in my mind that when Chloe sent the sad news that there were divisions in the flock at Corinth that she knew it would probably cause some people to turn against her, and maybe even her family. Of course, this reveals to us that Chloe was much more concerned about the spiritual welfare of the congregation than she was about keeping her friends. In other words, she was more interested in the welfare of the church than she was keeping her friends, who were probably contributing to the problems in the church.

My, how we need people like this in our churches today. We need people with such impeccable testimonies that they are willing to risk everything to make sure that God's house and work are handled the way they should be, and these people must be willing to sacrifice some comfort and friends in order to keep the church centered on the things of Christ and winning people to Him.

C. Thirdly, Chloe's report was a sad report. v. 11c

We have already mentioned it, but the report that Paul received from Chloe has to bring sadness to his heart. Why? Because this was the place where Paul had given eighteen months of his life trying to establish and build the church body, and now over the silliest and most selfish things, the church was now divided and arguing about what preacher was the greatest.

My friends, it is a very sad day in the life of any church when it is more important to the people who gets the most attention than it is how much Jesus is glorified and how important the Great Commission is to the church family. Truly, the

church in Corinth had a sad problem because the people had taken their emphasis off the main thing and placed it upon who was the greatest. I will firmly tell you that no one is important if Jesus isn't glorified, and the lost world is not the main emphasis of every one concerned. And, as I observe all around us today after 53 years in the ministry, it seems that all I see is troubled and divided churches.

Even at the time I am writing this commentary on First Corinthians, two of the former churches where my wife and I started are presently having major problems. One of the churches we started with 42 people which was a split out of another split when we came, and over the next eight years, we grew to over 2,000 members. Yet, just a few weeks back, this wonderful church split and now there is one group of people that is meeting in a hotel with about 250 people, while back at the main church, there are about 350 people meeting in a 1,700 seat auditorium. And, I distinctly remember that when my wife and I left that church back in 1997, we were averaging over 1,300 people in attendance every Sunday. And, I will tell you that this church split over how a dictatorial pastor almost bankrupted the church by wasting funds that could not be found where they were spent.

Another church that JoAnne and I started in our area was started with 16 people, and over the next eight years, we grew to over 750 members, even while we were overseeing a huge work in Africa. But, whereas the other church split over a dictatorial pastor, this second church is now losing members rapidly because of the passiveness of the present pastor. So you see, when the desires of the people or a pastor don't match with the desires of the Savior, then a division occurs, and then many people get hurt, and many people depart from the work of God. And sad to say, the main reason that these problems always come is for the same ego-centric, narcissistic motives that were destroying the church at Corinth.

And, let me say before we move on to the next verse that when you consider that my wife and I gave over 16 years of our lives to these two churches, it is truly heartbreaking to see the churches destroyed because of selfishness.

D. Fourthly, Chloe's report was a selfish report. v. 12

Earlier in the introduction to this chapter I talked about the selfishness of the Corinthians who were divided over their different preachers. Then of course, there were the super-spiritual people that felt like they were holier than other people because their only teacher was Jesus, and this too was just simply because of selfishness. Now, let's take a closer look at Chloe's report which was sent to Paul, and let's see more evidently the egotistical division that was prevalent in the church.

1. There was the selfishness of the super-educated, followers of Paul.

First, there was group one who had chosen to follow the teachings of Paul, and they were proud of it. Of course, if anyone should have had loyalty from the church, it should have been Paul. He had gone there to establish the church, and he not only stayed for 18 months trying to disciple the people and make the church stronger, but even after he left Corinth, the people were still on his heart, as is proven by the writing of at least three letters, and maybe four, to these believers.

But no doubt, there were many in the Corinthian church that related well to Paul, especially those who may have been from a Jewish background. They knew that Paul had been a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and thus, they had a lot in common with Paul. However, I just believe that they chose sides with Paul because of his past education, his family tradition, and of course, his upbringing as a Jewish lad who learned at the feet of Gamaliel.

Still today, there are many people in our churches that gravitate to some leaders because these leaders have a similar background and tradition, and therefore, people choose to follow them because they lean toward a man of this kind of culture. Yet, we better be careful that we don't let our past traditions, and even our family connections get in the way of our loyalty to Christ. It is Jesus that has saved us, not the highly educated preachers.

2. There was the selfishness of the super-eloquent, followers of Apollos.

Now very little is known about Apollos, but the Bible tells us in **Acts 18:24-26**; that he was a Jew from Alexandria in Egypt, and that he may have been converted under the preaching of John the Baptist, or by the influence of some of John's disciples. This passage of Scripture tells us that Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures, and that he taught diligently the word of God. The only problem was that he had an incomplete Gospel message because he had not been exposed to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It was like he was preaching as an Old Testament prophet without the complete truth, of which Aquila and Priscilla, later informed him. But, some of the people in the Corinthian Church became attached to Apollos, probably because of his learnedness and his eloquence as he spoke. When I think of Apollos speaking, I can't help but think that he must have been like a Greek philosopher. And, because of his eloquence, his speaking ability, and his clear presentation of the truth, a large group of people had flocked to him; thus making the division in the church even worse.

Every time I think of the preacher/teacher Apollos, I can't help but think of some of the very liturgical preachers and teachers down through the years in America. They have been well educated, well-spoken, quite sophisticated, and some of these have just been considered elitists. When I think of these kind of servants, I imagine Martin Luther, John Calvin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jonathan Edwards, Peter Marshall, James Kennedy, and even some others. I do not believe these Apollos type preachers were rambunctious like Peter, who we will mention shortly, Billy Sunday, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, and Mordecai Ham. Truly, God can use preachers of every style and fashion, but they should never become reasons or excuses for division.

3. There was the selfishness of the super-evangelistic, followers of Cephas or Peter.

We now move away from the more formal Apollos type preachers to the impulsive, rambunctious, foot-in-the mouth type, extremely bold and flamboyant, and aggressive style preachers illustrated by Cephas or Peter as we know him better. Peter was very forthright, assertive, courageous, and sometimes even

defiant. And no doubt, those who wanted to divide the church at Corinth over this style of preacher, were more comfortable with this popular rugged man of God. Although I am not sure that President Trump is even saved, his outspoken, overbearing, and defiant attitude reminds me of my concept of the Apostle Peter. Certainly, Donald Trump is no righteous Peter, but the way he comes on, and his blatant rebukes have to be similar to the way Peter preached. So, there were many that wanted to have their Cephass group, although we are still not even sure that Peter ministered in Corinth. But obviously, the people were exposed to Peter, and thus they marginalized the church by bringing a schism to the body of believers because of their affinity for Peter. Never should any local body of believers allow the church to become divided over their preferences for certain preachers or leaders, but yet, it is happening in many places today. When this happens, there is just one main reason, and that is selfishness and/or self-centeredness. This is the only way we can interpret this situation.

4. There was the selfishness of the super-edified, arrogant followers of Christ.

It is very hard for me to understand how a group of people who say they are believers could actually believe that they were so much holier than the others, unless of course, it would be some of our super-spiritual neo-charismatic brothers and sisters who just feel that because they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, they have arrived, and yes, become better than other believers. But of course, the Bible doesn't teach this at all.

The Bible teaches us that the moment we get saved, according to Romans, Chapter Six, we are baptized into the body of Christ with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a second work of grace, but it is the initial entrance into the family of God. Yes, I do believe that a person needs to become totally surrendered to Christ after salvation, whereby he or she acknowledges Christ as the Lord of their lives. But, even this doesn't make a person more spiritual. In fact, if a person is filled or anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit, he or she won't be arrogant and selfish, but the person will be meek and humble.

Therefore, the super-spiritual people in Corinth were more than likely just arrogant proud phonies who just really didn't have genuine salvation, but they just had religion and not salvation. Truly saved people don't boast about it, but they are humble and esteem others better than themselves.

So, Chloe's report to Paul, however she got it to him, was just a vivid description of the schism or division in the church in Corinth. I would like to say, "God bless Chloe for being such a courageous woman to expose this major problem that divided the church." May God give us some people like Chloe in our churches today; not gossips, but people who have a genuine concern for the welfare of the body of Christ.

III. THIRDLY, PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S RATIONALE FOR HIS COMMENTS.

vs. 13-17

Now, we come to the last five verses of this text. In these verses Paul explains

very clearly what his rationale or reasoning is for the truth he is sending the Corinthians in this letter. And truthfully, Paul doesn't leave any significant area uncovered in these verses concerning why the people in Corinth need to get their act together because of their selfish behavior. While the world was dying lost without the Gospel, the Corinthians were trying to see who was the most important preacher. This reminds me so much of what is going on in many of the evangelical churches here in America right now. If you watch some of these preachers and churches on TV, it just seems that they are just trying to see who can "out-sensationalize the others, and of course, who can be preeminent in order to raise the most money. Every time I look at this passage in chapter one of First Corinthians, I can't help but envisioning strutting turkeys in a barnyard somewhere. But, the truth is that these are real people trying to be church leaders in a day when strong spiritual leaders are almost non-existent. Let's take a close look at these next few verses and see what Paul is trying to get the Corinthian believers to understand.

A. Paul's rationale is based upon the supremacy of Christ. v. 13a

Paul starts off these few verses by asking some sarcastic questions. The questions he asks are these, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" These are very strong questions. But, Paul is trying to get the Corinthians to understand that their differences were not based upon true facts. The people were told that Christ is not divided, and that Paul himself was not crucified for them. And he stated that the people were not baptized in the name of Paul. Paul was just trying to get across to the people that there was no valid reason at all for them to be divided. They had the same Savior and Lord, and that the importance of the preachers didn't have anything to do with their salvation. Thus, Paul was trying to get across to the people the supremacy of Christ, and the foolishness of their division. He was just trying to get the people to understand that no human being was as important as Jesus Christ, Therefore, they needed to give Christ all the attention and glory.

May I say to each of you readers again right here that no preacher, teacher, or even evangelist is anywhere nearly as important as Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, there would have been no church at Corinth, and without Jesus, there would not have been any church today; especially a truly biblical one. Oh yes, there are some false counterfeit churches like the Catholic Church, Mormonism, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and others, but they didn't genuinely begin with Jesus. They were formed by fallen men! We are to build the church on Jesus Christ alone!

B. Paul's rationale is based upon the sacrifice of Christ. v. 13b

In the rest of this verse, we need to read between the lines to see some very important implied truth. This truth is that not one of the original preachers, not Paul, not Peter, and not Apollos, and no one other than Jesus, died by crucifixion on the cross for our sins. Christ alone paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and therefore, He alone deserves our worship and adoration. No man, whoever he might be, should ever take the place of Jesus Christ within the church. To divide the church

over the strong personalities of the preachers, or any other person, is nothing less than sin. Thus, Paul's rationale was that because Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for our sins, then, He alone should receive the loyalty and worship in the church.

C. Paul's rationale is based upon his servanthood to Christ. vs. 14-16

Verses 14-16 are indeed just a humble admission by Paul that he doesn't feel himself of much significance at all. In fact, he confesses that he didn't even do the baptizing of the early believers in Corinth, except for a few people. His main intention was to get these divided Christians to understand that the best way to be like Jesus was just to be a servant, and not to live looking for admiration. Paul didn't feel better than any of the other preachers or teachers, even if he had been the primary one that helped to establish the church there in Corinth.

And, may I say to you that this is the kind of spirit and attitude that every servant of God ought to have. There should be no parading of the flesh to draw attention to one's self, or to try and get a following. Our main purpose in whatever we do should be first and primarily to glorify Jesus, and secondly to share the love of Christ with those we encounter or try to reach.

Obviously from these verses, one of the problems that had caused the division in the church at Corinth was who had done the baptizing, or maybe even who had baptized the most people. In fact, it seems to me that this may have been the central problem. And, don't you think that it is quite ironic that we are having some of these same problems in our modern churches over who can baptize the most people. It seemed here in the Corinthian church, and it still seems today, that Christianity and church work has developed a competitive spirit which certainly always divides the people. This should never be, and Paul was trying to tell the people in his letter that it was not who baptized the most people that was the most successful, but it was the one who has the best servant-like spirit. But, isn't this what Jesus tells us in Matthew 23? Pay attention to these verses. **"Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is the greatest among you shall be your servant (Matthew 23:10-11).** My question to all of us is, "Are we really successful, or do we just think we are, and want others to think it as well?" For if we truly are successful, it is because we are servants!

D. Paul's rationale was based upon his sharing of Christ. v. 17

In this last verse in this small section of Scripture, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that he didn't come to carry out symbolic representations of the Gospel, but his purpose was to simply preach the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with words of wisdom, and certainly with the cross being center of his message. In other words, Paul's primary desire was just simply to share the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And, I will remind all of us right here that our primary and main purpose should always be to present the Gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we do this in the power of the Holy Spirit, then He will draw people unto Himself, and they will be genuinely saved. Therefore, if we do this

faithfully, then no one man can ever take the credit for winning people to Christ, because this is entirely an act of Christ Himself through His Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Well, by now, we have covered only seventeen verses of Scripture here in First Corinthians, but my, what a serious situation we found in the church at Corinth. The people there had begun to choose up sides and follow their selected preacher, and the result of their sinfulness had led to a four-way divide in the church. There were the followers of Paul. Then, others there wanted to follow what Peter had taught. Also, there were the people who flocked in behind Apollos. Then of course, there were those super-spiritual neo-charismatic people who thought they were better than others. Therefore, they just developed a following of elitist believers who felt holier than thou before the other Christians.

So, Paul wrote this letter in order to solve problems, and the first problem he dealt with was the problem of division over preacher religion. He will deal with many other serious problems throughout this letter, but surely we have already seen that they had major problems in the Corinthian Church, and we are today facing some of these same problems, even after 2,000 plus years later. Truly, history does repeat itself, whether it be secular history, or the history of the church. I just wish that we could learn from history so that we wouldn't repeat it so often. And, when we talk about these divisive problems being in the church, then, we do have critical issues that must be dealt with right away, or they will end up destroying not only the unity of the church, but its very existence as well. So, let's "nip these problems in the bud," as Barney Fife used to say.

Chapter Three

"The Preaching Of The Cross"

Scripture: I Corinthians 1:18-31

Introduction

As we move on in our study of First Corinthians, I suppose you could say that this lesson is the most important one in the entire book. Why is this true? Because it is about the extreme significance of the preaching of the cross as the center of the Gospel message. To those who are not really saved, the preaching of the cross is foolishness, just simply because they can't understand the truth that is only revealed by the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of the true believer. So, the truth that we are going to glean from this section of Scripture is vital to the message of salvation, and also to an understanding of the substitutionary sacrifice that Jesus paid when He did in fact die on the cross for our sins. So, let's pay diligent attention to the second half of chapter one and try to get everything that our Lord wants to show to us.

And, I will be quick to say that if you as the reader of this commentary don't seem to clearly understand the truth of this passage, maybe you just need to stop and examine yourself to see if you are really saved. Later on in II Corinthians, chapter thirteen, Paul told these very Corinthian Christians to examine themselves to see if they were truly in the faith. And so, I encourage every reader of this material to do so. Just remember that the proclamation of the death of Christ on the cross, and then of course, His ultimate resurrection which we will later cover in chapter fifteen of this epistle, is the main message of redemption. Therefore, let's not only believe it, but let's get busy telling a lost world about this message. Now, let's get into our verses and find what Jesus is trying to show us.

I. PAUL REVEALS THE RESULTS OF THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS. vs. 18-25

A. To the lost sinner, the preaching of the cross is pure foolishness. v. 18a

Well, I just mentioned this thought in the introduction, but we need to emphasize it once more. To those who have never been genuinely saved, the preaching of the cross is just simply foolishness. Therefore, it is no wonder that so many pastors and churches have tried to remove the preaching of the cross from the pulpits and churches of our lands. But, these who reject the preaching of the cross just reveal the fact that they are probably not even saved to begin with. This applies not only to lukewarm church members, but it applies to those preachers and pastors who don't want to preach on the cross because they fear the message will be too confrontational or convicting. In other words, they want to remove the blood from the Gospel message. And of course, if we do this, then there is no true Gospel message.

The Greek word for foolishness actually means silliness or absurdity, and for sure, this reveals just how people feel about the preaching of the cross. They

categorize it as silly or just moronic. But, the truth is that once these doubters get genuinely saved, then they will come to understand that the preaching of the cross is not foolishness, but in truth, it is the only way that a person can get saved and received redemption for their sins. So, our efforts should be to convince the multitudes that the only hope they will ever have is found in the preaching of the cross. And, the only way to get saved is through the One Who died on that cross, that of course is our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear lost friends, please don't be so silly as to count the preaching of the cross as a foolish thing. Because, if you continue to evaluate the preaching of the cross in this way, obviously, you will reject the Gospel message and die without Christ.

B. To the live saint, the preaching of the cross is powerful fuel. v. 18b

Well now, the phrase, "powerful fuel," is just a play on words to reveal just how wonderful it is to get saved, and then have the power of the Holy Spirit living within in order to keep sharing the Gospel with others under the power of God's Holy Spirit. And, I will tell you that from my personal experience, when I truly consider with gratitude what Jesus did on the cross for me, the very thought gives me a new passion for proclaiming this message to the lost world. When I stop and ponder the power of the cross, I am truly motivated to go and tell others about the cross of Calvary and what Jesus did for us there. The only motivation I need to keep me going with the Gospel message is just simply to reflect on the efficacy of the cross and what Jesus did for me when He died there. If I sincerely understand the price that was paid for my redemption, then I can't help but love Jesus with my whole heart. And, like one of my former great pastors, Dr. Homer Lindsay, Jr., of the great First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida use to tell me, "if we really love Jesus, this will be all the motivation we need to go after souls." How true this is!

C. To the learned scholar, the preaching of the cross is a penetrating fact. vs. 19-20

Down through the many years of my full-time ministry, I have had the privilege of meeting some very educated people. Many of these have had such a tremendous mental capacity that they just don't seem to understand simple truth. Some have almost reached the point to where down-to-earth simple common sense things just don't mean anything to these learned scholarly people. This of course is what Paul talks about in verses 19-20 of our text. He tells the Corinthian believers that God has chosen to destroy the wisdom and understanding of learned men and women in order to present the simple truth of eternal salvation. But, because of these scholarly people's practice of trying to use scientific and philosophical understanding, the simple truth of the Gospel just blows them away or literally destroys their thinking.

Of course, this is what God has intended to do. If man could figure out his salvation theoretically or philosophically, then there would have been no need for Jesus to have died on the cross for our sins. But truthfully, I believe Jesus treasures the thought of boggling the minds of self-centered egotistical people who believe they will be the source of their own salvation through works. But of course, this idea

has been the characteristic of all lost humanity until they come face to face with Jesus and have Him turn on the light of exposure to their sinfulness. It is only then that they take a serious look at God's plan of salvation.

I sincerely love verse 20 where Paul shows a bit of sarcasm when he asks the questions, **"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?"** The simple truth is that God chose a very sacrificial, but yet, simple way to bring about the pathway to salvation. We don't get saved through the foolishness of the wisdom of this world, but we get saved through the simple plan of salvation. And when this happens, it absolutely confuses the minds of those who believe they are smart enough to save themselves from hell and take themselves to heaven. It is truly extremely foolish to even consider the thought that God would give us the means to work out our own redemption. So, He just did it His way through the means of the preaching of cross. Therefore, no one can take the credit for bringing salvation except Jesus alone, who paid the ultimate price for our redemption.

D. To the Lord Sovereign, the preaching of the cross is a pleasing freedom. v. 21

Now, the next verse, verse 21 reveals to us a wonderful truth. That truth is that salvation doesn't come through man's wisdom, but, it pleased God to make it simple for us to get saved by just putting our active belief or trust in the finished product of the cross of Calvary. The word believe here in this text is the word *pisteuo*, and it is usually in the active voice when used. This means that in order to get saved, a person must take action and move toward Christ, and sincerely believe that Jesus Christ is Who He claims to be. And as I was told many years ago, *pistos* is usually in the active voice, thus there is no such thing as a passive faith. The true idea is that if we put our faith and trust in Christ, then we will move toward Him in complete surrender and dedication. It is never, never right to say that we are of the Christian faith because this is the passive voice. We see this statement a lot in obituaries where the person who died was not a dedicated believer. A passive person doesn't do anything, but just simply sits by while others do the action. This is completely foreign to belief and trust.

So, the so called learned scholar or wise person with the wisdom of this world cannot understand the purpose of the preaching of the cross, but instead, this worldly wise person will never understand how God saves people through the preaching unless this person gets saved himself. And, for God to provide this simple plan of salvation brings pleasure to the heart of God, and of course, it is because He was free to choose this method.

E. To the loud sanctimonious, the preaching of the cross is a pretentious failure.
vs. 22-23

In these two verses, 22-23, we discover that the Jews required a proof for whatever they were going to believe in. Their required proof was for supernatural signs and wonders. Of course, this sounded somewhat magical, but the fact was and still is, if people have to have signs and wonders to prove that God is Who He claims

to be, then there is no need for faith. Thus, the Jews didn't have enough faith to believe without proof, and the Gentiles sought after a special wisdom or understanding which they had to have in order to believe the truth of the Gospel. Therefore, the Gentiles were just as bad as the Jews requiring proof. So, they too didn't have enough faith to believe that Jesus was the Christ, and not some charlatan magician. Truthfully, both the Jews and the Gentiles believed that Paul's message of the cross was just a pretentious failure, and nothing of any consequence. But my, how wrong they were.

When Paul mentions the words stumbling block and foolishness, he is just exposing the hypocrisy of these people who laughed at the preaching of the cross, and he was revealing that they didn't have genuine salvation.

And, so it is today! Everywhere I go these days, I am seeing and hearing more professing Christians and professing preachers say that we no longer need preaching, but we need dialogue and discussion. And, the same contemporary hypocrites tell us that there is no such thing as absolute truth. Well my friends, this is same false teaching that came about during the days of the Enlightenment during the eighteenth century. These were the days when people believed that they were so intelligent that there was new truth everyday, and therefore, there was no absolute truth. Of course, this was a flat out lie, and it still is today. God knew what He was doing when He fulfilled all of His promises in and through His dear Son. And, when Jesus died on the cross, God the Father provided the only means for salvation, and this is the absolute truth.

F. To the loyal servant, the preaching of the cross is a preeminent force. vs. 24-25

In these two verses, Paul really tries to summarize what he had been saying. He just simply and emphatically states that to the loyal servant of God who has been genuinely saved, the preaching of the cross is a powerful preeminent force in the lives of those who accept this as absolute truth and genuinely get saved by the proclamation of the cross of Christ.

May I say once more, that the power of the Gospel message is truly in the preaching of the cross and Christ's completed act there when He died for our sins. To the lost world, His death on the cross, and our preaching of the cross looks totally foolish and worthless, but to those who have really been saved, it is the power of God which the Father demonstrates when this message is preached, and under deep conviction, people repent of their sins and come to Christ by belief in His finished work on Calvary. Therefore, we need to remember our God is so strong and mighty that when He does the smallest thing He possibly can do, this is much greater than the greatest thing any man might do. Please look at the following quote which I gleaned from an outdated commentary many years ago. I can't remember from which commentary I got it, but I rediscovered it in my notes.

"The most elementary things of God are inscrutable to man. The most minute example of the power of God is totally overwhelming to man." Amen! This is certainly a profound statement. We need to study it and believe it!

II. PAUL REVEALS THE REWARDS FOR THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.

vs. 26-31

In these last six verses of chapter one of First Corinthians, our beloved Paul shares with the Corinthian believers several wonderful rewards for the preaching of the cross. These rewards are truly outstanding simply because they go against everything that the elite Jews and philosophical Gentiles believed. These religious pretenders, some of which were more into idolatry than they were into trying to serve God, just believed that Paul's proclamation of the cross and the significance of it were just falsehoods and foolishness. They couldn't believe that if there was a true God in heaven, then surely just the preaching of the cross could not make it possible for them to go to heaven. So, they criticized the preaching of the cross, and they just would not believe that the simple message of the Gospel was adequate for salvation. Let's take a look at the wonderful rewards that Paul promised to those ordinary people who believed the truth of the cross, but also were willing to preach the truth about the cross, even if the skeptics didn't want to hear this message or believe it.

A. The preaching of the cross is rewarded with the calling of ordinary men. v. 26

Verse 26 is a great verse. Paul tells the Corinthian believers that God cherishes the thought of calling ordinary men to preach the message of the cross. By calling these ordinary men, then there is no way that anyone could get the glory for what they do, other than the Lord Jesus Himself. Paul says that God might call a few noble men, but not many. You see if God only called those men of nobility, then He would not get the glory because they might depend upon their learning their abilities, or their sophistication. And, when I think of the possibility of these noble people, I can't help but think about eloquent Apollos whom we talked about in our first study in this commentary. So, praise the Lord, He loves to call ordinary men to do extraordinary things for the Kingdom of God. And folks, this reminds all of us that because of God's limited call to the men and women of nobility, then there is hope for each of us. Why? Because most of us are just ordinary saved people that love Jesus because of what He has done for us.

B. The preaching of the cross is rewarded with the confounding of ordinary men. vs. 27-29

Friends, I love the King James Bible, and I only use this version of God's Word. But ever once in a while, I might read a verse in a more contemporary version if it seems to better explain what the KJV is saying. These three verses are three which I want to quote from the old Amplified Bible which has been out for many years. Please pay attention to these verses.

"No, for God selected—deliberately chose—what in the world is foolish to put the wise to shame, and what the world calls weak to put the strong to shame. And God also selected—deliberately chose--what in the world is lowborn and insignificant, and branded and treated with contempt, even the things that are nothing, that He might depose and bring to nothing the things

that are; So that no mortal man should have pretense for glorying and boasting in the presence of God" (I Corinthians 1:27-29). Did you get the truth of these three verses? I did, and I just want to shout, hallelujah! These verses tell us that God does in fact love to take that which is in the world that seems so foolish and that which seems to be weak and insignificant, and just do amazing things with it for His glory! Yes, I said for His glory, because when God takes nobodies and does extraordinary people and does remarkable things with them, then no person in the flesh has any reason to boast or be proud. You see, it is all about Jesus.

Only God the Father can take nothing and make something out of it, as it has been illustrated so vividly in the creation of the world. Man might invent, but only God creates something from nothing, and that's why He loves to take nobodies with nothing to offer the world and develop them into their full potential. When this happens, only Jesus will get the glory. But yet, what a thought this is. We are born into this world with sinful Adamic natures, and there is nothing good about us until we get saved and begin to allow Jesus to work in and through us. Then, once we accomplish that which He has planned for us, then we can look back and see the hand of God in all that has happened for, in, and through us. He must get the total praise and glory! Once more, Hallelujah!

C. The preaching of the cross is rewarded with the consecration of ordinary men.
v. 30

The word consecration is a very misunderstood word. Ordinarily, when people think or talk about the word, they think or talk of it as if they might be able to consecrate themselves to the Lord. But, the truth of the matter is that no individual is capable of consecrating himself or herself to the Lord. Consecration is an act of God on behalf of those who have fully surrendered their lives to the Lordship of Christ. It is a matter of God calling the individuals out of the world at the moment of salvation, then calling them to a life of separation from the world, and then clearly calling the saved and separated person into a life of sanctification and service for Jesus. Therefore, in this verse 30, Paul is talking about how God takes ordinary men and women and saves them, sanctifies them, separates them from the world, and then gives them wisdom and a righteous lifestyle in order to be influential and persuasive of others to come to Christ and follow their examples. Once again, it is not the noble or elite person that God usually calls and consecrates to the service of the Kingdom of God, but it is the ordinary person that God does extraordinary things with.

So, when a servant of God preaches the cross to those who are lost, then God rewards this act by saving, sanctifying, separating and then fully consecrating this ordinary person for His Kingdom work. And, may I say there is no greater reward that any child of God can enjoy more than seeing God use them to bring others into the Kingdom of God, and then completely develop them in order for them to reach their God-given potential.

D. It is rewarded with the confession of ordinary men. v. 31

When ordinary men do extraordinary things for God, then there is no other way it could have been except through the power of God. Thus, there is no room for anyone to ever take any glory for their accomplishments, except in and through the power and wisdom of God almighty; except of course, that some ordinary children of God are much more committed to Christ. Thus, they might be praised for their determination and persistence. But, even the strength to keep on laboring faithfully for Christ can only come from Jesus Himself. I can readily attest this after over 53 years of full-time service for the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one deserves glory for that which is done in the flesh, but it is quite alright to express gratitude to those who are very fruitful in preaching the cross and winning people to Jesus Christ. And, I sincerely believe that the most rewarded people that will ever receive a reward from Jesus Christ are those who have given their lives to winning lost souls in and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Truly, there is nothing so valuable anywhere on earth or in heaven as is the souls of saved men, women, boys and girls. Therefore, as I say so often, "we must keep the main thing the main thing, and that of course is the Great Commission."

Conclusion

Well folks, we have come to the end of our study in the first chapter of First Corinthians. Paul started out talking about the terrible preacher religion that had divided the church, and he ended up discussing the importance of the preaching of the cross. We need so desperately to learn some very practical lessons from this chapter.

The first lesson we need to learn is that no preacher or teacher should ever take precedence over the unity in the church. It is one thing to be right in doctrine, supposedly as maybe some of these people were. But, it is wrong to cause people to get hurt and begin to argue with one another when so much is at stake in trying to have a positive influence upon the lost world.

Secondly, we should learn from this chapter that it is only Jesus Christ that should receive our devoted loyalty, and this should be with humility, and not with arrogance about how super-spiritual we are.

Thirdly, we should give our time and talents to preaching the cross of Christ in order to present the only way of salvation. We should do this, even when others think we are foolish or ignorant to do so. Why? Because, it is only through the preaching of the cross that people can be saved. And further, we should make sure that we never allow the preaching of the cross to be taken from our pulpits or churches to accommodate political correctness, or even the culture in which we live. The Gospel message doesn't need to be contextualized in the culture to get the truth to the lost world. The only thing that is needed is for preachers to preach the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if people don't like it, then, so be it. The reason being that there is no other way for a person to go to heaven, except through the preaching of the cross. And, when the cross is preached courageously, there is no reason for gloating in the work of the flesh. Therefore, Jesus gets all the glory!

Chapter Four

"How We Can Understand The Mystery Of God"

Scripture: I Corinthians 2:1-16

Introduction

To most people in the world, to understand the mysteries of God seems absolutely impossible. People go on year after year trying to "figure out" God, always to no avail. But then, one day someone with the love of Jesus takes the time to share the Gospel message with these people, and then they get gloriously saved. When this happens, it is as if a bright light of understanding is turned on in the mind and heart of the newly saved person. The former mysteries of God begin to be uncovered by the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of this new believer, and it just seems that a divine miracle has taken place. Truthfully, this is exactly what has happened. The person who was before their salvation in spiritual darkness has now been resurrected anew spiritually, and God begins to illumine His Word and speak to the saved person's heart. The mystery or the mysteries of God no longer are mysteries, but now it is like walking into a darkened room and turning the light on. This is exactly what God does in the life of the new believer.

In chapter two of First Corinthians, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that this is exactly what happens. God does indeed illuminate the truth of His word for those who get saved, but before salvation, the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit. So today, let's take a careful look at this great chapter and see what God is trying to reveal to us about the Mystery of God.

I. NOTICE THE MYSTERY OF PAUL'S MESSAGE. vs. 1-8

I have already said much about how mysterious the Gospel message is until a person really gets saved, and then, the Holy Spirit turns the light on. Well, just remember that in our text, Paul was writing this letter to the church in Corinth, a city given to much paganism and the worship of idols. These Grecian people were given to philosophical and rationalistic thinking when it came to the existence of God, or gods as many of them thought. I am sure that you remember the encounter that Paul had at Mars Hill in Athens described for us in Acts 17. The entire city, including the Acropolis on top of Mars Hill, was given totally to seeking the gods. And, it was here that Paul declared that the statue the people had inscribed to the unknown god was the God he was telling them about. Thus, with this Grecian culture and rampant paganism, it was always the attempt of the people to try to reason out God. But truthfully, until a person gets saved, God is still a mystery. So, Paul had delivered the simply message of the preaching of the cross when he planted the church in Corinth, and now once again when he writes this first epistle to the church in Corinth, he simply declared the message of the preaching of the cross. Let's look at these verses and see if we can have our minds illumined by the Holy Spirit to discover what the mystery of God really is.

A. Paul's message said that it is a mystery because of the unusual proclamation. v. 1

In verse one of this chapter, Paul just simply starts out by telling the people that when he came to Corinth to plant the church there, he didn't come with man's wisdom or with the excellency of man's speech, but he just came with the declaration of the testimony of what God had done in his life, and also, what God wanted to do in their lives as well. Once more, the simplicity of Paul's message was what boggled the minds of these so-called educated people who were seeking to reason out the existence of God. So, just let me say that Paul's proclamation was just the presentation of the Gospel of Christ made possible by Jesus' death on the cross.

B. Paul's message said that it is a mystery because of its unique Person. v. 2

I love the confident stand that Paul declares to the Corinthians in verse two. He tells these people that when he came to Corinth to establish the church, he didn't come for any other purpose but to give them the Gospel message concerning the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Paul's message was simple and plain. It was the message to present the unique Person of Jesus Christ Who died on the cross for our sins. And may I say that this is the same message we should be presenting today. For, the only way for people to ever understand the mystery of God is through the Lord Jesus Christ. I just wished that every modern-day believer would become just like Paul, obsessed with telling the lost world about Him.

C. Paul's message said that it is a mystery because of its unbelievable problem. v. 3

In verse three, Paul goes on to tell the Corinthian Christians that there was no way that his presentation of the Gospel in Corinth could have been misinterpreted. Why? Because he didn't come there with a strong personality and dynamic presentation. He readily admits that when he came to Corinth, he was weak and very much afraid, to the point that he was trembling. So, Paul was trying to get the people to remember that he didn't walk into the city of Corinth with the assertive spirit of a salesman, but he came within himself as weak and so fearful that he was probably intimidated by this large city of pagans.

And when I contemplate what Paul is saying here, it reminds me so much of the first time I ever went into the maximum security prison in Florida to share the Gospel with men like Ted Bundy, David Washington, Ernie Dalbert, and many other cold-blooded killers. Truthfully, I was very weak, very scared, and yes, so afraid that I almost backed out at the last minute. Little did I know that this first entrance into these scary prisons would be the beginning of over 40 years of prison ministry.

So, there is a great lesson for us here. When God opens a door for the proclamation of the Gospel in strange cities, difficult circumstances, or scary places outside of our comfort zones, as we will see in the next verse, we can't turn back, but we must go forward in the power of God.

D. Paul's message said it is a mystery because of its unordinary power. vs. 4-5

In our next two verses, Paul continues to give the Corinthian believers a tremendous explanation of how and why he came to Corinth to begin with. He tells them that he didn't come to them with enticing or seductive words trying to impress or sell them something, but just simply to try to share the mystery of God's saving grace with them in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. Paul said that the why of his coming to Corinth was so that they could have true and genuine faith in the person of Jesus Christ and in the message of His death on the cross. In other words, Paul just wanted the people to get the simple message of Christ, and not the complicated false teaching of hypocritical false teachers.

So folks, what Paul was saying is this: when we proclaim the Gospel to the lost world, we must do so with the right motive and with the right purpose. We are to never take the message of salvation to any people any where in the entire world from the wrong motive, such as trying to show our eloquent abilities. And, we are never to take the Gospel to the lost world with the wrong purpose, like trying to win friends and get money. These wrong motives and purposes always negate the Gospel message, and we can be sure that God will ultimately expose our wrong motives and purposes to the entire world. You can count on this!

E. Paul's message said it is a mystery because of its unexplained purpose. vs. 6-8

I will begin this thought by saying emphatically that I am not a Calvinist in any form or fashion; and I want to be explicit about this. I am telling you this because of the horrible damage that is being done to the Kingdom of God all over the world because of the false doctrine of John Calvin, and the Catholic monk, Augustine. Irreparable damage in the modern churches is being done every where because of Calvinism. And, multitudes of lost sinners are dying and going to hell because these Calvinists are not going after souls because they don't believe every body can be saved.

However, I do believe strongly in the Sovereignty of God when it comes to how God planned our lives to serve Him even before the foundation of the world. In other words, He had a tremendous plan for each of us when we would ultimately and finally come to Him in salvation. Of course, the choice was and is ours for whether we accept Him by faith and get saved, or whether we reject Him and die lost having missed His sovereign plan for our lives is entirely up to us. God loved us enough to give us the choice in this matter. He didn't create robots so that He could just sit up in heaven and mash the remote buttons to make us do what He wanted us to do. This is what the Calvinists are basically still teaching.

But here in verses six through eight, Paul tells the believers in Corinth that God did have a plan for their lives from before the creation of the world, but until they would get saved, this plan would be a complete mystery because the light of spiritual knowledge is not turned on until the day of salvation. And whether a person will ever discover this plan for his or her life is completely dependent upon whether one accepts Jesus Christ as personal Savior, because it is then that the light comes on and God shows His plan for that person's life.

Paul is telling the Corinthian believers in these few verses that if they are "perfect" or mature, as the word means, they will understand what he is talking

about. But, if they are not spiritually mature, the plan of God for their lives will still be a mystery. Folks, this truth is truly heavy for even those who are saved. Why? Because, if Jesus even does turn the light on for us at the moment of our salvation, we will still not discern His perfect will for our lives until we grow up and seek earnestly to discover that will.

Paul goes on to explain that if the religious people in Jerusalem had been enlightened to the truth of why Jesus had come and had to die, they would probably never have crucified Him. And, this just simply means that if those Jews and Romans would have known that their carrying out the death of Christ on the cross would open the world up to the Gospel of Christ, for sure, they would have never crucified Him because they would not have wanted to fulfill the plan of God for man's redemption because they were still in the darkness of religious deception; both Jewish and the Roman Gentile philosophy. If they would have known the truth of why Jesus was dying, they would have done everything in their power to not put Jesus to death. But yet, because of their spiritual darkness, they thought they were solving a major problem by putting Jesus to death. But of course, we know that Jesus voluntarily gave up His life. It was not taken from Him!

So my friends, the lesson for us if we are truly saved is to find God's perfect will for our lives, and then develop our lives in His will so that we can reach our potential for Him. I hope you will join me in seeking His best for your life. But just remember, we will never come to discern His perfect will for us unless we are mature in our faith, and truly seeking to find His will. It is our responsibility to discover His will, and then to develop the gifts and talents He has given to us to carry out His will.

II. NOTICE THE MANIFESTATION OF PAUL'S MESSAGE. vs. 9-16

In our first point in this chapter, we talked about the mystery of Paul's message. Of course, this was talking about how people who are not truly saved cannot possibly understand the simplicity of the Gospel message of the cross and the price that Jesus paid for our redemption. We learned that an understanding of the simplicity of the Gospel is only possible by the illumination of the Holy Spirit who comes to live on the inside of us the day we get saved. Now, I would like for us to take an in depth look at the manifestation of truth found in this second part of Paul's message here in chapter two. Let's look closely at what God has in store for us.

A. We must see the rich Source of this manifestation. v. 9

In this verse, Paul talks once more about the inability of the natural man, or the one unsaved, and how he or she cannot truly understand all that God has in store for His children once they get born again. Because God is not only the Source of every spiritual blessing available to man, it is He also who alone can reveal or manifest the things that God has prepared and reserved for them that love Him. And, the tremendous inference in this verse nine is that with our natural understanding, it is impossible for us to grasp all the reserved blessings for those who are truly

committed and sold out to Jesus. In fact, the prepared and reserved blessings are even beyond our imagination to even contemplate what God has in store. Therefore, understanding these blessings and claiming them by faith requires a tremendous trust in God, and in His resources which He has prepared to give us. And, we do need to see here that the supply of God's blessings and resources never run out. This is a promise to every faithfully committed child of God. So, we need to claim what God has in store for us.

B. We must see the revealing Spirit of this manifestation. vs. 10-13.

In these next four verses, we discover some wonderful truth. Because of God's infinite love for His children, He has chosen to reserve for us some wonderful blessings that can't even be understood with any of the attributes of a human being. But, once a person gets truly saved, God's Holy Spirit does come to live in the new believer, and one of his God commanded responsibilities is to reveal the treasure chest of blessings that God has stored up for the child of God. Thus, it is only after we get saved and truly committed to Jesus that we can even fathom the depths of God's storehouse for His children. And, because the Holy Spirit alone understands the deep things of God, it is He only that can reveal or manifest the blessed things that God has in store for us.

And, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to take us a little deeper and show us that all that Jesus has reserved for us is not dependent upon conditional work that we do for Him, but it is a free gift to every committed child of God. And, because these things are freely given, we should have an even greater appreciation to God for these gifts. We should show our appreciation to Him by taking the message of the cross and salvation to others who need Jesus so desperately.

C. We must see the revealed secret of this manifestation. v. 14

In verse 14, Paul reconfirms what he has already stated. The natural or unsaved person cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, because to the unsaved person, these things are truly foolish. But, because the Holy Spirit lives within the child of God, He can and will reveal the spiritual blessings reserved for the believer. This is what Paul candidly tells the Corinthians, and God is telling it to us today.

D. We must see the rewarded saint of this manifestation. vs. 15-16

Now, we come to the last two verses in this chapter. Verse 15 tells us that the saved person can make the proper judgment about what is truly spiritual, and what is not because He has the Holy Spirit living within him. But, because the natural man doesn't have the indwelling Holy Spirit, he doesn't even know what spiritual things really are. So, he cannot make an adequate judgment about anything spiritual, because he has no spiritual discernment. This is why the simple message of the preaching of the cross seems so foolish to him. Therefore, we must always be careful

that we don't allow lost men and women to make final decisions about what is truly spiritual and of God, simply because they are not equipped to do so.

Thus, this is the reason we have so many professing leaders in our churches, and yes, especially in our government, who just simply don't know the difference between right and wrong. Spiritual matters can't even be recognized by non-spiritual people, and this is the reason that we see religious pretenders making religious decisions rather than making spiritual decisions. And, I would say that this is the main reason we see many Protestants equating Roman Catholicism on the same level as evangelical Christianity. But, the truth is that Roman Catholicism is nothing more than a false religion and an enormous part of the last days counterfeit church disguised in pretentious spiritual garb. We must be careful because these people are like the phonies Paul dealt with in Corinth who were pretending to be super-spiritual because of the different preachers they followed.

So, if we have truthfully the 1.2 billion Catholics in the world that most people say we do, then, is it any wonder that they are religiously brainwashing so many of our children and youth in to believing that they are just like any other evangelical, or even much better as some teach.

Therefore, my dear friends, because of what Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, we have been given a distinct manifestation of what is in store for genuinely saved children of God, but also, how the non-spiritual world cannot understand or discern the truth of God revealed only by the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Well, we bring this study of this short chapter to an end. But hopefully, God has shown us clearly the difference between a genuinely saved person filled with the Holy Spirit, and one that is still living under the control of the natural man with no ability to even discern right and wrong; let alone the many spiritual blessings God has reserved for His children.

Therefore, because of the truth shown to us by the Holy Spirit in this text through our beloved Apostle Paul, we need to claim by faith the free gifts of God, and then take the Gospel message to the lost world so that they might get saved and get in on God spiritual blessings for His spiritual children too. It is one thing for us to know what God has to offer, but it is quite another to claim these promises of God for our lives. Knowing about these blessings without claiming them, is like seeing in a catalogue the many things a retailer has to sale, but never really purchasing anything the company has to offer. God forbid that we only peruse the catalogue, but never send in the order by faith and trust in Him.

Chapter Five

"God Giveth The Increase"

Scripture: I Corinthians 3:1-11

Introduction

As we begin to study chapter three of First Corinthians, we suddenly see that Paul actually reverts back to what he discussed in the first chapter dealing with the divisions in the church at Corinth. Chapter two of the text which we just covered is almost like a parenthesis between chapters one and three revealing why people misinterpret the truth of the Gospel, and fail to see the spiritual significance of the preaching of the cross. Paul says that this happens because these who call the preaching of the cross foolishness do so because they are probably in fact, not even saved. Thus, they only have the understanding of the old nature of the flesh. But, here in chapter three, Paul includes something else that is very important to understanding the will of God. As he mentioned in chapter two, it is very possible for truly saved people to be so immature that they still allow carnality to dominate their lives so much that they just can't seem to understand that spiritual matters are only understood by spiritual people.

Let me mention to you that in the Greek, the word carnal is the word, "sarkikos" and it means fleshly or controlled by the nature of the flesh. It also has the indication of being controlled by the animal-like passions of the flesh. So, to really see what Paul is referring to, we need to see that it is possible for a person to really be saved, but then, because of immaturity and the lack of real growth, this saved individual can live his or her life in such a way that they just let the fleshly desires control them. When this happens, then it is truly impossible to understand spiritual things, because spiritual things can only be understood through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. So, if a believer is carnal or fleshly, then he or she is not controlled by the Holy Spirit, although He is living within that person's life.

As we move forward with the study of our text here in chapter three, it is very wise for us to understand that all the division in the Corinthian Church was caused by unsaved religious people, and by saved people who were immature and living in carnality. Therefore, Paul starts out this wonderful chapter by telling the people that it doesn't matter who thinks he is the most important preacher or teacher, if anything good is to come out of the effort, then it will be God that gives the increase. Man must demonstrate the effort, but it is only God that can produce eternal consequences through the frail efforts of a man or woman.

So now, let's take a verse-by-verse study through chapter three and glean the difference between a fleshly carnal Christian and a spiritually creative believer. Let's learn all that we can so that we can practically apply this truth to our lives and ministries.

I. NOTICE THE TRUTH OF A CARNAL CHRISTIAN. vs. 1-5

The statement about being a carnal Christian is in itself paradoxical and

disconcerting. To say that a person has gotten truly saved, and then go back to living in carnality is just hard to understand. But my friends, after dealing with church members for over 53 years, I can readily attest the fact that there are multitudes of professing Christians who swear that they are genuinely saved, but yet, they have never grown to the point to where they think and behave spiritually. Our churches are filled with these kind of people, and every true pastor knows the heartache of having to deal with these self-centered, ego-centric, and arrogant people who swear that they are saved, but they never seem to show any spirituality. This is truly a sad thought!

A. A carnal Christian is undeveloped. v. 1

In this very first verse, Paul tells why that carnal people can in no way understand spiritual things. The reason is that these people who may have gotten genuinely saved have never grown up in the Lord. They not only think like babies, but they also act like babies. And, within context of these first few chapters of this book, Paul is saying that the people who were causing division in the Corinthian Church were acting like babies.

And, I will tell you that through my many years of ministry, this has been probably one of the most horrible problems I have ever faced. There are so many immature and baby-like people in the churches that they never do any thing but whine and cry about everything you try to do to advance the Kingdom of God, and also, in trying to win people to Christ. These babies sleep through most of the worship services and miss what God is trying to give them, and then, just as soon as the services are over, they cry and demand the center of attention because they don't like the way things are going. May I tell you that I am sick and tired of these people who never grow up. These people just never develop into mature saints, because if they did, they would lose the center of attention.

B. A carnal Christian is undernourished. v. 2

In verse two of this chapter, Paul goes on to indict the childish behavior of the immature believers in Corinth. Paul tells them that he had given them milk when they were just getting started, and even then, they could not digest the milk of the Word. Then he says, by now you believers should be strong enough to eat the meat of the Word, but you are still having to be given milk because you are so childish and immature. The accusation that he made against them was just simply that they were not growing, and the implication is that if they can't reach the point to eat the meat of the Word, they never would mature in the Lord. These Corinthian believers were suffering from undernourishment by their own choice and because of their obvious stubborn wills.

I would like to please say right here that this is one of the main problems we are facing in our churches today. We have extremely shallow preachers preaching shallow sermons in the pulpit because the people are so immature that they can't take the meat of the Word. Thus, we will never get our people in the pews spiritually mature, until we preachers take the time to exegete the deep things of the book and

share them with our people so that our people can grow up. And, I will interject right here that this is the problem that we now have in Washington, DC, in our ruling government. We have childish and immature people trying to run our government, and in the process, we have childish behavior everywhere. If you don't believe this, just think back to the questioning and interrogation of Supreme Court Justice nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, and the childish behavior of so many of those questioning him. Childish behavior begets more childish behavior.

C. A carnal Christian is unsatisfied. v. 3a

In the first part of this verse, Paul says the following, **"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying,....."** Envying and lust for more is truly a characteristic of children when they want every need and want met without question. If they don't get what they desire, they often pitch a fit. This is what was happening in the church at Corinth, and this is why the people were divided. Once again, I will say that the problem was nothing but selfishness and the unsatisfaction with what they had. Immature childish people are never satisfied with anything you do for them. Enough is never enough!

D. A carnal Christian is unsociable. v. 3b

If people only have their minds on themselves, it only stands to reason that they will never be satisfied with what they have or get, and they will always demonstrate a fit or some foolish act in order to get more of what they want. This is so sad, but it is still happening in our churches today. People so often don't go to church to worship, but they go to see what they can get out of the church for themselves and their families. And, if they don't believe they can get what they want from one church, they will move on to another church and shop like they pick over a dinner buffet at some restaurant. If you can't seem to get along with others, it is probably just because you are so struck on yourself that no one you meet will ever meet your need. This is one reason so many marriages that start well don't end well.

E. A carnal Christian is also unloving. v. 3c

As we continue on with verse three, I want to mention that there is a third thing I want to mention about this verse. The thought that a carnal Christian is unloving is implied in this verse, rather than clearly stating it. You see folks, if a person is full of anger and strife, that person assuredly doesn't have love in his or her heart. Carnal believers rarely ever show any love or compassion for anyone other than themselves. And may I say, that this is why we have so little ministry going on in most of our churches today because of no real love. And if it is by carnal believers, then it is not from the heart, but it is usually done out of obligation. May I ask, "do you love the people in your church family, or is all of your ministry done out of a callused heart filled with obligation?" If it is the latter, then you need to experience a revival or renewal with your precious Lord and Savior.

F. A carnal Christian is uncivilized. v. 3d

Strife and envying are the characteristics of unloving uncivilized people. But, if you are truly a spiritual believer, then there will be civilized behavior and demonstrations of love coming from a heart of love.

Right now in America, we have a civilization that is acting more uncivilized than I can ever remember since way back there in the 1960s. And, unless there is a spiritual revival, the uncivil things that are happening will get worse and worse. And you can believe me when I say that I know much about uncivilized behavior because I have done ministry in prisons around the world for over forty years. And truthfully, I have seen more civilized behavior in prisons than on the streets recently here in America. Of course, I believe that social media has contributed very much to this hatred and vindictiveness that is everywhere raging in our country today. May I ask you, "are you an uncivilized professing Christian?"

G. A carnal Christian is unprincipled. vs. 3d-4.

In the very last part of verse three and also in verse four, we discover another great truth implied in these verses. This truth is that carnal Christians usually live their lives in a very unprincipled or non-structured way. These people may know that they are truly saved, but they are just so filled with the world that they can't discern or practice Biblical principles in their lives. I point this out because Paul tells the Corinthians that when they have chosen to divide themselves from each other and follow different leaders rather than promote unity in the body, then they are truly living in a fleshly or carnal way. I would add that this is a sensual way whereby they are trying to fulfill their selfish lusts for prominence and attention. Unprincipled people will do almost anything in order to draw attention to themselves and their tribe, party, or group. But, what we need are some dedicated mature Christians who learn to discern and live by Biblical principles in order to bring glory to God and pleasure to His heart. Carnal believers demonstrate quite the opposite lifestyles.

II. NOTICE THE TOIL OF A CREATIVE CHRISTIAN. vs. 5-11

Well, we have just covered the characteristics of carnal Christians. So now, let's take a good look at the characteristics of creative Christians. What Paul is doing in this letter to the Corinthian believers is that he is trying to show them the difference in a carnal fleshly immature believer and a growing maturing spiritual believer. These words should be so beneficial to each of us if we are truly saved and in the family of God. And, these precious truths should be an inspiration for us to become more and more like Jesus, and to really grow up in the faith. So, let's take a look at these words from God through Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles.

A. A creative Christian must realize the position of the preacher. v. 5

To the child of God, the preacher should be a very respected and significant position. Why? Because more than likely the message of salvation has been given through this preacher of God's Word. Therefore, he should be respected, obeyed when he preaches, and there should be a tremendous love for this servant of God.

Now, I made this last statement because in verse five, Paul tells the believers that he and other preachers are not to be worshipped or put on a pedestal. In fact, the true man of God is to be a servant of Christ and of men as well. Paul indeed does tell the believers in the Corinthian Church that it was through him that the Corinthians received the Gospel message, because as God's servant, Paul brought them the message of salvation. And, Paul tells the people that all people who are really saved have been recipients of another servant of God's message and ministry. Therefore, the preacher as a servant is to be respected and honored as God's servant, but they are not to be idolized or worshipped.

Just to attest the importance of servanthood, let me draw your attention to a passage of Scripture in the Book of Matthew. **"And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." (Matthew 20:27).** Presently, I am reading an old book that was written by Dr. Charles Swindoll many years ago. This book is entitled, "Improving Your Serve," and it truly admonishes the importance of all of us being true servants of God. Why? Because there is no higher calling!

B. A creative Christian must realize the process of productivity. v. 6

Now my friends, we come to the central theme of this passage of Scripture. Because of their preacher religion in the church of Corinth, obviously they had forgotten one primary thing. That was that regardless of what preacher does the preaching or the sharing of the Gospel, the process of productivity or fruitfulness comes only from God. You see, it is only God that gives the increase.

Paul tells the Corinthians that he might do the planting, and Apollos do the watering of the crops, but God alone brings the increase and harvest. Yet, when I think about this truth, I can't help but think about so many modern-day churches that have convinced themselves that they have to use lost rock bands and gimmicks to draw people in. But truthfully, all that is needed is the proclamation of the Gospel message with genuine love in the power of the Holy Spirit, and yes, God will give the increase. We need just to be submitted servants or vessels of use by God in order to reap the harvest. Just like planting crops in the ground here on earth, it doesn't matter who puts the seed in the ground and provides the fertilizer and water, if God doesn't bless the crop, it will not reproduce and multiply. Creative Christians must understand this process clearly.

C. A creative Christian must realize the place of the planter. vs. 7-8

Verses seven and eight go on to explain with a little more detail what I told you back in verse 6. Paul tells the Corinthians that it doesn't matter who the planter is, or who pours on the water, neither of these is anything without the increase given by God alone. Therefore, no man or woman can ever take credit for the harvest God gives, but it is quite alright for others to express their gratitude to the

workers who have shown their dedication by planting and watering the plants. We give gratitude to the workers, and glory to the Lord who provides the harvest.

Verse eight further expands the thought of the insignificance of those who do the planting and watering. In this verse Paul tells the believers that there are not big and little people in the fields of labor. In fact, he says that they are equal, and thus, there was no reason to show favor to any of the leaders over another. But, there is a promise here that if each servant of God is faithful, he or she will be rewarded according to his or her faithfulness. And, there is no way that God will ever forget the faithfulness of each planter and each person who waters. The rewards will be given at the Judgment Seat of Christ out in the future, and Paul goes on to discuss this Judgment Seat in the next part of Chapter three.

So, my dear friends, every person's work is important if that person is faithful and dedicated to the fields of service, but the harvest can only come when God gives the increase. But, we must never forget that God never forgets those who He will need to reward out in the future. Therefore, if you ever get the idea that you are laboring in the fields and no one is watching, just remember that Jesus is!

D. A creative Christian must realize the program of the Planner. vs. 9-10

In these two verses Paul is explicit in telling the Corinthians that every person's efforts are extremely important, and that all of us are laborers together in the fields of service for our Lord. Then, Paul reiterates the importance of the farmers and also uses the analogy of a building to indicate how significant we are in the plan of God. You see folks, God is the Planner and we are to be His servants to help farm the fields and build the Kingdom of God. There are not little people and then other big people. We are truly co-laborers together with Christ. In other words, Jesus is the Captain of the team, and we are on the team. Therefore, we cannot go wrong as long as we labor in obedience to the Captain.

Also, Paul goes one step further in verse 10 and tells the people that it is only by the grace of God that any of us can be in the family of God, and also, on the farm team or building committee of our Lord. So, Paul declares himself as the master builder which laid the proper foundation for the church in Corinth, and then, every person that follows Paul to help build the house will also be rewarded accordingly. And, we need to remember that we are not going to be measured by other people on the team, but we will be measured by the potential God gave us, and how we fulfilled that potential. The sad thing is that down through my many years of ministry, I have seen very few that ever reached their potential. I surely hope you do as one of God's choice servants.

E. A creative Christian must realize the pillar of the product. v. 11

Now in verse eleven, Paul reminds the believers of a very significant truth. That truth is that Jesus Christ must be the foundation upon which we build His house, or the building will not stand. And, this is rather unique because Paul wanted all of the Christians to remember that unless Jesus was the foundation of the building, nothing of eternal value would ever be accomplished. We need to

remember this when we think of our churches. Churches that are built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and carried out by His plan for the Church, will be successful and prosperous. But, churches built on anything less will never succeed or be effective.

Conclusion

It is very simple for us to understand, so we must remember what Paul has said in the first eleven verses of chapter three. Paul told the believers in Corinth that there are no big people and little people in the Kingdom of God. All are the same with different gifts, but each one is very important to the success of the Kingdom. But, unless we realize this, we will be inclined to put some people on a pedestal, while others will not mean very much. But, the Lord says that He will never forget the faithfulness of any of His children, and that He will reward them accordingly at the Judgment Seat of Christ. So, we need to progress forward in our ministry as servants of God in order to help complete the project of building the Kingdom, and we need to remember that God will never forget what we have done if we do it for the right reasons with the right motives. We need to always remember that ours is a team effort with Jesus as the Captain.

So folks, do you understand the difference between the carnal Christian and the creative Christian? If so, you might just want to stop and make an examination to see what kind of believer you are. If you are controlled by the flesh and worldly desires, then you are carnal, and will never produce much fruit as a child of God. But, if you are a creative believer, pleasing Jesus will be your main goal, and you will live just to be a true laborer or servant of God. Therefore, please remember that if you are a contributing creative believer, you will help harvest a great crop as a farmer, and you will help build a great building as a builder. But, just remember, you must be creative, and in order to do this, you can't live in the sinfulness of this world. Now, just notice this next quote. **"A lack of interest in the Word of God, and the absence of spiritual growth are the first indications of carnality."** I hope you are not carnal!

Chapter Six

"The Christian's Promised Inspection"

Scripture: I Corinthians 3:12-23

Introduction

As we continue on in our study of the third chapter of the Book of First Corinthians, I must tell you that these next twelve verses are probably some of the most important in all the Bible for the child of God. I say this because these verses describe the future Judgment Seat of Christ that is coming for every child of God. It will be at this Judgment Seat where each of us will indeed be held accountable for the kind of servants we have been down here on earth as we serve the Lord. This inspection by Jesus our Lord will be extremely revealing, and nothing will be left unexposed. Everything that we have ever done in this body will be brought to light by the radiance and fire of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important that we know that this Judgment Seat is not to determine whether we are going to heaven or hell. That was settled the day we either got saved, or we rejected the privilege to chose Christ as our Savior. This judgment will have nothing to do with whether we go to heaven or hell, but it will only be for the believers who have surely been saved. It will be an inspection of the fruitfulness of our works, and we will either be rewarded for our faithful service, or our works will be burned up by the fire of Christ's radiance, and we will only get into heaven because of the grace of God, but our hands will be empty and our rewards will be lost. This is not going to be a joyful time, unless we can stand there unashamed before our King. And, as we are admonished in Second John, we need to make sure that we receive a full reward. Please pay attention to the following verse. **"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. (II John, verse 8)"**

Folks do you get the seriousness of this verse. This verse is telling us through the old Apostle John, that if we are not completely faithful to the end, we might lose what we have already earned. I believe this is referring to the fact that if our labors have been for the wrong reasons or from the wrong motives, then our works will be hay, wood, and stubble, and yes, they will be burned up. And, in this verse from 2 John, it just seems that these full rewards are conditional based upon us staying faithful to the very end. So, may I challenge each of you my readers to really pay attention to these next verses to see the seriousness of the coming Judgment Seat of Christ. It is my prayer that not one of you who are reading this Bible commentary will miss out on the best rewards that our Lord can give you. Therefore, let's give it our best effort as we dig deeper into this wonderful text, and let's keep our eyes and hearts open to what God wants to teach us.

I. PLEASE NOTICE THE CONTENT OF THIS COMING INSPECTION. vs. 12-13

A. This is going to be a status inspection. v. 12

In verse twelve, Paul continues the thought of building upon the right foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is extremely important that we have Jesus Christ as our foundation, but it is also very important what kind of works we manifest now here on earth in view of the future manifestation when our every work and deed will be manifested. The question is, "will we have works that are enduring and last for eternity, or will we have works that are temporary and be burned up at the Bema Seat?" Maybe, all of us should stop right here and reflect on what kind of works we presently have, and if so, which kind of works will be rewarded when we stand before Jesus.

The status of our works will reveal whether they can endure the fire of Christ's radiance because they are gold, silver, or precious stones. Or, will our works be made of hay, wood, stubble, which is very flammable and easy to be destroyed. I must tell you that I surely don't know all the criteria for this judgment, but I am sure that the substance or status of the inspection will have to do with why we have done what we have done, what kind of motives we have had for our service, and whether our works have been of a temporary nature, or will they have been of an eternal nature. I must tell you that I sincerely believe a lot of Christians are going to be extremely embarrassed and ashamed when they ultimately see just how they have wasted their efforts on doing possibly some good things, but not the best things. The Judgment Seat of Christ is truly going to be a serious occasion as we will see more about shortly.

B. This is going to be a singular inspection. v. 13a

The second point that Paul makes in this series of verses is found in the first part of verse 13. He begins this verse by saying, **"Every man's work shall be made manifest..."** This phrase tells us that the inspection, which is ahead of us, is a singular inspection. This singular inspection means that the inspection will be for every individual believer. It is not going to be an inspection for a group of believers, or for a composite number of people standing before Jesus, but it is going to be that every believer will stand before Jesus and give an account for everything he has done in his body and service since the day of his salvation. No one will be left out, and no one will be looked over. So, it is going to be an inspection and expose for every born again child of God.

C. This is going to be a solemn inspection. v. 13b

The word manifest in this verse is just telling us that the light of Christ's radiance will be turned on extremely bright, and nothing will be missed in the life and service of a child of God. The results will produce no arguments from these individuals, because the days of making excuses will be over. All of the excuses we have heard down through the years of our ministries will not be allowed at the Bema Seat of Christ, and truthfully, when the truth comes out, the folks who have made these excuses for years and years are truly going to be embarrassed and ashamed. And personally, I believe that those who have received so many excuses from others not wanting to get involved will be shown the insincerity of these who

could have done great things for God, but instead, they opted out of making the Kingdom work the main thing in their lives. What a day of solemnity that is going to be!

D. This is going to be a showing inspection. v. 13c

Well, the next point in this verse is that when every child of God stands before Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ, everything is going to be revealed in each person's life. There will be no hidden works or motives for these improper works once a person stand before Jesus. Our omniscient Savior already knows everything about us, including the very thoughts that we have had about Him and His Kingdom work. Therefore, those whom we have tried to hide our lack of sincerity and incomplete faithfulness from, down through the years, are going to be shown these weaknesses in our lives. And yes, I believe, if we have unconfessed sins in our lives as believers, we will be held accountable for these also.

Of course, I know that a lot of people don't believe we will be confronted about our unconfessed sins, but it makes no sense to me that when we get saved we have to put our faith in Christ and repent of our sinfulness in order to be saved. Then, why would any sins as a believer not have to be confessed to Jesus if they are to be forgiven? This would just be a double standard, one for the lost person coming to Christ, and another for the saved person who needs to clean up his or her life every day. Yes, we only get saved one time, but there has to be a daily cleansing of our sins through our confession. We can only appropriate forgiveness when we confess our individual sins and ask Christ to forgive those sins. I tremble to think about how so many of us will be exposed as half-hearted, half-committed and insincere believers when we stand before our Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat. We better learn from this text, and get right with God.

E. This is going to be a searing inspection. v. 13d

Once more I want to say that I don't understand the criteria for this serious inspection that is before us, but we can learn from this verse thirteen that when we stand before the King of kings and the Lord of lords, every man's works shall be tried by the searing fire of our God. Now, there are many ideas and arguments about what this searing fire is going to be, or from where it will come. Well, I am convinced by Revelation 1:14, that this fire is going to be the searing eyes of flaming fire of our Lord Jesus as is described by John in this verse in Revelation. Just notice the following words, **"His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire."** (Rev. 1:14) So my friends, when we stand before our King Jesus, His eyes will burn as a flame of fire, and there is no doubt that this fire will reveal all of the sins, the inconsistencies in our personalities, and it will purify everything about us. The reason this has to be is because He is trying to get us ready for the marriage supper of the lamb, and we will have to be pure before this marriage takes place. I surely don't understand everything about this coming event, but I truly believe it is going to happen after the rapture of the church; probably in the heavens while the seven years of tribulation is going on

down here on earth. It is truly going to be a scary time for every child of God, but especially for those who have never taken their commitment to Christ most seriously.

II. PLEASE NOTICE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS INSPECTION. vs. 14-15

We have already talked about the seriousness of the coming Judgment Seat of Christ inspection. It is truly going to be a seriousness moment for every child of God, because either we will be rewarded for our faithfulness, or we will suffer much loss because of our unfaithfulness. My question for all of us is, "will we be blessed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, or will we suffer great loss?" It is my prayer that we will receive great rewards and hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of our Lord." Now, let's look at these two consequences we will discover at the Bema Seat.

A. There will be the consequence of personal rewards. v. 14

Now, some of you might be saying, "why should we even care about the possible rewards when we leave this world?" The only thing that will matter is that we make it to heaven. If this happens to be your simplified answer when asked about rewards, then there are some things you just don't know or haven't considered.

When we get to heaven, we are not just going to be up there all the time bowing before Jesus and just doing nothing but worship. In fact, the Bible tells us that our faithfulness down here on earth right now is preparing us for a greater work for the Lord Jesus during the millennium, and yes, I believe when we arrive on the newly renovated and purified earth, we too will have positions of authority and responsibility. Please notice the following words from the Book of Revelation. **"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. 20:6).** If we are going to be reigning with Christ, then this means we will have authoritative responsibilities. Therefore, without a doubt, we will be held accountable by our Lord Jesus, even in this period of His millennial reign.

So my friends, if we are going to receive the rewards of positions in the millennium, then we must be faithful down here on earth right now. Yes, there is far more to being saved, than just going to heaven. We must be faithful to the very end in order to receive a full reward. Are you living in such a way as to be assured of great rewards at that day of inspection? I surely do hope so, but if you are not, then why don't you start a new today. You can't change your failures in the past, but you can start from where you are, and then finish the race well all the way to the end.

B. There will be the consequence of personal regrets. v. 15

Verse 15 is a very unusual verse in the Bible. It is a reminder to every born again child of God that there is a day of inspection coming when we are going to give

an account for everything we have done with our lives since the day we were saved. And, as I have already stated, God is truly keeping a record of how we have lived as believers, and also how faithful we have been in following His will for our lives. So, when that day of judgment comes, our works will be exposed as to whether they have been genuine and complete, or whether we have tried to serve Christ half-heartedly. There will be no one that will be excused from the Bema Seat judgment.

The truth will be that if our works have been of hay, wood, and stubble, these works will be tried by the fire of God's inspection, and these kind of works will be burned up completely, and we will be forever saved, but only by the grace of God. There will be no deception when we stand before Jesus. So, being saved as by fire means that we will enter the presence of God empty handed with nothing to show for our years of labor, except for the testimony that we came to Jesus. But as I have often said, "if our salvation is genuine and real, we will feel obligated to give the Gospel message to others in order to show appreciation for God giving it to us." We must never forget that salvation is indeed by grace only, but we are expected to provide good fruitful works to show our love and appreciation to Christ for what He has done for us. To do less is to end up with huge regrets at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Therefore, my dear friends, just stop and think about it. Will you stand before Jesus one day and have only regrets, or will you receive the rewards that He wants to give you? You better make sure that you don't stand there empty handed, because if you do, you are going to be extremely embarrassed.

III. PLEASE NOTICE THE CAUSE OF THIS FUTURE INSPECTION. vs. 16-23

Well folks, we come now to the last eight verse in chapter three. The central theme of these last verses is "why is there going to be a Judgment Seat of Christ inspection for all of us believers out there in the future?" I will do my best to give you the reasons for our coming inspection as they are found in these eight verses. Once more, I want to say that this upcoming Bema Seat judgment is truly a serious matter, and we must understand that it is serious and not take it lightly. So, let's see what Paul was trying to tell the Corinthian believers, and also see what God is trying to show to us today.

A. The coming inspection is caused because of the Spirit's temple. vs. 16-17

I suppose that we could say that the primary reason God is going to hold a special inspection for us in the future is because of the fact that He paid for our redemption with the death of His Son on Calvary, and therefore, He has the ownership rights of the temple He has purchased. God bought us with His Son's death. Therefore, He has the right to hold us accountable for the way we have used our bodies, His vessels, in the service of His Kingdom.

In verses 16-17, Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that they are the dwelling places of God. Thus, He has the right to expect their faithfulness and fruitfulness in their bodies. In **Romans 12:1**, Paul said, **"I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."** This is

truly a strong admonition that in return for what Jesus did for us, we are to use our temples, the dwelling places of God, for His honor and glory. Thus, Paul was just simply trying to remind the believers in Corinth that no preacher was worthy of worship or lordship because every person is just the temple of God. So folks, I am going to ask you, "how are you using your temple for God?" Our temples are not to be paraded before the world as some mighty person or place, but we all are just sinners saved by grace, and apart from what God does in us and through us, we will accomplish nothing to brag about.

Then in verse 17, we are admonished by Paul to not defile our temples, because if we do, there is a terrible price to pay. This verse tells us that if we defile the temple of God, God the Father will destroy us. Now folks, this is a serious statement. This literally means that defiling our bodies is just as bad as someone who may have damaged or defiled the temple in Jerusalem. This was a serious offense and one that resulted in great punishment and shame.

So, Paul was telling the Corinthians that it was a serious matter to do anything with their bodies that would bring reproach or dishonor to themselves because inside of them dwelt the Holy Spirit of God. We must never forget that if we do anything to contaminate our bodies, we have sinned mightily against our Lord.

Personally, I believe that it is very possible for a believer to so desecrate his or her body that God might even allow him or her to commit the sin unto death. First John talks about this, and, I believe this was vividly illustrated by the death of Moses who died in the wilderness having never entered the Promised Land of blessing. The Promised Land does not represent heaven, but it is a picture of the victorious Christian life. Many carnal believers have experienced premature deaths because they dishonored or desecrated their temples. God forbid that we ever let this happen to us.

Yes, the primary reason for the upcoming inspection at the Judgment Seat of Christ is simply because once we got saved, we were no longer our own. But, our bodies are temples of God where His Holy Spirit lives. Therefore, we have to give an account for the way we have used these bodies.

B. The coming inspection is caused because of the Saint's temptation. vs. 18-20

Going further in our discussion of the reasons for the upcoming inspection at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we just need to look at verses 18-20 to find a very evident reason. This reason is that human beings have the tendency to deceive themselves into thinking that what they do in their own bodies is their own business, and does not concern anyone else. But, this is truly a faulty mindset because it assumes that each person is his or her own god. So, Paul tells the believers in Corinth that they should stop pretending to be so wise, while neglecting the simple truth of the Gospel message that each believer will have to answer to Christ at the Bema Seat.

Because of the fact that so many people are deceived by Satan into believing that they are themselves very wise, it is so easy for them either to simply reject the truth that there is a God that they have to answer to, or they just believe the lie of Satan that they will be the exception to the rule and God will not judge their

foolishness. The wisdom of the world is truly empty or vain, and Paul tells the believers in Corinth that they better not forget that God knows everything about them. So, if this is true, and it is, then we must not succumb to the temptation of the devil and believe that we can outsmart God. Satan is truly a liar, and we better not believe what he tells us, because we are going to have to answer to Jesus for every thing we do in this body of flesh.

Before moving on, let's look at the word craftiness in verse 19. In the Greek this word actually means cunning or false wisdom. Paul is strongly telling the believers in the church that they must not be deceived into thinking that their false wisdom will get them through the upcoming inspection without suffering loss. And yes, this is what all of us must remember. There were people in the church at Corinth that had chosen to side with different leaders, some of whom were teaching false doctrine from false wisdom. Therefore, Paul was warning them to not be so easily led astray by this false wisdom but to be wise enough to just pay attention to what God and His true servants say about His Word and truth.

Thus, my friends, we must remember that the Bema Seat is going to be necessary because of the willingness by so many to give into the temptation of Satan. It is my prayer that every one of you reading this commentary, and yes, even myself, will never be led to believe by Satan that our earthly wisdom is wiser than the true wisdom of God. From an old T.V. program back in the 1960s, I get this thought, "God The Father Knows Best!"

C. The coming inspection is caused because of the Saint's tendency. v. 21a

In the first part of verse 21, we discover another reason for the upcoming inspection of every believer. That reason is that there is the tendency in any believer who God blesses and is successful to try and take the glory only reserved for Jesus. The Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal who has stolen the glory from Christ and enthroned himself to receive this glory. In other words, Jesus will really expose the proud servant who takes God's glory for some work that only God could have performed through him or her. Because of our egotistical attitude, there will always be the tendency to take the glory for something accomplished, rather than give God the glory; of course, who alone is worthy. The inspection at the Judgment Seat will reveal those who are humble and grateful, and also, those who are proud and arrogant. The former will receive great rewards, while the latter will suffer great loss.

D. The coming inspection is caused by the Savior's treasury. vs. 21-23

The last two verses in this chapter reveal something very unique about our Christianity. That revelation is about our unique relationship with Jesus Christ. The Christian religion is the only religion on earth that teaches the merging of Christ with a believer. I often think of this like putting the sponge into the water, and the water getting into the sponge. All other religions of the world teach that many should fear and reverence their god, but there is no way to have a personal relationship with their idol. Yet, all of Christianity teaches that we can have an

intimate relationship with Jesus. Thus, He has a wonderful treasury in the people that He saves, and those of us who have been saved have the entire treasury of Christ and Who He is, plus all that He has to provide for us. So, another one of the purposes of the forthcoming inspection is so that Jesus can show off His true bride and those who have really been saved. And, when this happens, there will be an expose of those who are truly in the bride of Christ. And folks, I can't help but believe that we are truly going to be shocked by those who appear with us at the Bema Seat, and we will be surprised how many people who won't be there that we really thought would be. So, once more, the Judgment Seat of Christ will be the day when all people and the things we have done will be revealed.

One more thing! Most genuine theologians believe that there will be five crowns given out to the faithful people at the coming Judgment Seat. I want to give you a list of these. Please study them, and be encouraged to remember them. And of course, do everything you can to earn as many of them as possible. Please notice the crowns.

1. There will be an Incorruptible Crown for those who get mastery over the old man. (I Corinthians 9:25)
2. There will be a Crown Of Rejoicing for the soul winners. (I Thess. 2:19)
3. There will be a Crown Of Life for those enduring trials. (James 1:12)
4. There will be a Crown Of Righteousness for those who love His appearing. (II Tim. 4:8)
5. There will be a Crown Of Glory for being willing to feed the flock of God. (I. Peter 5:4)

Conclusion

We come now to the conclusion of chapter three. In this chapter, Paul reminded the Corinthian believers and yes, us today, that there are really no big people in the service of our King. In fact, we are all equal whether we be planters or waterers because it is God that gives the increase. And, without our Lord bringing forth the harvest, there will be no harvest. Therefore, we need to look at our role as servants of God as simply being one among many, and each of us should consider others with more esteem than we do ourselves. And, if we don't act like this, then we will reveal our carnality.

Also, in the latter part of this chapter, Paul reminds the believers in Corinth that everything we do today for our Lord and His Kingdom should be done in view of the coming Judgment Seat of Christ which every believer will face individually. And, at that Judgment Seat, our Lord will reveal whether our works have been done with the right motives and for the right reasons. If our works are of gold, silver, and precious stones, we will be rewarded richly. But, if our work are hay, wood, and stubble, our works will be burned up, and we will be saved as by fire only by the grace of God. So, let's do our best to live our lives in order to reap a full reward!

Chapter Seven

"The Ideal Servant Of Christ"

Scripture: I Corinthians 4:1-21

Introduction

Now, as we continue to move on with our study of I Corinthians, we come to chapter four. This is another great chapter, especially coming on the end of our study in chapter three, where Paul told the Corinthian believers that they had to stop their strong personality divisions in the church, and become true servants of God. He also warned them that factionalized Christianity was a dangerous thing, because one day all of us as believers would have to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account for our works as believers. Paul said if we stand there with works compared to gold, silver, and precious stones, then the fiery trial from the radiance of Christ's eyes would reveal that we had right motives, right purposes, and good intentions in whatever way we have tried to serve Christ here on earth as believers. Therefore, we would be rewarded with many great rewards for our service. But, if our works were of the temporary nature like hay, wood, and stubble, then our works would be burned up, and we would go into heaven empty handed, saved only by fire. Truly, we should have learned from the study of chapter three, that the kind of service that we give in our Christian lives is just as important as the amount of our service.

Now, as we begin this study of chapter four, I would like for us to really take a careful look at the "Ideal Servant," that Christ would have every believer to be. God is not looking for perfection just yet in this life, but He is looking for faithful persistency and true commitment in our lives down here as servants of God. So, as we begin, may I ask you if you are a true ideal servant of Christ? If you are not, I pray this study will help you to start working on becoming that "Ideal Servant Of Christ."

I. THE IDEAL SERVANT IS A STEWARD OF GOD'S WEALTH. vs. 1-8

Dear friends, If you are a truly born again child of God, you are a very rich person in Christ. And, because of our relationship with Jesus, we have tremendous access to His manifold blessings, talents, strength, wisdom, and yes, even His amazing grace. You might say, that our riches are just filled with the amazing grace of God. Therefore, we must become wise stewards over every blessing and gift God has given to us.

But, the question is, "what does the scripture mean when it says we are to be good stewards"? Well, the word steward means several things. First, it means that we are to be accountable for our managing skills over the valuable gifts that God gives to us. Secondly, the word steward also has the meaning of overseer. This refers to the overseeing responsibility that God gives to us His servants over the many blessings of life. Thirdly, the word steward may also mean governor, or one who is put in a responsible role over the affairs of another. This last statement is a tremendous statement because it reveals the fact that when we consider the

responsibilities we have as servants of God, we must look at this role like a person who has borrowed some possession from another, and, while we have that possession in our care, then we are to take care of it just like we owned it.

So my friends, we are to view whatever task or talent that God gives us as a temporary role over something that is not lasting, but, we envision that one day we will be held accountable at the Judgment Seat of Christ for how well we have served our Lord. Now, please notice what we must know if we are going to understand and enjoy our role as stewards of God's blessings.

A. First, a good steward knows his position. v. 1

There are two extremely important thoughts in verse one. First, there is the reminder that one day we will be held accountable for our service as ministers or servants of our Lord. Our goal should be to stand before Jesus unashamed because we know that we have been an ideal servant for Christ to others.

Secondly, there is another important truth brought out in this verse. This truth is that when we are truly saved servants of Christ, we must never forget that we are going to give an account to Jesus for our stewardship of the mysteries of God. This means that when we serve Christ faithfully, He is going to be revealing great things to us, whereas before we got saved, these things may have been a true mystery. But, once the cover is taken off, then the truth that God gives us must be protected and managed well because it is truly a valuable treasure which God has given to us. Therefore, an Ideal Servant of God knows assuredly his or her role as a steward over the blessings and mysteries of God. Others may not understand these mysteries, but once God reveals them to us His servants, then we will be held accountable for protecting them, and also, sharing them with others when needed.

B. Secondly, a good steward knows his purpose. v. 2

Faithfulness is a wonderful characteristic of a true child of God. Because of this person's relationship with Christ, he or she feels extremely loyal and obligated to the Lord of lords and King of kings. And, if this child of God really understands the significance of stewardship, that is, "managing the possessions of another owner," this person must also know the purpose for which God has called him or her, and to seek to fulfill that purpose. Therefore, being in the perfect will of God and following the revealed purpose that God has for a person's life, should be the most important thing to any child of God.

And, I need to say right here that it is completely impossible for a child of God to ever be completely happy until he or she fulfills God's purpose and reaches his or her potential. But, it is sad to say, but most believers I have met in my long life as a servant of God, I have found very few truly happy and purposeful believers who remain faithful to the very end in trying to be good stewards over what God has given to them. Don't forget, and we must never forget, that whatever God provides for us to carry out His will and purpose is only loaned to us because our Lord is the owner whereby we are just the managers.

C. Thirdly, a good steward knows his praetor. vs. 3-5

In these new few verses we come to a strong statement once again from Paul the Apostle. Obviously, there were professing believers in Corinth who were questioning Paul's credibility as a true servant of God, and they were making an improper judgment about him as a man of God, and now, he had to deal once more with these terrible accusations. It just seems that everywhere Paul would go, or where he had been, that he was constantly having to defend his apostleship regardless of how much God had used him wherever he had gone and ministered. The truth stated here is that Paul was not about to get too concerned with the false critique and judgment of the Corinthian believers. The reason of course was that Paul had already realized the only judgment that really mattered was the one he would one day receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

I can't help believe that what precipitated this accusatory behavior of the Corinthian church was the fact that back in Chapter three, Paul had been dealing with the coming Judgment Seat of Christ where every believer will one day be judged. Thus, Paul's warning to the Corinthians about their coming inspection resulted in these professing Christians trying to humiliate Paul by falsely judging him as a servant of God. Folks, don't you think that it is quite ironic that the people who are so quick to judge us when we remind them of God's judgment, are the ones who adamantly reject the truth of God's holy word.

Let me illustrate this. Today earlier before coming back to the writing of this commentary, I had a staff meeting with our small staff. During the meeting, I asked about a young couple who had recently visited our church. Some of our visitation teams had been trying to contact these people ever since they made the visit at our church. This morning, I was told that this young family didn't like our church because I preach against homosexuality. Just think about that. They don't like me because I preach the truth of the Word of God. But the problem, you see, is that they don't want to hear anything that goes against their modern concept of what sin really is in this contemporary age. Of course, they will be able to find scores of preachers who would rather make them feel good, rather than tell them the truth.

In this discussion, I have used the word praetor as to mean judge or magistrate. My intent is to show that Paul rebuked those who were unnecessarily judging him by telling them that he himself was incapable of even judging his own ministry properly. Therefore, he had decided that he would wait until the day when Jesus alone would be his judge of the work he had done as a servant of God. In other words, Paul was saying that these Corinthians or he himself were not adequately qualified to make a correct judgment of his service to the Lord. So, he was resolute in waiting for the perfect judgment of Christ at the coming Judgment Seat of Christ.

There is a great lesson here for all of us. We have no right to critique or judge our brothers and sisters in their work for the Lord, just as long as they are faithfully serving Christ, and yes, I believe being fruitful. You see folks, we don't judge our brothers and sisters, but we can inspect their work by the fruit they bear. However, the final inspection is yet to come. This should be the way we live our lives; vividly aware that there is coming a day of inspection for every child of God.

We are once more reminded in the last part of verse five that there is coming a day out in the future when God's search light shall be turned on every child of God, and the very contents and intents of the heart shall be revealed. I am very sure that many of us will not be pleased with what God exposes about us, but it will not be possible for us to thwart this inspection. There will be no arguments, no excuses, no carnal rationale, and there won't be any exceptions to this glaring inspection. Therefore, we must make sure that even the works we do here in darkness are proper with the Lord, because one day there will be a day of revelation.

D. Fourthly, a good steward knows his pride. vs. 6-8

Now, we move on to the next three verses in this chapter. Verse six is also another strong verse. In this verse, Paul once more refers to the division that was obviously in the Corinthian church over preacher religion. Paul here refers to the inclination for people to have improper pride in their preachers and leaders, and even to put them up on a pedestal for everyone to see. He even mentions his friend Apollos and himself in order to reject the arrogance of these followers.

Paul goes on to strongly rebuke the people for their puffed up attitude which places one man above another. These Corinthians were promoting or parading their favorite preacher one against another, although they had nothing to offer the Kingdom of God which was not given them by God. These were strong words, but much needed words for this divided church family.

Then, as we move on to verse seven, Paul goes on to tell the Corinthian believers that it is God alone who has made each of us different in his own way. Therefore, there is no reason for any man or woman to take glory for what he or she does. In facts, the gifts, the talents, and the abilities that we have, all come from God. Thus, there is no valid reason for any of us to boast.

In addition, as we take a careful look at the next verse, verse eight, we run into something that is not too evident. You have to read carefully to see it. This something is some evident sarcasm by Paul toward the arrogant proud braggadocios people in Corinth who had chosen to divide the flock. With this sarcasm, Paul told the people that he sincerely wished that they were as important as they thought they were, because they were acting like kings. Therefore, if they would have been kings, then, he and the other believers would share in the benefits of their kingship. I believe Paul could have described these arrogant people the way my earthly father use to. My dad used to say, "I would like to buy that person for what he was really worth, and then, sell him for what he thought he was worth." If I could, Dad would say, then I would be extremely rich. This is no doubt how Paul felt about the ego-centric people in Corinth. Just remember, folks, ideal servants of God get rid of their pride and arrogance. They truly realize that they are nothing apart from Jesus Christ who has given them everything they have.

II. THE IDEAL SERVANT IS A SPECTACLE TO THE WORLD. vs. 9-13

Now, in this second point in this study, we are going to come to grips with just how the unsaved world really feels about the dedicated servants of God.

Truthfully, we are often considered fools and idiots for our trust in Christ, and the way we give Him our faithfulness. Paul uses the word spectacle in verse nine. The word spectacle in the Greek literally means, "theater, or a show to be gazed at, and made sport or fun of." In other words, to the unsaved, unenlightened person, we are just making fools out of ourselves if we are truly following Christ in a dedicated manner. You might just say that we are a laughing stock to the world. May I tell you, that I will gladly be laughed at by the lost world for the cause of Jesus. Why? Because I know how this thing is going to end. These people may laugh at us now, but one day they won't laugh, but they truly will be exposed and shocked by the reality and genuineness of what we have stood for. Now, let's take a close look at this spectacle.

A. This spectacle may include an appointment with death. v. 9a

The first thing that comes to my mind when I look at the first part of verse 9, is, "Why would anyone want to be a believer if the very fact that he is a Christian should lead eventually to his death or martyrdom? Of course, in our modern American world, almost no believers have to worry about physical persecution or death. Yet, in Paul's day, those who were really committed followers of Christ had to face the possibility of death everyday, especially those in the Roman Empire.

What Paul is really trying to get across to the people, that even if a true servant of God who is really committed to Christ has to face death because of his or her faith, it still would be worth the death experience because of what lays ahead for the child of God. What Paul was really saying was, even if we are criticized, run down, and ultimately slain, it will have been worth the cost.

There is one more thing I want to mention in the first part of this verse. That is that even the very angels of God believe that if we are truly sold out servants of God, they might even look at us with a little suspicion because they don't understand why we love the Lord enough to die for Him.

I would like to go further and state that here in America, we know so little about suffering for Christ, but yet, in many parts of the world, people die every day for their faith because they love Jesus supremely.

Brietbart London newspaper web site tells us the following stats.

1. Every five minutes in some place in the world, a Christian is killed for his or her faith.
2. Currently, at the time of this writing, Christian Freedom International says that over 200 million followers of Christ are currently facing persecution.
3. Currently, in 105 countries out of 196 countries in the world, people are being persecuted for their faith in Christ.¹

I could go on mentioning the names of many countries of the world where every day millions of people are suffering and dying for the cause of Christ, but I will just mention a few. People are suffering and dying in China, North Korea, Indonesia,

¹ Brietbart London, website, pages 1-3.

Burma (Myanmar), Malaysia, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Russia, some of the Philippine Islands, Syria, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and on and on we could go. So, my dear friends, if we think that here in America we are going through great trials, just remember that the rest of the world is suffering so much worse. But, may we never forget that as we get closer to the coming of Jesus, things are getting worse and worse, and before very long, it will likely be illegal to go to church here in this country; especially if some liberal progressive person becomes president again.

B. This spectacle may include an arena of display. v. 9b

As a believer in Christ, do you ever just feel that whatever you do, and wherever you go that someone is always watching? Well, I do! And, the older I get and the longer I serve Jesus, the worse it seems to get. We are always under the scrutiny of others who are inspecting us and our testimony. Truthfully, I believe these people are just looking for some mistake we make or some wrong we do so that they will have an excuse for rejecting Christ. Yet, we just need to understand that the more faithful we become to our Lord, the less we will be understood by the blind world. But, let me remind all of us that the arena of display we are in down here on this earth is nothing compared to the arena of display we will be in when we stand before Jesus in heaven.

C. This spectacle may include an attitude of derangement. v. 10a

The word derangement is not used much in these modern days, of course, unless by the conservatives who talk about the President Donald Trump derangement syndrome. Well, because I am strongly conservative in principle and practice, I think there are those who act totally deranged and unhinged about our new-style president. Of course, I certainly don't agree with our president on a lot of things, but surely, never in human history has an American president been hated so much by this "Donald Trump Derangement Syndrome" crowd, who just never will hush from criticizing the president.

But now, let's take a further look at the first part of verse ten and see how some of the Corinthian believers were acting totally and completely deranged. I say this because they obviously were calling Paul and his dedicated Christian friends absolute fools because of their strong commitment to be dedicated servants of God.

As I have already stated, these deceived and carnal, or either lost people, were acting themselves like fools because they could not recognize the sincerity and true credibility of Paul and his friends. So, Paul was being somewhat sarcastic, when he accused them of being wise and strong, while he and his colleagues were dumb and weak. Paul even told them, that they must be extremely honorable while he and his followers were completely hated. I will talk a little more about this in the discussion of the next part of the verse.

D. This spectacle may include an air of disdain. v. 10b

At the risk of sounding somewhat repetitious, let me again mention that Paul

and his beloved dedicated servant followers were hated and despised by those who were either carnal or yes, maybe even lost. It is truly hard for me to understand why people could hate us as God's servants, but yet, Jesus said in John 15:18, that if they hate us, they hated Him first. Therefore, we are just simply sharing in the hatred that people have for Christ. But folks, we must never forget that if we suffer with Christ, we will one day reign with Him. The suffering is truly not pleasant, but one day all of the pain and disdain we receive from others will be worth it once we get to live with Jesus in the millennium and in heaven eternally. I don't like reproach any more than you do, but we must just keep remembering that better days are to come. And, this is exactly what Paul was trying to get across to the Corinthian believers.

E. This spectacle may include acts of deprivation. v. 11

The next thing we are looking at in this text is found in verse eleven. And truthfully, the content of this verse is related to the truths of verse 10, because it is talking about some of the things we have to endure as faithful servants of God. In verse 10, it was the ridicule and disdain of others that don't like our message or even ourselves, just simply because they don't like Jesus. This of course reveals that they are either so carnal and worldly, or they are just plain lost. But, there are other problems that we will have to face if we are truly dedicated sold-out servants of God.

The next problem Paul addresses is that if we faithfully serve Christ, than more than likely we will have to endure hunger, thirst, nakedness, beatings, and even homelessness. Obviously, no one would know more about this deprivation than would Paul the apostle. He suffered tremendously for the cause of Christ, and he promised the Corinthian Christians that they would too if they really became those ideal servants of Christ who would be a spectacle to the world.

Folks, don't you think it is quite ironic when you read verse eleven and these other verses about the suffering of true believers when we hear so much today about the health and wealth prosperity Gospel? It seems to me that some of these modern preachers who are preaching this foolishness ought to get in these Scripture verses and find out just how much health, wealth and prosperity there really is for the faithful servant of God. And, when I read about this deprivation which Paul says will come to all true servants of God, I can't help but think about what Jesus said when He was telling His followers what to expect when they promised to follow Him. Pay attention to this verse found in **Luke 9:58, "And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."** You see folks, we are not promised that everything will go well, and we will be rich and healthy when we commit ourselves to follow Christ, but instead, we are basically promised that the day will come when we will face deprivation of many necessities of life.

F. This spectacle may include an attitude of derision. v. 12

Well, in verse 12, Paul continues on telling the believers in Corinth that things might just get so bad for them that, like him, they might have to earn their

own food by working with their hands. Paul did this as a tent maker so that the people would not be beholden to him because he taught them the Gospel message.

Then, Paul goes one step further and describes how all of us as God's servants should respond to deprivation, ridicule, criticism, and persecution. Paul says that if we are reviled, then we should bless. If we are persecuted, then we should just deal with it without revenge. In other words, we should try to kill our attackers with our kindness. But, may I tell you that this is one of the hardest things we will ever have to do. In fact, I don't think I can possibly do it in and of myself. The Holy Spirit of God must work in me and through me if I am to respond to this kind of abuse in a loving way. I say this because of so many years of abuse and attacks down through more than half-century of ministry. Yet, I desire so much to respond to this derision and deprivation the way Jesus would. Maybe with His help, we all can learn to do this.

G. This spectacle may include an appearance of defamation. v. 13

We now come to the final verse on this second point of this study. And, may I say that this is a difficult verse to accept. I say this because what it actually means is when others get so angry with us as God's servants that they blaspheme us and attack our very being, we should then respond by trying to comfort the wrongdoers by our encouragement of them. This sounds so utterly ridiculous and paradoxical, but yet, when we can't do it ourselves, we must then depend upon the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us to respond positively when we have been treated so negatively. And yet, we do know that when Jesus was hanging on the cross, He forgave those who were crucifying Him because He stated, **"they did not know what they were doing."** And friends, this is the only way that we can possibly respond to evil people when they abuse us. We must just believe that they have done what they have done to us through their ignorance.

Yet, I suppose that God's faithful children will always be considered the filth of the world, or as this verse states, **"the off-scouring, or the extra dirt that falls from our shoes when we come into the house after walking out in the mud."** We must always and forever remember that if we are going to be the kind of ideal servants that will honor Christ, even when we are treated unjustly, then we must be so full of Jesus that rather than take the defamation personally, we must see it coming from ignorant people under the control of Satan.

III. THE IDEAL SERVANT IS A STANDARD OF GOD'S WAYS. vs. 14-21

As we move on with this study, the next thing we find in the last verses of chapter four is that a true servant of God is always going to present or demonstrate God's standards which should be followed and applied in order to carry out His planned ways for His people. These standards are going to be rather difficult sometime to follow, but we must follow them if we expect to influence others to do so as well. So, let's take a close look at the following truth which God gives His Corinthian believers and to us today as well. There is much wonderful truth here to

glean from, so let's do our best to dig deep and ask God to show us what He wants us to get from this rich and rewarding study.

A. The ideal servant provides a standard with his warning. v. 14

Paul begins these verses with a plain statement by telling the Corinthians that his intent in rebuking them for the division they had created in the church was not to embarrass them or to make them feel ashamed, but because these believers were Paul's children in the faith, he wrote this letter to warn them to stop the parading of the flesh and the choosing of sides for one preacher against another. You might say that the reason Paul wrote was to warn the people to not allow these problems to continue because they would ultimately be judged for their misbehavior by our Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, if they were indeed saved.

So my friends, there is a great pattern for us as God's servants. We have a God-given responsibility to warn our brothers and sisters of the mistakes they are either making or about to make in order to advance the Kingdom of God and His glorious work. We must not sit back and allow division to develop in the body of Christ due to our tolerance of man-made religions and self-centered cliques or groups.

B. The ideal servant provides a standard with his witness. v. 15

In verse 15, Paul just jumps right into telling these misbehaving professing Christians, that if they are saved, they are saved because he brought them the Gospel and no one else. Therefore, they were his children in Christ and because of this, they were obligated to pay attention to what he was telling them.

And, we need to see that in the beginning of this verse, Paul uses tremendous sarcasm once again by telling the people it doesn't matter if they have ten thousand other teachers, they have no right to be heard because he is the one that came to Corinth and spent eighteen months to share the Good News of Christ with them. In other words, Paul was saying that he had earned the right to tell them the truth, when in fact, all of these other phonies had not. You might say that Paul was reaffirming his credentials so that hopefully, they would pay attention to him, and not to the other hypocrites.

Truly, there is much to be said for earning the right to speak when it comes to demonstrating our witness. If we are not devoted servants working in humility before others faithfully, we cannot earn the right to speak with authority. So, let me ask you the readers this, "have you earned the right to speak by your dedication and faithfulness?" If you haven't, maybe this would be a good time to start working on it.

C. The ideal servant provides a standard with his work. v. 16

Verse 16 in this text is a very brief verse. Paul just simply tells the people in the Corinthian Church that it is his desire that they would just simply follow him as he tried so hard to be a good servant of Jesus Christ. This verse follows Paul's instructions for these dear believers that no one but he had the right to expect the

people to follow him because he was the one God used to bring them the Gospel message. So, we can see obviously, that Paul not only had the right to expect the people to follow his example of the work that he did for Jesus, but also, that he had set such a standard for their Christian service that the people could not go wrong in following him.

This speaks loudly to me as a pastor of many years, but also just simply as a every day believer. We should set the proper example or standard for others to follow so that they can be inspired to be an ideal servant of God. The truth is that we learn from others, either good or bad. So, the lesson we need to learn is that our testimony and work should be so genuine or real that others will be inspired to be like us as we try so hard to be like Jesus. What Paul was trying to get across to the people of Corinth was that he alone was the best example of a servant that they could find at that time because he was the one who paid the price to bring them the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Folks, there is a great lesson here for us. We must never forget those whom God has used to impact our lives with the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. I say this emphatically because right now in my 71st year of life, I am experiencing almost every day the loneliness of being an elder servant of God because so many people that my wife and I have tried to help have truly forgotten who we are. They have gotten caught up in their business, and regretfully to say, they have been allured away many times from the truth of the Bible to become entangled with a false gospel of entertainment and activity. And, now that they have fallen for the seduction to either move away from the truth of God's Word toward a new watered-down version of the Gospel, or to a less offensive contextualization of the Gospel, these people now neglect those older people who may have led them to Christ, or even trained and help develop them in their faith. I will tell you that this is a very sinful thing, and obviously, Paul was seeing it happen to him because some new stars with a new gospel had come to town in Corinth. It is my prayer that all of us, even after almost 2,000 years of Christian history behind us, will continue to follow the fine standard and example of work which Paul the apostle demonstrated.

D. The ideal servant provides standard with his ways. v. 17

Now, just read carefully verse 17. Paul tells the believers in Corinth that because they have forgotten his teaching and the ways which he taught them, he is going to send young Timothy to Corinth to remind them of the great example he had set for them.

As I read this verse, I want to get mad, I do almost get sick on my stomach, and I would just like to say, "to heck with the Corinthians." Now, why do I feel these many emotions? Well, the truth is that Paul spent eighteen months of his life in Corinth presenting the Gospel, establishing the church there, and in discipling the people, and what does he get in return? He gets a slap in the face figuratively speaking. They acted like they didn't remember the great things God did for them through this great servant of God. They had just simply forgotten the good ways which Paul taught them just simply because they had become enamored with some other false teachers and preachers. Believe you me, I know all about this kind of

treatment. Whereas Paul only spent eighteen months there in Corinth and was forgotten by those whom he had led to Christ and discipled, my wife and I have spent as long as eight years each planting two churches and helping them grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ only to be treated like dirt by many whom we even led to Christ and ministered to for several years. May I say resoundingly, "this hurts." It hurt Paul, and it still hurts us today. It is truly quite a shame that people forget so easily and have to be sent a younger man of God to just help those non-appreciative people remember who helped bring them to the party. And yet, this is happening everywhere, especially here in our American churches today.

E. The ideal servant provides a standard with his wisdom. vs. 18-20

May I ask you the readers a question? The question is, "do you have the gift of discernment?" You may think this is not a good question, but if you were in the position that Paul the apostle was in with the Corinthian Church, you would certainly need the gift of discernment. I say this because in verses 18-20, Paul candidly tells the believers in Corinth that when he gets to Corinth shortly, he will discern the true believers and servants from the false ones. And, he will be able to detect those that are puffed up and arrogant, and those who were genuine and humble about their service to Christ.

He tells the people that he will be able to discern when they were real or not based not upon what they say or claim, but he will detect whether they really have the power of God's anointing Holy Spirit when they speak. It didn't matter what their claim to fame was, but the truth of the matter was, "did they speak with the power of God's anointing as a representative of Jesus Christ?" Paul just stated that the proof of their servanthood would be based upon the evidence of the Holy Spirit's power in their lives.

Truly, Paul the apostle was a great servant of God because he was anointed by the Holy Spirit in such a way as to be able to discern with genuine wisdom whether someone else's spirit bore witness with the Holy Spirit living within him, or whether the things they were saying and claiming were just of self or because of false doctrine. And, may I tell you that in this age of the counterfeit church in which we are now living, this gift of discernment is more important than I can ever remember it being in my entire lifetime. The reason of course is because of so many false cults, false doctrines, twisted religions, and of course, those who are constantly trying to merchandise the Gospel. We desperately need divine discernment to help us stay true to the Word of God, and to not be led astray by the counterfeit preachers and church leaders.

F. The ideal servant provides a standard with his words. v. 21

Let me say that as we take a look at this last verse in chapter four, Paul really reveals his strong words to the church at Corinth in somewhat of a threatening way. I don't mean that he was evil or even necessarily ill-tempered, although at times Paul was a little rough. But, what I do mean is that Paul warned the people with a tough love that when he returned to Corinth he would definitely take care of the

situation. I just believe that he was just fed up with the division and ego-centric attitudes of some of the people in Corinth, and he just wanted to bring it to an end. So, he tells the people that it will be their choice on how they want him to come to their church. If they stop their foolishness and begin to put into practice what he has told them in the first four chapters of this great epistle, he will come to them with much love. But, if they continue on with their foolishness, then when he arrives, he would handle the situation the way any loving parent would handle rebellious children. So, the choice was theirs! Should he come with love and kindness, or should he come with rebuke and confrontation? They had to make the choice, and he would respond accordingly.

Now, I bet you that some of you reading this commentary think that Paul was just too harsh and that he just needed to cool it. Well, I don't agree at all. The reason is, that sometimes people take advantage of grace and continue to push an issue too far. When this happens, love and grace just don't work. There has to be righteousness and loving justice to these trouble makers if the church and the work of the Lord is to continue on well. And, as a pastor who has had to deal with quite a few of these difficult dividing people down through the years, I must tell you that sometimes we just have to "nip it in the bud," as I mentioned earlier in this writing project. Of course, you would have to be an older American and one which had watched the comedy show, "Andy Griffith," if you were to understand this terminology. This statement comes from old Barney Fife, the Deputy Sheriff of Mayberry, North Carolina. The thought is, "if you have a serious problem, you must deal with it sooner than later before it gets totally out of hand. I believe this is exactly what Paul was doing with the problem in the Corinthian Church.

Conclusion

Well folks, we have just concluded another chapter in our study of, "Divine Wisdom For A Worldly Church." This study deals with the Church of Corinth and the problems that Paul had to deal with throughout First Corinthians. As we will see as we move on in this study, there were probably more problems here than in almost any other church Paul founded. However, because Paul had to deal with so many problems in this church, we today have these wonderful words to help us face many of the problems we are now facing in our modern churches. So, in the plan of God, He wanted us to get these truths so that we would have these words of wisdom for our modern worldly churches.

Now, to conclude this chapter four, let me just say that I sincerely hope and pray that you the readers have really gleaned just how important it is for every child of God to really be an ideal servant of God and demonstrate a life of humble submission to Jesus, and to make a sincere commitment to ministering to scores of others if we truly have been genuinely born again. I know for sure, that this old preacher has a genuine desire to be an ideal servant of God in order to bring glory to Christ, and also, to provide a living credible testimony to others that I do have Jesus living in me, and that I have on my heart and mind what Jesus has on His; the souls of lost men, women, boys and girls. I am praying that my servanthood in these last days of my life might just influence others to come to Jesus, and yes, also, pick up the mantle from those of us who will soon be going home to be with Jesus.

Chapter Eight

"When Sexual Immorality Comes To Church"

Scripture: I Corinthians 5:1-13

Introduction

Well, if the title of this chapter doesn't get your attention, then nothing will! And yet, in this day of wicked immorality everywhere, both outside the church, and yes, inside as well, this is what we are facing. Why, just a few days ago as I was getting ready to work on this commentary again, I read about two more large churches here in America with thousands of church members, where their senior pastors just fell because of sexual immorality. It is going on everywhere, and yes, I have had to deal with it several times during my many years of ministry.

For instance, once while I was away in Africa doing mission work many years ago, one of our choir members committed adultery with a single mom in the choir. When I came home from Africa, I had to immediately deal with the problem, and sorry to say, the married home was destroyed, and the couple divorced. And of course, the single mom left the church, and probably is not even in church until this day. Sexual sin is everywhere, and so it was in the Corinthian Church when Paul wrote this epistle.

The problem in Corinth was that there was a man in the church that was committing incestuous fornication with his stepmother in his home, and the church knew about it, but did nothing about it. Their excuse was that they were trying to be loving and kind instead of dealing with the problem by putting the man out of the church. Of course, the community knew about this sin, and they would never have had any confidence in the testimony of the church because of their tolerance of sin.

So, when Paul wrote this letter, he immediately dealt with the problem after trying to solve the problem of the divided church over preacher religion. As we will see throughout the rest of this book study, this Corinthian Church was filled with problems, and when this sexual sin came to church, it was just one of many problems that the church had. Therefore, because of what was going on in the Corinthian Church, we must learn some valuable lessons about tolerance of sin, and the significance of dealing with these problems before they destroy the fellowship and the testimony of the people of God. Surely, we need to discover that it is much easier to deal with a serious sin quickly, than to let it fester and destroy the testimony of the body of Christ. So, let's now look at this fifth chapter and learn what God is trying to teach us about the seriousness of sexual sin in the church.

I. NOTICE THE DREADFUL SIN OF THE SINNER. v. 1

A. This was a prominent sin. v. 1a

Verse one starts off by telling us that the sin of fornication within the church fellowship was of common knowledge, and it was doing much damage to the testimony and effectiveness of the church. This was not some little sin that was

unknown to the people, but obviously, it was such an enormous sin that everyone was talking about it, but no one had the guts to deal with it. Therefore, Paul just simply started this chapter by saying, "it is common knowledge" of what is happening between a man and his stepmother, so, something has to be done.

May I just say right here that in scores of churches here in America, and yes, in many other parts of the world, sexual sin is being committed by the church leadership, but it is being swept under the rug to try to hide it from the world. Yet, God knows everything about it, and He is demanding that the sin be exposed and dealt with quickly. If sin of this nature is not dealt with quickly, the church will lose its power with God and its testimony of integrity before the world and community in which it exists.

B. This was a perverted sin. v. 1b

The middle part of verse one really reveals the perverted nature of the sin that was going on between the man and his father's wife. The perversion was so bad, that Paul said that even Gentile pagans would not commit this kind of sin. It was the sin of incest, and the Bible tells us explicitly in the Book of Leviticus 19, that any two people who were caught in an incestuous relationship should be put to death. Now, if you don't think this is a serious sin against God, then pay attention to what I said. I said that the Bible says they should be put to death.

Well folks, I am glad that we are living in the New Testament day of grace, but the truth is that God still hates this sin, and it must be dealt with. Perversion, whatever the kind, is truly hated by God. He loves the sinner, but He hates their sin. Thus, as we look around us here in America today, I just wonder what God must be saying about the way our U.S. Supreme Court approved Gay marriage, and then of course, the horrible mixed up perversion of the transgender mess that is going on right before our very eyes. Do you suppose that God is pleased with the horrible tolerance of these sins within our churches? I know He is not!

And then, just think about the churches in the Catholic Church denomination where their priests have molested thousands of altar boys and even girls that have been taken advantage of after going into a confessional booth. Then, what about the camp directors and personnel in many Baptist and other Protestant Churches that have contributed to the sexual delinquency of hundreds and hundreds of teenagers because of the vileness of these people?

Then, what about people like Jimmy Swaggart and Benny Hinn who have committed grave sins with women while standing in the pulpits and pretending to be men of God? And, the list could go on and on. I heard the present President of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. J.D. Greear, say that we should quit stigmatizing sexual sin, especially homosexuality, because this sin is no greater than any other. But, this is truly a lie when you stop to consider the terrible consequences of sexual immorality. These consequences affect scores of people, and often ends up in some greater sin like murder, as in the case of David who had Uriah killed after he committed adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife.

C. This was a piercing sin. v. 1c

Can you stop long enough while reading this commentary to just think about this terrible sin committed by the man in the Corinthian Church? He had betrayed his father, stolen his father's wife, and sinned against his entire family. And worse than this, he sinned against our wonderful God and His body of believers, the Church. How sharply piercing was this horrible sin? What started out as just a few moments of pleasure ended up affecting numbers of people, and obviously, until Paul made the church deal with him, he didn't even repent or feel remorse. But of course, this is always the consequences of sin. It starts out with the temptation of Satan to have a little pleasure, but almost always ends up causing hurt to fathers, mothers, children, relatives, friends, and even the body of believers. May God help every person to stop saying, "its my body, and I can do what I want to with it." This is demonic reasoning, and it always ends up with people getting viciously hurt. This is why sin has to be dealt with, especially in the body of Christ.

II. NOTICE THE DERELICT STAND OF THE SAINTS. v. 2

Tolerance is a terrible thing when the end result is many people getting hurt due to this negligence. Of course, scholars tell us that there are hundreds of verses in the Bible about the seriousness of tolerating sin. When we tolerate sin and fail to confront the sinner, we become enablers of the sinner or sinners, whichever the case may be. We become a supporter of sinfulness or wickedness just because we don't have the intestinal fortitude to confront the person and take whatever steps are necessary to put the guilty sinner in a place of shame and exposure. To fail to deal with sexual immorality in the church is a willful act of Biblical defiance, and it always results in a festering sore which gets bigger like a cancer until scores of people are hurt and the cause of Christ is hindered.

A. This derelict stand includes no meekness. v. 2a

The wrong kind of pride is a damnable thing! This is what Paul had to deal with when he wrote this chapter about sexual sin in the church at Corinth. The people who were leading the church, and even bragging about their best preachers, were very much aware of the sin that was going on in the camp, but they just would not deal with the issue. Their defense was that they were trying to let their love rule in order to not condemn the man and maybe even his stepmother. But, the truth is that the people were using their tolerance as a means to boast and show evident love and compassion for these sinful people. But, I will tell you that I believe this was nothing more than a smoke screen to cover up their obvious neglect because they didn't want to have to deal with this very problematic situation.

So, my friends, instead of having a broken spirit and mourning over the sin of this man and his stepmother, the people were proud and arrogant about their tolerance. There just simply was no meekness at all. Now, when I say meekness, I am not talking about weakness, but I am talking about strength under control and maintaining a teachable spirit. Thus, Paul wrote them to try to help teach them what

they should do about the sin in the camp, rather than just exhibit a phony type of love and compassion which did nothing to fix the situation. Therefore, Paul was very confrontational about the people's sin and neglect, and he withheld nothing when he told them what they should do.

B. The derelict stand includes no mourning. v. 2b

At the time when I am writing this commentary, something has happened which truly illustrates the truth Paul is trying to get across to the Corinthians. A large church not too far from where I live recently had between \$300,000 and \$800,000 embezzled or stolen by some staff member from the church treasury. Of course, the buck always stops at the top with the pastor in a church situation. But sad to say, there was no admittance of wrong, or brokenness by the pastor, but instead, before leaving the church and moving away to Texas, he helped split the church and left the main church reeling from the ordeal. There was no admittance of wrong, no repentance, and no broken spirit or regret. In fact, another staff person was implicated and chosen to be the scapegoat, while the pastor made accusations and threats to the people. When there is no brokenness or confession of wrong by the guilty party and also, those who have tolerated the wickedness, God rarely ever heals the situation unless someone steps forward and deals with the problem. So, in our text, from a far distance, Paul steps forward and writes this long letter and tells the people what must be done.

C. The derelict stand includes no marshaling. v. 2c

Evil left un-dealt with, always leaves sin in the camp and a negative testimony to the world. Paul now rebukes the people for not dealing with this man in the Corinthian Church who had brought his sexual immorality to church. Paul tells the church that because this man showed no sign of repentance, they were to put him out of the church, and in the next few verses, we will see that they were to have a public service to consign the sinful man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, and the welfare of the body of believers.

III. NOTICE THE DEMANDED STEPS FOR THE SAINTS. vs. 3-5

In these next three verses, Paul the apostle tells the Corinthian Church what they must do with this promiscuous man in the church. They were instructed how to handle their problematic situation, and they needed to do it immediately.

A. The first step was to have confidence in the preacher's advice. v. 3

In this verse Paul tells the people that he is absent in body, but his spirit is with the church, and he had already decided what had to happen to this non-repentant sexually immoral man. The people had to move forward with the advice that Paul had given them, and they would not do this unless they had enormous confidence in what he told them.

There is a great lesson for us here today. That lesson is that when any kind of immoral situation arises in a church body, the pastor in charge of the church is to stand for what is right, give Biblical instruction on how the matter should be handled, and the people are to stand with the pastor in carrying out the action which the Bible demands. Our political correctness, our affinity to not offend anyone, and our tolerance of evil cannot, and it must not dictate to us what we should not do, when God has been clear through his servant the action that must be taken. Yet, we must remember that we are living in age when people don't want the truth, and the last thing people want is to rebuke or confront those who are evil. However, if we are to bring glory to God, keep the testimony of the church clean, and make a stand against evil, then Biblical action has to be taken, whether we like to do it or not!

B. The second step was to have cooperation with the people in taking action. v. 4

Verse four is a very simple verse. In this verse, Paul's tells the people that they need to take some action against the person doing the sexual immorality. Paul tells them that he may not be there in body, but he is there with them in spirit, and he wants to stand with them as they take a stand against this perverted member of the church body. But, let me interject the fact that just because this man was a member of the local church, doesn't mean that he was really saved. In fact, I believe maybe as much as three fourths of the members of churches are not really saved. I say this because of the Parable of the Sower where there were four kinds of soils, but only one was genuine. Also, I believe the large majority of church members are truly lost because only 25% of the members are dedicated, faithfully attending, and even less than 25% really give tithes and offerings. So, maybe this sex offender was not really saved. So, Paul tells the church members to come together and deal with this man, and don't go on allowing him to exist in the church like he had done nothing wrong.

C. The third step was to join the others in condemning the person accused. v. 5

Now in verse five, we see that Paul tells the Corinthian Church that they needed to take some solemn and serious action toward this offender. The content of Paul's instruction was that they were to have a public church meeting, publicly address this man for his sin, and then, if there was no repentance, they were to take a public action to dismiss him from the church fellowship. Once this action was taken, the man would then be placed in a shameful position to where he might be embarrassed enough to eventually repent and get right with God. And truthfully, looking ahead to Second Corinthians, we do know that this man did repent, and Paul admonished the church to receive him back into the fellowship with forgiveness.

So, the primary reason for his action was to rebuke the fellow with the desire that he would get right with God, but if he failed to do so, then he was to be excluded from the church and put in a position of shame so that God's Holy Spirit would convict him and he then would repent and thus, be restored. Also, if the man was truly saved, then there would be evidence of the fact that he was saved by his

response to this serious action. The point Paul was trying to make was that if this man who was bringing sexual misbehavior to their church was not stopped, then his sin would provide a negative testimony of the church for the community, and this man's blatant sin would set a precedence for others to commit additional sin. Therefore, this man had to be put out of the church if he would not repent. I have no doubt that this man was discharged from the church, and eventually, he repented and was restored. So, the action paid off for the church, and also for the man who was committing this egregious sin.

There is a great lesson for us today in our churches. Sin of any kind cannot be allowed to go un-dealt with in our congregations if we sincerely want to have the presence of God's Holy Spirit, and if we truly desire for our churches to manifest a positive testimony for the cause of Christ. I would say without reservation that today while I write this commentary, there are multitudes of immoral situations going on in the churches of the world that need to be dealt with. So, let's learn from Paul's admonishment to the Corinthian Church and go clean up our churches of the worldly mess that so many are in.

IV. NOTICE THE DEFENITIVE SENSE FOR THESE STEPS. vs. 6-13

So, why did Paul the Apostle demand so strongly that the Corinthian Church deal with this immoral man in their church? The answer is found in these last eight verses of chapter five. Paul seems to have covered everything by giving four great reasons that the matter of evil in the church had to be handled, and yes, handled quickly. Let's take a look at these four reasons and learn just why we too need to deal with so many of the sinful problems and people that have come to our churches in this generation. The reasons are still the same, and it is truly just using common sense to define and confront any person who becomes so vile and so wicked as to bring sexual immorality to the church. We must deal with everyone who contaminates the body of Christ and the worship and service of our Lord with this blatant ungodliness.

A. It makes sense to deal with this matter because of its contagiousness. v. 6

In the beginning of verse six, we find that the people in the church at Corinth must have had a terribly arrogant attitude about their tolerance of sin. Obviously, they were so proud of their "loving tolerance" of this sexual pervert that they probably had even bragged about it. They seemingly prided themselves on being politically correct and extremely tolerant in those wicked first century days when the Roman colonies were so powerful and prominent. Corinth was a vile and evil place, just like the city of Athens.

I can truly affirm the statement I just made because in my past I have visited Corinth and Athens twice in my life. And, I must tell you that in the ruins of these old cities, we saw scores of immoral gods and debauched relics which indeed exposed the wickedness of the people, and also, their proud arrogant attitude toward being the center of paganism. Thus, it is very obvious that the culture and sinful practices of that day had come into the churches with full force.

Paul desired so much that the people deal with this serious matter before this sexual immorality spread throughout the churches of the area. In other words, the evil of this man committing fornication with his stepmother was very likely to become contagious and spread rapidly. If you don't believe this would have happened, just stop and take a look at the scores of churches here in America and in other parts of the world where immoral leaders have not been dealt with, and also, where even some pastors have been allowed to go on ministering, even when they have committed every kind of sexual sin. If you don't believe this, just think about Benny Hinn, Jimmy Swaggart, Paula White, Jim Bakker, Ted Haggart, Robert Tilton, and many others who fell morally, but then were allowed back in their positions of leadership as if nothing had ever happened. This type of behavior was sick in Paul's day, and it is still sick in our day as well.

B. It makes sense to deal with this matter because of its comparison. vs. 7-8

Almost always in the Bible, the term leaven is used to represent evil. In verse seven, Paul tells the Corinthians that they needed to get rid of the leaven that would contaminate the entire body of believers. So, they need to get rid of the evil man and exclude him from the church body.

Also, because Paul mentions Christ being our Passover lamb, it would be very important to remember that the picture or symbol of what Christ did on the cross for all men, is the observance of the Lord's Supper. There are some scholars that believe that Paul was telling the believers in Corinth that if they expelled him from the local church body, he should not be allowed to share in the Lord's Supper. And, based upon what Paul has said about Christ being the sacrificial lamb for the Passover Feast, then it could very well be that Paul was trying to keep the people from allowing the sexually immoral man from participating in the supper because he was evil and would nullify the significance of the supper if he was allowed to share in it.

In verse eight, Paul tells the people that they should go on and keep the observance of the Passover Feast, but that they should not have malice or wickedness in their hearts and lives if they did participate in the Lord's Supper. Instead they should make sure the sinful man was not allowed to participate, but that they should not kick him out of the church with malice or hatred. Instead, they were to observe the Lord's Supper which was compared to the sacrificial observance of the Passover Feast which God instituted to remind the Israelites of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

So, the truth emphasized here is that no person should come to the observance of the Lord's Supper without being genuine and sincere so that the observance could be carried out with truth like Jesus had planned. Therefore, the process is, get rid of the sin, also, get rid of the unrepentant sinner, and come to the supper with a clean, sincere and genuine heart and soul. Only in this way, could there be true righteousness, and a life of sincerity. For Jesus to be in the observance with power and glory, the sin had to be expelled from the body of Christ. We may not like it, but the sin must go if the power of Jesus is to come.

C. It makes sense to deal with this matter because of Paul's caution. vs. 9-11

As we take a look at verses 9-11, let's begin with verse nine where Paul reminds the Corinthians that he had already told the church to not mingle or co-exist with fornicators in a previous letter. God never preserved that letter, but it is very obvious that Paul had been very frank about mixing with the world. Yet, here these same people who had received the earlier warning is now wanting to allow this sexual fornicator to stay in the church and have the same privileges as the other church members. Paul reaffirmed his caution or warning about this, and he emphatically was not going to tolerate the church's tolerance of evil.

In verse 10, Paul goes on to explain that he didn't mean that they would never be around any sinners, but that they were not to mingle with them, and by doing so give them the impression that what these sinners were doing was alright. In other words, what Paul was talking about was insulation and not isolation from the worldly crowd. Paul just simply stated that it would be impossible for the believers to never have any contact with these sinful people because if that were possible, they would have to go and live in another world. Paul was strong and firm, but he also was realistic.

Then, in verse eleven, Paul becomes more specific and gets down to the nitty gritty of the matter. He tells the Corinthian believers that they were not to hang out with one who said he was a brother, and I might even add, sister, if these people were professing to be saved and yet, were not living like a saved person. Then, the other believers were not to even sit down and have a meal with them. This was not isolationism as I stated earlier, but the purpose of this was to not give the impression that the church tolerated or compromised with this person in his or her sin. Also, if the people spent time with these evil ones and never took a stand against their sins, they would be encouraging and enabling the sinners to even get worse. And, this fellowship with the wicked would also negate the testimony of the believers before the world. So, it is quite obvious that it is alright for us to have contact with some lost people, or hypocrites who profess Christ, but don't live it, but it is not right for us to give the impression that we compromise with these wicked people or even give attention to them unless they stop their sinning through repentance, and desire to get right with God. We are to separate ourselves from these who might have a tendency to give us a bad reputation, but we should not stop keeping the channel of communication open so that we might help them get right with God.

D. It makes sense to deal with the matter because of the corruption of this wicked man. vs. 12-13

As we come to these last two verses in this chapter, it seems to me that some people in the Corinthian Church had accused Paul of being too judgmental of this sexually immoral man in the church. Maybe they had accused him of being a holier-than-thou man, and when Paul responds with this letter, he explicitly tells them that as the founder of the church in Corinth, he doesn't have the right to judge those outside the church, but he certainly does those who are members of the church and

pretend or profess to be saved. Going back to what Paul said earlier in this text, we need to realize that a little leaven contaminates the entire lump. In other words, these sinful immoral people in the church membership must be dealt with, and when we do, our action should be with a heart of love, and with the intention of trying to correct and restore the fallen person. And, I will tell you that this is exactly what happened with this dear man. There is much evidence that the church family did in fact withdraw fellowship from this brother, and later in Second Corinthians, Chapter Two, Paul reminds this same church to forgive this man and restore him into the fellowship of believers. So, the reason for withdrawing fellowship from this man was to get him to repent, and when he did finally repent, the burden of forgiveness was now in the laps of the other church people. So you see, the purpose of this exclusion was not for punishment, but for correction and eventual restoration. And, praise God, it worked! I do hope and pray that in this generation when the church is so worldly, and the world is so churchy, that we will begin to stand up against the evil in our churches, but always with the eventual role of trying to get people right with Jesus.

Conclusion

Well friends, sexual immorality did come to the Corinthian Church. And, the church members were so concerned with being politically correct that they prided themselves on being so loving and tolerant that they just let this wicked man keep coming without confronting him and his sin. Of course, when Paul the apostle found out about this matter, he courageously told the people to deal with the situation because the testimony of the church was at stake, and he emphasized that the matter had to be dealt with immediately. Also, we must remember that in addition to Paul wanting the church to have the power of God, he desired also that they might withdraw from this man because he needed to be made ashamed of his behavior.

So, Paul pushed the church to do what was right, and not only did they clear up the problem within the flock of God, but it ultimately resulted in the man repenting and getting right with God. And of course, this was Paul's overriding intention to begin with. Folks, it is never easy to confront people who are living in sin, but even if they get mad at us at the moment, they will probably never get right with God until they are exposed as being either a carnal believer, or even a lost church member. The purpose of rebuke is not to condemn or destroy, but the purpose of rebuke is to reveal the seriousness of the sin, and then hopefully, get this guilty person to acknowledge his sin and get right with God. I might just add, that a small amount of embarrassment temporarily is well worth it, if this person will then get right with God and be restored to the flock. Just remember that a little leaven will eventually leaven the entire lump, unless of course, this leaven of evil is taken out of the body of believers. As a pastor for over 53 years, I would say that we have a lot of churches in this modern day where we need to deal with the sin in the camp. If we don't, we can never expect to see a great movement of God and a demonstration of His saving power.

Chapter Nine

"A Question About Christians Who Sue Other Christians"

Scripture: I Corinthians 6:1-8

Introduction

Now, as we move forward with this wonderful study of First Corinthians, I invite you to look with me at the first part of Chapter 6. And, as we take a careful look at the first eight verses of this chapter, I must tell you that this is another very serious problem which Paul was trying to solve in the Corinthian Church. And to be honest, this problem is another very shocking one. I say this because these first eight verses deal with the question about Christians taking their brothers and sisters in the church to the secular courts to try and solve disagreements.

Certainly, the text does not reveal what the disagreements were over, but most assuredly because of the other divisions in the church which we have already discussed, there truly was a conflict that it seemed the people couldn't solve, or either they just didn't want to solve the way believers should handle their disagreements. So, let's dig deep in these next few verses and learn the truth of the text, and then ask God for wisdom on how to apply this truth in in our church families. There is one thing for sure, and that is that we just don't need any more divisions in our churches today than what we already have, and for sure, we don't need secular courts trying to settle arguments between brothers and sisters in Christ.

I. NOTICE THE RIGID REBUKE FOUND IN THIS QUESTION. v. 1

A. First, it is an appalling rebuke. v. 1a

In the first part of this verse, Paul just really confronts the people as he seems to really be out of sorts with them. Let me paraphrase the first part of the verse to really get the depth of what Paul is saying. Paul says, "How dare any of you who have a matter of disagreement or argument with another to take the problem to secular courts and judges to try and settle the matter?" Paul was just inflamed with what these people were doing. Of course, as we have already seen, Paul had already had to deal with so many problems that it is just no wonder he was out of sorts with the people. Not only were they disobeying how God had told the believers to deal with problems of disagreement, but they were resorting to trusting secular courts more than they were the leadership of the church to help them solve the problem. Yet, I must tell you that I have seen many professing believers down through the years resort to worldly tactics to try and solve problems, but I have never seen one situation like this solved without resulting in lasting bitterness and animosity. I am sure that Paul knew that this is what would happen there in Corinth.

B. Secondly, it is an appealing rebuke. v. 1b

As Paul continued his rebuke of these Corinthian believers, it just truly seems that he was saying, "Do you honestly think that lost secular unjust judges could handle a disagreement better than truly saved people?" It was like Paul was saying, "I don't think so!" He was just utterly disgusted with these carnal and confused people in the Corinthian church. Truthfully, it was as if Paul was indicting the people for believing that secular lost judgment had more wisdom than believers who had the illuminating presence of the Holy Spirit within. So, Paul just appeals to them to stop their foolish practice of trusting Satan's people more so than trusting God's people.

II. NOTICE THE REAL REASON FOR THIS QUESTION. vs. 2-6

A. The first reason is the saints' status. vs. 2-3

In verses two and three, Paul really presses the people by telling them that how could you be taking matters to secular courts when in fact one day we believers are going to judge the world (kosmos-mankind)? It seems rather ridiculous that we who are going to be given the responsibility of judging others on behalf of our Lord can't even make simple judgments about the smaller things we argue about here on earth. Please pay attention to the following verse. **Matthew 19:28, "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man, shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."** This verse might seem a little hard to understand, but I don't think it is.

In this verse Jesus seems to be referring to the future day when God will fulfill his promises to the nation of Israel during His millennial reign here on earth after the rapture of the church and the Great Tribulation. During this time, faithful servants of God who died before the rapture, and those who are caught up in the rapture are going to be given reigning responsibility over the people alive during the millennium. Therefore, Paul is saying, "if we are going to be trusted with this kind of authority, why is it that we can't settle the smaller matters in our churches?" Personally, I believe that Paul is revealing to the Corinthian believers that his evaluation of the problems they were arguing about were not really that important, but in their own minds they had elevated them to huge problems. Of course, isn't this what Satan always does? He always magnifies the problems to make them seem insurmountable. If he can get us to exaggerate the size of the problems, then we will be more inclined to go to the secular world for a court solution or judgment. This is so sickening. It is just making a mountain out of a molehill.

In the third verse, Paul also includes the fact that if we can't solve problems between two brothers or two sisters in the church, how do we think we are going to be able to judge angels out in the future? Of course, the Bible is not precise on when or how we believers are going to judge the angels at some point in the future, but according to II Peter 2:4, it may very well be that one day when God brings up the fallen angels from the pit for judgment, maybe He is just going to allow faithful

servants of God to hand out the punishment to these fallen angels who have given so much trouble and opposition to the saints here on earth. Maybe this will be the day when God allows us to give vengeance to these terrible creatures who followed the example of the devil and rebelled against God and His people. They have no doubt afflicted millions of people with their diabolic Satanic influence, and thus by what this verse In II Peter is teaching us is that they will have a payday someday for sure, and we will be there to help administer it. Hallelujah!

So, my friends, Paul says if you people are going to be given the responsibility of judging the fallen angels, why can't you handle the small things you encounter here in the church today? I just wish that we could not only believe Paul's admonition, but also live and practice this by dealing with the problems and come to a conclusion about settling our differences here on earth in our church families. Yet, we surely know that so very often, these disagreements in the churches here are rarely settled unless there is a church split or division. God help us to be mature enough to deal with these problems according to God's plan and authority.

B. The second reason is the saints' sin. v. 4

I suppose that we might say that one of the Corinthian believers' biggest sins was just simply negligence. Obviously, there were in many people in the church who were spiritual enough and qualified to make judgments in these smaller matters, but this would never have been brought up if there had not been outright negligence. And, an amazing thing about what Paul is saying here is that these problem matters were of such a small nature that the least esteemed in the church were very much capable of dealing with them. In other words, he did not tell the pastors and deacons to deal with them, but that these matters should be solved by those who were esteemed to be lowly. By the way, it has been my experience that some of those who are the smartest and most spiritually discerning in the church are often times the wisest when it comes to solving problems.

When I think of the statement I just made, I can't help but think about a man in one of my churches in days gone by. This man was a mountain man who worked daily as an automobile mechanic, but when we in the church were trying to solve problems, he always would come up with a better solution than anyone else. Therefore, I reached the point that I was more inclined to get his recommended solution than any of our other church members. We must never forget that the greatest wisdom for any situation is that which comes from God through the spiritual understanding of His Word.

C. The third reason is the saints' shame. vs. 5-6

We now come to verses 5-6. These are two very serious verses. I say this because of the shame that was being placed upon these negligent saints who did not want to deal with and settle their problems. But instead, they were taking these problems to the secular judgment seat where they were destroying their testimony before a lost world. Thus, Paul tells them that it was indeed a very shameful thing that they were doing by allowing the secular judges to make decisions that these

saved people should be settling themselves. They had in fact capitulated their responsibility to these secular courts, and by doing so, they were destroying their testimonies and the reputation of the Corinthian Church. Their sin of negligence led to an even greater sin of allowing the lost world to make an example out of their silly cases, and by doing so, their testimony was being destroyed and the name of Jesus was being dragged through the mud. Can we please learn from these terrible situations in the Corinthian Church? I surely hope we can! Let's make sure that we don't give the problems that should be solved by the church to a lost world whereby the name of Jesus is besmirched by this unchristian activity.

III. NOTICE THE RIGHT ROUTE AS A RESULT OF THIS QUESTION. vs. 7-8

A. This route includes acceptance of personal injury. v. 7

Now as we get to verse 7, we really see the strength of Paul's message to these negligent believers in Corinth. In this verse he tells them that they are truly guilty before God because they take their brothers and sisters to the secular courts. In other words, they have truly mocked the name of Jesus by their negligence to deal with their issues themselves. Paul goes on to tell them that it would be far better to be defrauded and lose the argument and even some finances than it would be to destroy the testimony of the church before the lost world. So, they just needed to get their greed, their selfishness and their egos out of the way and solve the problems without embarrassing one another and the name of Jesus before the lost world in a secular court. Paul told them that this was indeed a serious matter; not the problems themselves between each other, but the seriousness was in the wrong way they were trying to deal with the issues before secular courts. And, may I tell you that as pastor for over half a century, the biggest problems I have ever seen in any of the churches which I have pastored has been the petty and childish behavior of people who magnified small things, and made certain mountains out of the situations. These things start small, but if they are not dealt with, they will grow and fester until they become major issues which may even destroy a good church. It is far better to lose the arguments and squabbles than it is to lose the church and its effectiveness in a lost community or even the greater world.

B. This route includes abstention from personal injury. v. 8

In this last verse in this chapter, Paul the apostle really gets candid with the people in the Corinthian Church. He told them in verse seven that it would better to accept loss and wrong doing than to take their cases before a lost world and hurt the testimony of themselves and the church body. Now, Paul emphatically demands that they stop hurting one another by the wrong way they were dealing with these issues by suing one another in the secular courts of the land. It would be far better to accept injury to one's self than it would be to injure others and the name of Jesus by the way we handle these squabbles. It is much better for one to lose and everyone else win, than for one to lose and everyone else suffer defeat; including the cause of

Jesus Christ. We must do whatever we have to do to avoid hurting others and the cause of Christ by mishandling matters in our churches.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have covered these first eight verses of Chapter six of the book of First Corinthians rather in detail. Hopefully, we have come to understand the seriousness of God's children taking their problems and disagreements to the secular courts instead of dealing with them in the church family. We have learned that it is far better to suffer injury and loss than it is to take our brothers and sisters to the secular courts and suffer an even greater loss by ruining our testimonies and even the testimony of the church. Therefore hopefully, we have completed Chapter Nine of this commentary by vowing to work out our own problems within the fellowship of the church rather than taking our problems to the secular courts of the land. We must be more concerned about division in the family, our ruined testimonies, and the negation of a church's outreach and ministry, more than we are about our own selfish ways or covetousness for money or power. Hopefully, we won't be guilty of doing what the Corinthian believers did.

Now, before closing this chapter, I want to share some things from my heart about this Scripture in Chapter Six which we have studied. There are many people who use this text as a law with which to forbid any kind of law suit for a Christian. I don't believe we should go this far at all. I say this because there are many extenuating circumstances where a lawsuit probably should be carried out, even if the person being sued says he or she is a Christian. The point I am making is that there are many gray areas in which we cannot use legalism with this text to force the believer to not ever file a lawsuit against another professing Christian. But, it is extremely important that much wisdom from God must be used, and the motives for filing a lawsuit must be from the right motive; not for revenge, not from extreme bitterness, and not just for the love of money or because of covetousness. Let me mention just a few exceptions to the rule Paul has stated in our text. Of course, every person who is faced with the decision to sue someone must decide for himself or herself based upon the individual situation. And, I would suggest that before a lawsuit is pursued that every Christian should seek wise counsel from a well-trained senior pastor or other very knowledgeable counselor.

1. I believe that a Christian can sue a company which is responsible for some wrong or hurt where someone has been injured or hurt through the negligence of some person within the company, even when the wrong doer is a professing Christian.

2. I believe that a Christian can sue a doctor, medical clinic or hospital if someone has been severely injured or someone as died due to a medical mistake, even if one or two people who professed to be Christians made tragic mistakes which resulted in the terrible injuries or even death. The motive for the suit should not be revenge, but to get some relief from enormous bills or to comfort those who may have lost their provider in the home due to the mistakes. The institution is responsible for the people who work there. In fact, many of these institutions have compensatory

insurance that may compensate the suffering or grief stricken people who have lost a loved one.

3. I believe that there are grounds for a Christian who owns property to evict another Christian from a residence or business property if that person fails to pay the proper rent on the property. Let me give you some good advice from attorney Matthew B. Tozer, a Christian lawyer in southern California. "A Christian versus Christian landlord-tenant dispute, it seems, can be resolved via Christian mediation arbitration in most cases. However, in some cases, going to the magistrate may be proper if the Christian tenant refuses to vacate, refuses to pay rent, and refuses to immediately seek a Christian mediator and/or arbitrator to quickly resolve the dispute."²

4. Finally, I would like to mention that I do believe there are circumstances involving some automobile accidents where an injured person might sue the insurance company of the other person, but it must be handled properly and with the right motive. Let me share something else with you from Matthew Tozer, Christian attorney in California.

Christians Covered by Insurance:

"In many cases, the person who caused your harm or damage is covered by insurance. Example: Automobile accident cases. What if that insured person is a Christian? In some states, you can sue the Christian's secular insurance company directly. Therefore you don't have to directly sue the Christian who harmed you. In other states, you must sue the individual even though the insurance company (surety) is paying for the damages and controlling the case. Obviously, a secular insurance company will rarely, if ever, agree to a Christian dispute resolution process. For example, if you were seriously injured, out of work, and unable to provide for your family, what do you do if the negligent driver who caused your damages is a Christian? Remember, you have an obligation to provide for your family (**1 Timothy 5:8**). Therefore, in that situation, seeking fair compensation via an out-of-court settlement through a believer's insurance company would appear reasonable. Moreover, if the insurance company is unreasonable or disputes liability, you may have to file a lawsuit (or go to trial) in order to obtain compensation for your losses. The Christian versus Christian issue is, I believe, incidental in this matter in nearly all of these types of cases.

What if your injuries were temporary and your own health insurance paid for your bills, but the automobile insurance company won't pay you as much "pain and suffering" damages as you think is fair? There are sections later in this article that may help you make a wise decision.

In general, I believe that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company if the claim is pursued without malice or

² Matthew B. Tozer, Christian Attorney in California, Website, Article: God and Government, pages 4-9

slander or greed. The following advice may be helpful to you: "Do not initiate anything without first saturating the matter with prayer." God loves you and wants to guide you in the best path."³

³ Ibid, pages 3-4

Chapter Ten

"A Strong Proclamation Against Sexual Impurity"

Scripture: I Corinthians 6:9-20

Introduction

Earlier in this study, we talked about the man in the church at Corinth who committed incestuous relationships with his stepmother, and of course, the ultimate lackadaisical attitude that the church members had toward this very sinful and immoral man. Truthfully, as we discovered earlier, this man brought sexual immorality to church, and the people prided themselves on being tolerant of him and his sin. Thus, Paul the Apostle had to deal with this matter sternly, and later in Second Corinthians, there is evidence that the man repented and Paul instructed the people to forgive him and welcome him back into the church body as a repentant sinner.

Now, here in the last part of Chapter six, Paul makes a strong proclamation once again about the seriousness of sexual impurity in any form. In fact, he takes his time and reveals many specific sins which we will take a look at in this discussion, and he provides pertinent information for everyone in the church how they ought to be living and glorifying God in their bodies. And, it is very evident to me that Paul wants to not only expose the sins of the people, but also to warn them about allowing any of those professing to be saved to go on committing these horrible sins. These twelve verses under study in the remaining part of this chapter are some tremendous words of admonishment and warning for every child of God. Truthfully, these verses written by Paul were given to the Corinthian church members to help them to discern vividly those who just said they were saved, and those who really gave evidence of genuine salvation. The fact is that if a person continues to commit sexual immorality, this person is not really saved. Why do I say this? Because if a person is truly saved and commits these horrible abominable sins, then God's Holy Spirit living within him or her will make either one most miserable, and if there is genuine salvation, then the person will no doubt repent of his or her sins, and turn from their wicked ways. But, if the person is not really saved, then this individual will go on committing these grave sins without guilt or conviction. Of course, the only solution in this case is for the person to really get under deep conviction as a lost person and eventually repent and get saved and come to Christ. Then, the individual will in fact stop this terrible debauchery of sexual sin and allow Jesus to really change them and make them genuinely a child of God.

Therefore, let's take a close look at these twelve verses and see what God is trying to get across to us as we study the text with a teachable heart.

I. NOTICE THE WISOM OF THIS PROCLAMATION. vs. 9-14

A. It is truly a wise proclamation because of the varied distortion of sex. vs. 9-10

In verse nine Paul asked the question, "Don't you know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Then, he goes on to describe specifically some of the terrible sins that give true evidence that a person is not saved and will not go to heaven. Of course, all of us know that there are no big sins and little sins, but we do know that some sins, like sexual sins, have far greater consequences. So, Paul goes on in this verse to list some of these serious sins that a person will go on committing which for sure indicate that the person is not saved. Therefore, those who continue these horrible sins will have no part in the kingdom of God.

Paul lists fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, and abusers of themselves with mankind. The fornicators are those men who indulge in unlawful sexual intercourse; sometimes even for money. The thought is that Paul was probably talking here about male prostitutes. The word fornicator in the Greek is the " pornos", from which we get the word pornography. This word in itself reveals to us the seriousness of this sin, and why people who are living in this debauched condition cannot enter the kingdom of God.

The second serious sin that Paul mentions here in this verse is idolatry. Idolatry is hated by God, and has always been despised because our God is a jealous God and demands that we worship none other than Him. Personally, because I have been to the ruins of Corinth on two occasions, I believe this was a type of idolatry which was associated with sexual sin, such as the worship of Aphrodite. Aphrodite was the goddess of fertility, and in worshipping this goddess, the men and women would go to the temple and engage in horrible sexual immorality with the temple prostitutes; both female and male. This sexual sin was truly the god of lust and pleasure, and it was and still is an abomination before God.

The third word or sin which Paul mentions in this verse is the word adulterers. Of course, we know that this sin is the breaking of marriage vows and having sex with someone outside the marriage relationship. Thus, when this happens, the person not only sins against God, but he or she sins against their spouse, their family members, and yes, even the spouse and family of the woman with whom the sin is committed.

The fourth sin mentioned by Paul is the word effeminate. This word in the Greek is the word "malakoi," and it means soft to touch. I believe it is referring to the passive male perversion of these individuals rather than to be aggressive or sadistic which we will see next. Also, when I think of the term effeminate, I think of sissy or feminine-like. Thus, maybe we can just say that this passive male is the male partner in homosexuality with a woman-like personality and one who responds like a female in a male relationship. Truly, this is an abomination before God, but we do know that this was happening in the city of Corinth, and may have affected the church there. Just remember the tolerance of this congregation in Chapter five, and I think you will agree with me that the church may have allowed this rotten behavior to come into their church as well.

The fifth sin described by Paul in this verse is the sin "of abusers of themselves with mankind." Without a doubt, this phrase refers to the aggressive, sadistic, or even masochistic male in a homosexual relationship. God emphatically calls this sodomy. This is the serious sin which brought down fire and brimstone on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. And, this destruction found in the Book of

Genesis, Chapter nineteen, most assuredly reminds us of God's attitude toward this twisted perversion of sexuality, and it should warn us of the serious judgment that will befall any person who gets into this wickedness and develops this lifestyle without repenting and changing his direction. Just remember that God does hate this twisted sin, but He still loves the sinner.

Next, in verse ten, Paul describes five more sins that will ultimately keep a person out of heaven, if this person doesn't repent and change his or her lifestyle. The solution requires the transformation of mind and behavior, and this is only possible by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and sincere broken repentance before God and a turning away from this wicked lifestyle. The sins that Paul mentions in this verse are, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. The truth the apostle is trying to get across here is not that one who has at one time or another committed these sins cannot go to heaven, but he is telling the Corinthians and us today that people who commit these sins and remain in these lifestyles as proof they are not saved, for sure can't be saved and enter the kingdom of God.

So, what I see in this verse is that Paul is following up on the sexual sins mentioned in verse nine by telling the people that many of these sins listed here in this verse will indeed contribute to the sexual sins described in the previous verse. You see folks, when a person commits sexual sin, that person has stolen from the partner or future partner of that individual involved in sex with him or her. Secondly, a lot of sexual sin is the end result of drunken debauchery or drug induced misbehavior. You see, sexual sin is the usual evident result of other sins which people involve themselves in. And of course, the word revilers means those who accuse and abuse others with contempt. This is usually the byproduct of sexual sin and immorality.

Let me illustrate this with something that is going on right now in America. For many weeks, President Donald Trump has been trying to get the Democratic Senators to come together and vote on Judge Brett Kavanaugh and place him on the U.S. Supreme Court as a new Justice. But, because of some woman's accusations against Judge Kavanaugh from 36 years ago when he was supposed to have sexually molested her, the wicked Democrats are railing against this precious man and his family. Even after hours and hours of questions and attacks by the liberal senators, not one of these Democratic Senators have changed their minds to vote for Judge Kavanaugh, even with no corroboration of these charges. These unethical, unfounded attacks, and just plain evil actions are just political because these wicked liberals want to keep on killing babies through abortion. We have already murdered over 60 million babies in America, and they want to just keep on killing these precious children. Therefore, they want to stop the nomination of a man that they believe might vote to change the law concerning abortion in this land.

The next word or sin mentioned by Paul in this verse ten is the word extortion. The word in the Greek actually means "a rapacious or ravenous robber." This refers to a person who is so obsessed with getting whatever he desires or wants that he doesn't care who he injures or hurts in the process. In other words, everything is about him and his. But here in this text, Paul tells the people in Corinth that the person who continues in this lifestyle has no hope of going to heaven unless they repent and get saved, and then of course, change his life and behavior. No one,

absolutely no one, can live as if he or she wants to live so selfishly and then, even expect to go to heaven. Yet, if a person does repent and get saved, even this extortioner can be forgiven and allowed to enter heaven. But, there has to be proof before the Lord of a changed heart and life.

B. It is a wise proclamation because of the valuable discovery for sexual sin. v. 11

Now, in verse eleven, Paul interjects a message of hope for those who were so stooped and involved in sexual sin and debauchery. The hope lies in the fact that some of those people in Corinth were a living testimony to the power of God's amazing grace. Why? Because they used to be guilty of all of the sins which Paul described, but obviously, they had been saved and forgiven by God, and now they were new people in Christ. So, if these people could get saved, there was and still is hope for others who are living the way the Corinthians used to live.

This would be a good time for me to preach just a little. If there are those of you who have picked up this commentary to read, and you know that you are still living in the depths of sexual sin, please, please know that there is truly hope for you, if you will really repent, get saved, and changed by the power of God. This is the reason Jesus came down from heaven and died on the cross; that is to pay our sin debt. Thus, all men who honestly and genuinely come to Jesus and ask for cleansing and forgiveness will indeed be forgiven, just like He did for the Corinthians when they got saved and became a part of the church in Corinth.

There is an amazing truth here in verse eleven in addition to what we have already seen. The truth is that when God saves a person from a lifestyle of sexual sin or perversion, He sanctifies the person and sets them apart for Himself. They have not only been forgiven, but they have been washed whiter than snow before the Lord of heaven and earth, and they have been justified before the Judge of heaven and earth. In other words, when we get saved, our guilty record as a sinner by nature has been erased by the blood of Jesus because He took our place on Calvary. So, when we get saved, Christ sanctifies us, justifies us before God the Father, and He empowers us to live a righteous and holy life before others.

C. It is a wise proclamation because of the valid desire for sex. v. 12a

In the first part of verse 12, Paul tells the Corinthians that there are some things that we might do within certain limitations that may be appropriate, but if we do them and they don't bear positive fruit, then they should not be done. I just believe that there were people in the Corinthian Church who were pushing the limit with Paul, just like in the case of the man who committed sexual sin with his stepmother. They undoubtedly thought that because of the tolerance of the church with the man back in Chapter five, then they too might be able to do whatever they wanted to do. So, what Paul is telling the believers is that the desire for sex within certain parameters is truly good for married people, but it should not be used just to satisfy their lust in any way they thought they wanted to carry it out.

In the next chapter of First Corinthians, we will talk about the sacredness of sex within the marriage relationship, but once more we must be warned that to

disregard the limitations and restraints on this God-given right is to bring chastisement for the believer and certain hell for the unbeliever. Sex is a natural gift from God to man and woman, but it is not natural to conduct it outside of the limitations and restraints of marriage.

D. It was a wise proclamation because of the vicious danger in sex. v. 12b

The last part of this verse has a tremendous truth and warning. The truth is that there is a right way to participate in sexuality within marriage, but there is the possibility to become imprisoned by sexual lust and desire. Paul tells the church that he will not capitulate himself to the lust of the flesh because he doesn't want sexual sin to have power over his life. Therefore, he will obviously not surrender himself to the power and control of sexual sin. May I tell you that our prisons wouldn't be filled with sexual predators if these people would have given their bodies to Jesus and to the control of the Holy Spirit.

E. It was a wise proclamation because of the volatile disposition of the body and its desires. v. 13a

In the first part of verse 13, Paul describes the temporary nature for the desires of the body. This means that if someone wants to eat meat or indulge in sex perversion, they can choose to do so, but these desires of the flesh come and go quickly. And of course, Paul tells the believers in Corinth that because of the temporary nature of the desires of the flesh, these things should not have priority in our lives. Why? Because all the items that satisfy our lusts and desires are going to be done away with.

Let me just take a moment and say right here that I truly believe that the major reason evangelism and missions have been on the back burner of ministries in the churches here in America and abroad, is that the majority of people in these churches are only concerned with what is temporary rather than what is eternal. And, this is exactly what Paul is saying in this verse. The desires of the flesh and the body are only temporary, and both will deteriorate at some point in lives. Therefore, whatever we do in our bodies should be done with the eternal goal of laying up treasures in heaven.

F. It was a wise proclamation because of the virtuous design of the body. v. 13b

In the last part of verse 13, we discover an expansion of the thoughts Paul has given to us about the body and how we use it. Here in this part of the verse, Paul is saying that the purpose of our bodies is to be the dwelling place of Jesus Christ, and to glorify Christ with everything we do in these bodies. And of course, there is no way that we could ever glorify Christ with sexual sin or any other kind of sin in our bodies. We are to use our bodies as vessels of honor fit for the Master's use. In fact, we are not our own, but we belong to Christ who paid the purchase price for our redemption when He died for us on the cross. So, we should use our bodies for God's glory because this is why He made us!

G. It is a wise proclamation because of the victorious dominion over the desires of the body. v. 14

Well folks, if our bodies have been made to ultimately deteriorate and then die, then we would only have hope in the power of the resurrected Lord Who not only arose from the dead Himself, but He also offers to us resurrection power to live above the temptations of the flesh here in this life. Truthfully, I believe this is what Paul was talking about in my favorite passage of Scripture found in Philippians, Chapter three. Please pay attention to what Paul said in **Philippians 3:10**, when he said these words, **That I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death:**" Did you see what Paul is saying? He is saying that his supreme desire was to know Christ much better intimately, and to experience His resurrection power in his life everyday that he lived. This should be our desire also because the only way for us to overcome the diabolic temptations of the flesh is to live experientially under the power of the resurrected Lord. Yes, for certain, there is power over the flesh, but it is only possible in and through the resurrected power of Christ Jesus.

II. NOTICE THE WARNING IN THIS PROCLAMATION. vs. 15-17

A. This warning includes a reminder of the believer's unusual position. v. 15

We now move on in our study of Paul's letter to the Corinthian Church. As we continue the thoughts about Paul's strong proclamation against sexual impurity, we come to a specific warning to the believers about the seriousness of desecrating the body. You see folks, as we have mentioned before in this study, our bodies are not ours, but we have been purchased by Christ's death on the cross as the cost of our redemption. Therefore, when we come to Christ and are baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit, we become His vessels, and thus, we dare not join our bodies to some sexually illicit individual, but only our God-given spouses. If we do, then we fail to recognize our position in Christ, and desecrate our bodies, the very temple or dwelling place of Christ. The key to refraining from this sin, is to remember that when Jesus saves us, we are not our own. Thus, whatever we do in our bodies brings our Holy Savior into an unholy relationship. We must never forget our position.

B. This warning includes a reminder of the believer's ugly possibility. v. 16

The thought of whose we are, and to whom we belong should give us the desire to say no to temptation because when a person commits a sexual sin with an illegitimate partner, that terrible sin joins the body in which Christ lives to the other partner in an ungodly way. According to Genesis 2:24, when the man and woman come together in a sexual relationship, then the two become one. Therefore, it is a very serious and sinful thing for believers with Christ living on the inside to stoop so low that he or she would desecrate the temple of God. Yet, we must never forget that Satan always stands ready to tempt a person to fall, and if we are going to withstand this temptation, then we must have the power of God's Word and the presence of

the Holy Spirit living within us. And, we must ever remember that a few moments of pleasure can and often does bring a life-time of hurt and regrets. Even as a pastor now for over 53 years, I can't help but remember vividly so many people who use to be faithful and dedicated believers who are now on the garbage heap of broken homes, enormous hurt, and a life of sad regrets. We must remember that it is far better to say no to temptation, then it is to try and pick up the pieces after succumbing to Satan's brazen temptation.

C. This warning includes a believer's unique partnership. v. 17

Now, in verse seventeen, we discover the unique partnership between the born-again child of God, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. I have often times illustrated this relationship by using the analogy of putting a sponge into the water, and the water then goes into the sponge. This so vividly illustrates what happens when a person gets gloriously saved. The Holy Spirit baptizes the new believer into the body of Christ, and then, takes up His dwelling place in the child of God. Thus, to commit sexual sin is to not only sin against God the Father, but it merges the saved person who possesses the indwelling Holy Spirit with the sinful partner, and thus, the sinning person just joins his or her body with the presence of Christ living within with an illegitimate partner, and thus desecrates and dishonors the very Holy Spirit on the inside of him or her by this dastardly act. We must decide whether we want to partner with the indwelling Holy Spirit, or do we want to partner with another person who may be Satan's representative.

III. NOTICE THE WEIGHTINESS OF THIS PROCLAMATION. vs. 18-20

We come now to the third point in this chapter, and this continuing point is Paul's strong message to the Corinthians about sexual impurity. We have already discussed the wisdom of this proclamation and the warning Paul gave the people about this sin. Here in this third point, Paul really reveals the seriousness of sexual impurity, and he does it with no reservation or reluctance. We too should get this message and realize that though sexual sin is not a more serious sin than any other, it does produce far worse consequences which I have stated earlier in this commentary. Now, let's look carefully at the weightiness or seriousness of Paul's message to the Corinthian believers, and to us as well.

A. Paul's proclamation reveals that sexual sin is a sin against one's body. v. 18

In this verse, Paul tells the Corinthians that they are to flee fornication or sexual sin. The word flee here means to aggressively flee or run from sexual immorality. In other words, the child of God is to do everything he or she can to avoid sexual impurity because this is a sin that does lasting damage to anyone's body. What Paul is trying to get across to the people is the seriousness of this kind of sin, because sexual sin not only damages the mind and emotions of a child of God, but it contaminates the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Also, this would be a good place for me to mention that in this day of A.I.D.S, and many other kind of sexually transmitted diseases, sexual sin is very dangerous because of the possibility of contracting a fatal disease. And, because I work in African prisons as a missionary, I have seen first hand what sexually transmitted diseases can do. Right now, 40% of all of our prison inmates in our Africa prisons have A.I.D.S or some other sexually transmitted disease. Therefore, sexual sin may not be any different than other sins, but the consequences are far greater. So, our commitment as born again children of God should be to flee or avoid sexual sin with everything in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. Paul's proclamation reveals that sexual sin is a sin against God's building. v. 19

Once more in this verse, Paul repeats himself about the human body being the temple or dwelling place of God, and therefore, if we commit sexual sin, we desecrate the body of Christ as well. We have no right to use our bodies for sin because our bodies have been purchased by Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, and therefore, they are not ours, but they belong to Jesus. We must remember that anything we do that harms our bodies is also harming our Lord Jesus Who lives within us.

C. Paul's proclamation reveals that sexual sin is a sin against the Savior's blood.
v. 20a

Folks, the price of our redemption was the willful shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. Therefore, when we commit sexual sin with these bodies we live in, then we are desecrating not only our bodies, but we are desecrating His precious blood. If you don't know what the word desecrate means, it means to defile, blaspheme, prostitute, or contaminate the sinless blood of Jesus Christ. This is the enormous price that has been paid for our salvation and redemption. Thus, we don't have the right to do with our bodies what we choose. And, I so wish that all of these women and girls who decide to murder their unborn babies would come to understand this when it comes to abortion. And truthfully, there would not be such a huge amount of abortions or murders if these women and girls would understand that their bodies are sacred and belong to God. Please don't contaminate the blood of Jesus by your sexual sins or perversion.

D. Paul's proclamation reveals that sexual sin is a sin against God's blueprint. v. 20b

This last phrase in this chapter reminds us of two very important truths. These truths are that God has a plan or blueprint for every person's life, and this plan or blueprint has two main purposes. First, we are to glorify God in our bodies. Secondly, we are to glorify God with our human spirits. Of course, we can't possibly do this with our spirits unless our spirits are captivated and controlled by the Holy Spirit. And, I can readily assure you that unless we realize that we are not our own, we can never possibly glorify God with our bodies and with our spirits. So, we must concentrate on whose we are, and to whom we belong!

Conclusion

We have now concluded another wonderful chapter in this study of First Corinthians. This entire chapter has been a strong admonition by Paul the apostle that we are to refrain from committing sexual sins in our bodies which have been bought with the precious blood of the Lamb of God when He died on the cross for our sins. Therefore, if for no other reason, it should be our overwhelming desire to honor Him with lives of holiness and righteous living. But, if this is to happen, then we must make sure that we avoid or flee the temptation which Satan brings our ways, and we must be resolute in saying no to this devil who would love to destroy not only our bodies, but also our Christian testimonies which some of the Corinthian believers did. Can I say again, we must not bring reproach on Jesus by surrendering to the temptation to commit sexual sin.

In this chapter we have learned about Paul's wisdom for this proclamation, the warning in the proclamation and of course, the weightiness or seriousness of this proclamation. Therefore, we have a choice to make. While professing Christ as our Savior and Lord, we can let down our guard and plunge into immoral sin, or we can emphatically say to Satan to leave us alone and refuse to desecrate these bodies which God has purchased for Himself through His death on the cross. Because we no longer belong to ourselves if we have really been saved, our precious Lord has the right to demand that we **".....present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)**

So once more, my dear friends, may I challenge you the reader, and yes, even myself, to make a resolute commitment to stay clean before God and finish our race staying true to Christ morally. We have a huge amount to lose if we through weakness and willful sin throw away everything for a few moments of sinful pleasure. I assure you that it will truly be worth the effort, if we will always flee sexual sin and stay faithful to God in body and spirit.

Chapter Eleven

"The Sacredness Of Sex Within Marriage"

Scripture: I Corinthians 7:1-9

Introduction

Well folks, we now move on to Chapter seven in the Book of First Corinthians. In this chapter in the Bible, and yes, in this Chapter eleven in our commentary, we move on from sexual impurity and sin in the life of professing believers to some truth and understanding about the sacredness of sex within the marriage relationship. In this chapter, we are going to learn about a new problem that Paul was trying to deal with specifically in the Corinthian Church, and we are going to be reminded of how God planned the sex relationship to be only within the confines of marriage and the marriage vows. The modern generation in which we live today may not take the sacredness of sex within marriage very seriously, but God still does, and so should we. May we be reminded that God created us, male and female, and He also planned the proper relationship for marriage and for sexual intimacy. Multitudes of people make fun of, and just plain defy God's plan during these bold and defiant days, but nothing changes the fact that God made man and woman and He gave the sex relationship to the husband and wife to draw the married couple together and knit them in love and affection, and the sexual relationship was never intended for two men or two women together. In fact, homosexuality and lesbianism is an abomination to God, and as we know from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God never tolerates this debauchery and perversion very long. Yes, He still loves these queer people, but He hates their wicked sins, and be assured that sooner than later, He will bring cataclysmic destruction on these people if they fail to repent and turn from their wicked ways.

In this Chapter seven of the Book of First Corinthians, we are also going to take a look at Paul's instructions concerning the partnership between a man and his wife, and God's and Paul's desired preference for marriage. We are going to see here in this chapter as we did back in Chapter six that God's Word is very clear about committing any kind of sexual sin, whether it be fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism or any other kind of illicit sexual encounter. I would ask each of you readers to really pay close attention to what God is trying to teach us through these inspired words of Paul the Apostle. There is so much truth here that is so relevant for the terribly immoral times in which we now live. There is one thing we must never forget. That is, that God has not changed His plan for our wellbeing since the first century when Paul wrote our text, and God's plan and rules are still the same from one generation to another. And, if we think we are too smart to need to apply God's plan and rules in our generation, then we are sadly wrong, and we might just as well get ready for the judgment of God. So, let's now open our eyes and hearts to what God truly wants to show us in these following verses. After we study this text carefully, we will never be able to say that we have not been properly warned by God against sexual perversion in our lives.

I. NOTICE THE PROBLEM THAT DEMANDED A RESPONSE. v. 1

A. There was the problem of sexual abstinence between the married. v. 1a

As we move on in this wonderful study, we seem now to run into another problem that Paul was having to deal with in the church at Corinth. It seems to me that someone in the church at Corinth had come up with the silly question that if some husband and wife got saved, were they to stop having sexual relations due to their salvation. The very idea of this was completely stupid when you stop to think about it. Obviously, some of the people had listened to Paul's teaching about sexual impurity until they misinterpreted what he was saying. They just seemed to have come to the conclusion that if people were saved, they were to stop being intimate in their marriage relationship. From all indication, someone in the church at Corinth had written to Paul to ask about this matter. So, once again, Paul had to deal with this childish and immature matter.

Maybe this would be a good time for me to even address the greater issue of why people ask dumb questions which should be easily answered if people just used a little common sense. Why do I say this? Well, the people in Corinth no doubt had the Old Testament Law and Prophets, and therefore, they should have known that the sex relationship between a husband and wife was sacred due to the teaching in the Book of Genesis. Then, why on earth would someone ask about this matter when they already knew that the blessings of God were already on the physical intimacy of a husband and wife? Of course, having been a pastor for more than half a century, I know that much of a pastor's time is taken up with childish and immature questions. Church members would not have to bother or aggravate a pastor with non-significant questions if they would just search the Scriptures and find out what thus sayeth the Lord.

So, my dear reader friends, this was a silly question about abstinence between a husband and wife, when the people should have been interested about abstinence for unmarried young men and women. Yet, in our American society today, there is more interest in abortion and killing babies than there is about abstinence. Let me tell you a story that illustrates this.

Sometime ago, one of our delinquent church members in our present church wrote me an e-mail to brag about her unmarried daughter being pregnant with a baby even before she ever got married. This ridiculous mom was proud that her daughter was pregnant through a sinful act. In fact, she told me in the e-mail that this had to be God's will and blessing because her daughter had gotten pregnant before, and that baby died. So, we have a professing Christian mom bragging about the sin her daughter committed because a new baby was going to be born. May I tell you as a man of God that this was one of the sickest things I have ever read. To be very blunt, I would say that this mom's attitude was one of the most wicked I ever witnessed in any church member in all of the eleven churches I have pastored down through my years in the ministry. We need to pray for these very deceived and hypocritical people. She and her husband are truly phonies!

B. There was the problem of sexual action before marriage. v. 1b

In the second part of verse one, Paul says the following, **"It is good for a man not to touch a woman."** What Paul is talking about here is that if a man is single and can't control his sexual desire, he will have more time to devote himself to Christ and the ministry. But, if he can't control his sexual desires, then the only proper way for him to satisfy this desire, is to get married legally and have his own wife as Paul mentions in verse two. Let me reiterate one more time that sex before marriage, outside of marriage, or in any form apart from the husband-wife relationship is totally sin.

II. NOTICE THE PLAN THAT GOD HAS ESTABLISHED. v. 2

A. This is a plan for purity. v. 2a

In verse two of this chapter, Paul goes on to explain quite clearly that the only truly Biblical way to satisfy the desires of the flesh is to be properly married to a spouse, and that the sex relationship can only be carried out Biblically is in a proper marriage relationship. And, may I say again, there is no exception to this rule. Yet, I do know that there are many people today, just like in Paul's day, who honestly believe that they will be the exception and that God will allow them to commit sexual sin without retribution or chastisement. However, every person who ever comes to believe this will sooner or later be shockingly surprised and embarrassed. We must never forget what Galatians, Chapter six, tells us. This chapter tells us that whatever we sow, we shall surely reap. This is the law of the harvest, and this is the only law on earth that can never be broken.

B. This is a plan for propriety. v. 2b

So now, we see that every man is to have his own wife, and every woman is to have her own husband, if they intend to have a biblically-blessed sexual relationship. There are no exceptions to this rule, as I just mentioned in the previous paragraph. The word propriety means correctness or in the right way. Therefore, if two people are to be allowed to have sexual relationships, they must be married to each other, and must render unto the other due benevolence which Paul mentions in our next verse. So my friends, If you or someone you know are living with someone unmarried, engaging in sexual relationships, and pretending this is alright, just remember that it is not correct or alright. Instead, it is sinful, non-ethical, and especially negating to one's testimony. And, you can rest assured that God's judgment is coming very soon if there is no repentance and change in lifestyle. God never has played games with people who flaunt this rule of non-ethical and immoral behavior. The only outcome is suffering, heartache, and eventual disaster. There are no exceptions to this truth. And, don't you ever believe there is. There is coming a payday someday. You can truly count on this! Therefore, my friends, to go outside of or against God's rules for sexual misbehavior is to invite real trouble from God.

III. NOTICE THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE MAN AND HIS WIFE. vs. 3-5

A. This is a sacrificial partnership. v. 3

In order for a husband and wife to have a sacred sex life in their marriage, there has to be sacrificial attitudes and actions. Verse three is a reminder of Paul to the Corinthians that the sex relationship within marriage is a normal thing, and that each spouse is to recognize that their bodies are to be reserved for and given to their spouse. The idea here is that there is to be a sacrificial submission of one's physical body to the pleasure of the spouse. Therefore, because of the singularity of this willful submission, these bodies are not to be given to anyone else outside of the marriage relationship. In other words, these bodies within marriage are to be reserved for only their spouse, and to do less would invite catastrophe and the eventual judgment of God. So, what do we learn from this verse. We learn that sex between two married partners is quite normal, and it is to be looked at as a sacred privilege between the two parties.

B. This is a submissive partnership. v. 4

Verse four is a continuation of the thought in verse three. The physical relationship between a man and his wife is to be a very submissive relationship. This doesn't mean that the relationship should not have some rules, but it does mean that each person in the marriage is to abide by the rule to present his or her body as a gift to the spouse in a loving way. The truth is that just like the child of God has been given the responsibility of using his or her body for Christ as the temple of God, the husband and wife are to divest themselves of selfish power to withhold the sex relationship from the other.

Now, this brings to my mind the many years of marriage counseling I have done for so many couples. The sex relationship should never be used as a weapon to get back at the spouse, or even the withholding of this relationship should never be a weapon in order for one to get his or her way. I have heard so many couples down through the years tell me about how problems arose in many other areas of the marriage, but then, ended up in the bedroom because one or both of the spouses forgot that when they said "I do" to their spouse, they were capitulating their bodies to the satisfaction and enjoyment of the other. What this means is that sex is not just for the selfish desires of one of the partners, but it is the unique gift from God to help cement the relationship until death when one departs from his or her spouse. I will firmly tell you that if a couple allows this God-given relationship to be relegated to a tool or weapon for one to get his or her way, the marriage is on the way to disaster.

C. This is a satisfying partnership. v. 5a

Please notice the first part of verse five. In this very first phrase, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that if they withhold the sex relation from their partner, they have willfully robbed or stolen something that is rightfully the spouses, and if this does happen, there are severe consequences to face. However, if a child of God

withholds the physical relationship from his or her partner for the purpose of being isolated with God for spiritual intimacy, this is quite proper and all right. But, this restraint should not be for a very long time because the desires of the flesh are quite natural, and to avoid giving into the burning lusts of the flesh, these desires should be met in a proper relationship between the husband and the wife. The true goal of intimacy in marriage is to give oneself to the spouse in an unselfish way in order to bring to the spouse pleasure and wellbeing. To withhold this relationship from a spouse is to be self-centered and egocentric, and it may be a very cruel way to try to demonstrate bitterness toward the partner. So, the sex relationship is a normal relationship between a husband and wife, and it is to be looked upon with reverence and deep appreciation. As the Bible says in Genesis two, **"they two become one flesh."**

D. This is a subduing relationship. v. 5b

When I mention the word subduing in this verse, I am not talking about one or the other partner in the marriage relationship subduing the other. But, what Paul is saying is that if the couple cannot abstain from sexual relationship because of the desires of the flesh, then they should indeed come together intimately in order to prevent being led into sin outside of the marriage. If they satisfy the physical desires Biblically within marriage, then they will subdue or defeat the temptation to satisfy their desires outside of the marriage because of the strong seduction of Satan who loves to destroy homes and marriages.

So, the truth that Paul is trying to get across to the Corinthian believers is that if within their marriage relationship they decided to refrain from physical relations in order to devote themselves for a period of time to prayer and fasting, then this is quite alright. But, they must not totally and completely abstain from the sexual relationship because this physical relationship is a natural and normal part of the marriage. And, if the married couple refrains from the relationship, they indeed will set themselves up to succumb to the enticement of Satan outside of the marriage union.

IV. NOTICE PAUL'S DESIRED PREFERENCE FOR MARRIAGE. vs. 6-9

A. It is a preference without a direct command. v. 6

Now, as we come to verse six, Paul makes a statement that has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by many people down through the years. Paul tells the Corinthians that his advice for the marriage relationship was not a direct command from God, but that he was giving the advice with the inspired approval and permission of God. In other words, if we think that this advice was just a recommendation to the people from Paul without God's approval, then we might conclude that the advice is not true, or that the verse is not inspired. But, without a doubt, if God was speaking to Paul in an intimate way to give him the inspired Word of God, we could never assume that Paul didn't discuss this matter with Christ, and that our Lord truly did put His approval upon what Paul wanted to recommend to

the married couples in Corinth. So, this verse is very important, just like the rest of the entire passage of Scripture.

B. It is a preference without demanded compliance. v. 7

Verse seven is an extended explanation of the advice which Paul had given to the Corinthian married couples. This verse just simply says that the best way to carry the Christian life without family responsibilities would be for a person to be single, which Paul obviously was at this time. He probably was married in the past, but either his wife had died, or they had divorced. No one knows this for sure, but in order to have been a member of the Sanhedrin like Paul had been, a person had to have been married.

Therefore, Paul is saying the best way for a believer to live is to remain unmarried and devote all of his or her time to the Lord, but if he or she could not do this because of the desires of the flesh, they were to get married and satisfy the desires of the body Biblically within marriage. And of course, Paul was teaching that the only legitimate way for a person to satisfy the sexual desires was and still is within a husband and wife relationship according to God's plan.

C. It is a preference without detrimental consequences. v. 8

In verse eight, Paul goes one step further and provides the truth that it is preferable for the unmarried to not get married, but to avoid some very detrimental immoral consequences, the single person should go ahead and find God's spouse and satisfy their desires in a proper Biblical way within marriage. Paul just knew the significance of being single for the possibilities of sharing the Gospel unhindered, but it was quite alright and far better for a person to get married than to remain single and end up committing some immoral act trying to satisfy the desires of the flesh.

D. It is a preference with difficult control. v. 9

In this last verse of this chapter, verse 9, Paul just restates what he has already said about getting married to avoid succumbing to the desires of the flesh and committing sin, and then he tells them once more why this is so important. What he is saying is that every child of God should have his or her flesh under control, and not out of control. And thus, if individuals remain single, there will always be the possibility of falling to temptation and trying to satisfy the sexual desires in an immoral way. But, if those who burn with sexual passion get married, they will indeed have a legitimate way to fulfill the desires of the body within the restraints of marriage.

One last note here. Truly, it is God's will for saved people to live clean and holy lives before the lost world. But, if the sexual desires that a person has is very strong, then the only way these desires can be fulfilled is in a Scriptural based marriage relationship. There are no exceptions regardless of what our secular culture is telling us today. Just remember, our culture is very wicked at this time.

Conclusion

We now come to the conclusion of this chapter. In our study of our text from **I Corinthians 7:1-9**, hopefully, we have come to understand the true sacredness of the sex relationship within the confines of marriage. God used Paul in a special way to describe in detail how important this relationship is to the success of the marriage relationship, and he clearly defined how sacred and holy this relationship is if couples are to honor God with their partnership in marriage.

Paul starts out in this chapter by revealing the problem about new believers and abstinence in the church at Corinth which was creating a lot of questions. Obviously, there were some people there in the church that felt that if people really got saved, they were not to engage in the physical relationship in their marriage. So, Paul wrote to clear up this problem, and in his discussion of this subject matter, God used him to provide a tremendous amount of information about the importance of the sex relationship with the marriage partnership.

Therefore, Paul describes God's plan for marriage and how He had established this plan in the Book of Genesis, and then, he further defines how the physical relationship should be made a priority in the marriage if the relationship was to be a success.

Paul then goes on to tell the Corinthian Church that God had not given a direct command about the marriage relationship, but Paul had discussed this matter with God, and He had given the Apostle divine confirmation of what Paul was recommending to the people. Therefore, we must understand that this text is no less inspired than any other in the Bible because the entire Word of God is divinely inspired and infallible.

Chapter Twelve

"Paul Gives Further Regulations For Marriage"

Scripture: I Corinthians 7:10-24

Introduction

We now continue this wonderful study by moving on to the last verses in Chapter seven. It is obvious in these verses that Paul continues to try and give advice to the Corinthian Church to help answer a lot of questions from some of the new converts in Corinth. We have already talked about those who came to believe that if a person got saved, he or she were to stop their intimate marriage relationship and maybe even proceed to an ascetic lifestyle. Of course, this is not what God teaches in the Old Testament. So, this misconstrued idea was wrong and Paul had to give his advice with divine approval to the people to help them clear up the confusion.

Now, the issue we find in the remainder of this chapter concerns whether a man or woman should remain married if one of them got saved, and the other one did not. Paul starts out in verse ten by telling the people that God had given true rules and regulations about divorce, and the truth was that if the saved and unsaved spouse couldn't get along after one got saved and the other did not, then, they could separate, but they were not permitted to divorce and marry someone else. In fact, Paul tells the people that they should remain separated until God worked in the situation and eventually saved the other spouse, or at least brought about reconciliation for the couple. It is very important that we realize that God hates divorce as He has stated in **Malachi 2:16**, where we find the following words. **"For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that He hateth putting away:"** In other words, God hates divorce, and he only allows one to depart from their spouse if that spouse has committed adultery; and we need to remember that this was not God's original plan for the home, but it was only tolerated by Moses because of the hardness of the people's hearts. You can find this exception verse in **Matthew 19:8**.

So, let's move on with our study and look at each of these following verses to discover further regulations for marriage. This is a tremendous passage for these days when over 50% of marriages are ending in divorce, and also, when so many thousands of people are living together unmarried. Therefore, I hope you will join me and glean what God wants to show us in the remainder of this chapter.

I. NOTICE THE INFLEXIBLE PRINCIPLE FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE. vs. 10-11

A. This principle includes a remaining relationship. v. 10

Once more let me say that obviously Paul was trying to deal with some more problems in the troubled Corinthian Church which had surfaced because of somebody's false teaching. The people were just very impulsive, and just got carried away with how they should conduct themselves marriage wise after they got saved. So, one person in the marriage got saved, while the spouse remained unsaved.

Therefore, the question was, "should the saved person leave and divorce the unsaved person?" Paul's answer, and more so, God's answer was, "the marriage should not be dissolved if the unsaved person would go on living in the marriage with the saved person." Thus, it was not God's will during Paul's day for the divided home to split up, and neither is it so yet today. However, if the divided home, because of one's salvation could not be reconciled, then one of the marriage members should leave, but not ever remarry.

B. This principle includes a reconciling relationship. v. 11

But now, if the married couple could not live together peaceably, then one should leave to prevent violence or abuse. But, the separated couple were not given the right to remarry. The proper thing was to pray for the unsaved person to truly get saved because if she or he did, then, this person would be ready for reconciliation. And, may I interject a thought right here. If troubled homes were being counseled to pray for God to reconcile their relationships, then we would not have this horrible problem with divorce and remarriage. But yet, sad to say, usually the first thing a counselor usually offers if there is much trouble in the home, is for one of the spouses to move out, and then eventually end up with divorce. And of course, this action always ends up with bitterness, animosity, resentment, and very rarely does the couple reconcile together and rebuild their home. And for sure, this is God's plan for healing homes. Our marriage vows are still unto death, even if multitudes jump ship and leave the home at the first sign of trouble; especially if one newly saved person is going to have to live with an unsaved person. This unsaved person is usually a man, because women are more spiritually sensitive and respond more quickly to the presentation of the Gospel. If you don't believe this, then the next time you go to church, just compare the number of women and children who are there, as compared to the number of adult men that are present. None of these modern day naysayers who are saying that there is really no difference in the make up and abilities of men and women are absolute fools, and their advice should be avoided at all cost.

II. NOTICE THE IRKSOME PROBLEM OF SAVED AND UNSAVED MARRIAGES. vs. 12-16

Now, as we move on with this subject matter, we find Paul continuing the discussion about saved and unsaved marriages. Surely, someone in Corinth was trying very hard to mix Gnosticism in with the Gospel message because of the extra rules and regulations that they were trying to put on the new converts. So, Paul just continues to give his personal advice about how the saved and unsaved should conduct themselves. Let's take a closer look at Paul's expansion of this subject matter. I would especially ask any of you pastors or church leaders reading this commentary to take personal note of Paul's advice in order to use it along the way in your marriage counseling, or when one spouse gets saved, and the other one doesn't.

A. Notice the responsibility of the saved marriage partners. vs. 12-13

1. First, there is the responsibility of the saved man. v. 12

Paul tells the saved husband that if he has a wife that is still not saved, then he should not put her away if she is willing to stay with him. Of course, Paul tells the believers that he doesn't have a direct command from God about this, but like we discussed before, if Paul gave anyone advice, we know he had prayed much about the matter, and he would not have given the instructions unless he felt it was truly God's will. And, I might add that this advice in verse twelve is very reasonable and practical for two people who have made their marriage vows to each other for life.

2. Secondly, there is the responsibility of the saved woman. v. 13

In this verse, Paul just reiterates his advice about this matter by being specific this time about a saved woman living with an unsaved man. The requirement is the same as he gave to the saved husband. If the lost husband wants to continue in the marriage with his partner who has recently gotten saved, then the saved wife should do her best to stay together with this man and try to keep peace in the home.

I would like to add that down through more than a half-century of ministry, I have noticed more often than not, that the woman usually gets saved before the husband because the wife's heart is usually more open to spiritual matters, and thus, she is more prone to give her heart to Christ first. If this does happen, then, the wife must realize that she might have some difficulties living with the unsaved man because he still operates his life as a lost man, while she now wants to live as a saved woman. He might resent her involvement in church activities, her giving of tithes and offerings, and he probably will get upset with her when she tries to get him saved. The road for this newly saved lady may be rough for a while until Christ does change the husband's heart. But, it has always been my advice in counseling saved wives who are still married to a lost man to prayerfully go slow with him, learn to be patient with him, participate in the church activities that he doesn't mind, but if he gives you heartache, then you must back off and only do what he will tolerate until God changes his heart.

But, I would tell every saved wife that if her husband is abusive to her about her Christianity, then she should separate from him until he gets saved so that she can stay safe. Never should a Christian wife stay in a violent or abusive situation if her husband threatens her because of her Christian commitment.

B. Notice the reasons for continuing the marriage. v. 14

Once again in this verse, we come to a very difficult and sometimes misunderstood verse of Scripture. I say this because Paul admonishes the saved husband or wife to stay married to their lost spouse if it is at all possible so that the lost spouse, and yes, even their children can be "sanctified" by the lifestyle of the saved family member. The word sanctified here comes from the Greek word

"hagios", and it means holy. But, the problem we face trying to interpret this is that some people might be inclined to believe if the saved person stays with the unsaved spouse, then the saved person's lifestyle will automatically bring salvation to the rest of the family. Well folks, this is not true at all. No one gets automatically saved by the salvation of another family member who lives within the home. So, what is Paul talking about here. I believe what Paul is saying is that if the saved spouse lives a Godly or holy life in the home where he or she lives, then that sanctified lifestyle will have a tremendously positive influence on the lost spouse and or the children who live in that home. Truthfully, there may not be any positive influence in the home at all unless the saved spouse or parent really lives a genuinely committed life. So, as hard as it may become, the only hope there might be for the lost spouse or children may just be the dedication and devotion of the saved person.

1. When the saved person lives a genuine Christian life, then there is a tremendous influence on the unsaved spouse. v. 14a

2. When the saved person lives a genuine Christian life, then there is a tremendous influence upon the children in the home. v. 14b

Now, let me provide a strong affirmation of the truth of this verse by telling you about my childhood. I grew up in a home where my father was unsaved, but my mother had gotten saved when she was twelve years old. When she and my dad got married, he was a lost Lutheran, and she was a carnal Christian Baptist. They decided before the wedding that they would compromise on where to attend church by saying that one Sunday they would go to the Lutheran Church while the next Sunday they would go to the Baptist Church. I was told by my mom that they tried this for a short while, but it just didn't work at all. Why? Because my mom was truly saved and she felt uncomfortable hearing the Lutheran preacher telling that you get saved by baptism, when she knew from personal experience that this wasn't true. Then, because the Baptist Church is usually less formal and less ritualistic than the Lutheran Church, my father didn't like to go to the Baptist Church. So, very soon after their initial commitment to visit both kinds of churches, they just didn't attend anywhere.

Therefore, my brothers and I came into a home where my mother was a nominal genuine Christian while my father was a well-trained religious lost man. Dad had some religious knowledge in his head, but he didn't have Jesus in his heart. So, the only positive Christian influence that I had as a child came from my saved mother who told me how to get saved. But, because Dad wouldn't go to the Baptist Church with us and mother didn't drive herself, we only went to church when Dad was in a tolerant mood and would take us to church. I can remember like it was just yesterday that my Dad would drive out in front of the Baptist Church in a 1952 wine-colored Chevrolet, and drop us off, and then, he would go on down the road to some of his relatives to play cards. When church was over, he would come back and pick us up, and yes, on the way home, he and mother would argue most of the way because Dad made fun of her for singing in the choir or trying to help teach a children's Sunday School class.

So friends, the only positive influence I had growing up in a divided religious home was the influence of my saved mom. But praise God, I am happy to report that many years after my mother died (she died at age 53), my father did get saved at a Baptist Church after he married a Methodist woman and he and she decided to attend the Baptist Church because he was a Lutheran and this new wife was a Methodist. I am still praising God for my dad's salvation, and I believe that my mother did have a positive influence on his life, even when he pretended she didn't, and even when he made fun of her. Therefore, I must tell you that I would not be sitting at this computer today writing a Bible commentary if it had not been for my saved Mom being willing to put up with a lot of hell on earth and try to train us properly how to live, even when my Dad was not truly saved.

C. Notice the rules if the unbelieving spouse leaves. vs. 15-16

Now, some of you might say, "but what should I do if my unsaved spouse leaves after I get saved and leaves the home?" Well, these two verses explains clearly what must be done if this happens.

1. The believer is set free from the responsibility. v. 15a

In this verse Paul tells the Corinthian believers that if a lost spouse in a home can't take living with a newly saved spouse and leaves the home, then the saved partner is to let that person depart. In other words, the saved partner is not to live under tremendous guilt and self-denunciation because the unsaved person chose to leave. I believe that what Paul is truly saying is that the saved person is not under the bondage or guilt of trying to beg the person to stay, especially when that might result in verbal or even physical abuse. The saved spouse is not bound to stay in a bad situation, especially if the unsaved spouse is violent or abusive.

So, the question now is, "Can this Christian wife or husband remarry another person after their unsaved spouse has left them?" It is my strong personal conviction that the separated Christian spouse should not date or marry again unless he or she knows for sure that their separated spouse has been committing adultery or fornication. I say this because of the exception clause in Jesus' discussion of marriage and divorce in Matthew 19. **Matthew 19:9** says, "**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.**" So, let me repeat it again. If the unsaved person leaves the saved spouse, then the saved wife must remain single and prayerfully wait for the husband to get saved unless the unsaved spouse commits sexual sin in any form. If this happens, and God forbid it does, then the saved separated spouse has Biblical grounds to marry another person. But, the person who the saved spouse remarries must also be a believer who has gone through the same set of circumstances that made this saved spouse a single person again. And, I will emphasize that before a saved spouse begins another relationship, he or she must have exhausted every effort and time in trying to reestablish peace with the unsaved husband or wife.

2. The believer is to seek peace with the spouse. v. 15b

In this part of verse 15, Paul again emphasizes the importance of every saved spouse doing everything possible to reestablish peace and reconciliation with the unsaved spouse that has left the home. This is not a casual effort, but the saved person who knows Jesus personally must exhaust every effort in order to restore his or her home, and only after everything has been tried, and proof of immorality by the departed spouse can be truly verified, then, can this saved child of God move slowly toward another relationship with another believer who has been through a similar situation.

3. The believer is to seek the salvation of the spouse. v. 16

In verse sixteen, Paul asks a strong question of a Christian man or woman when he says, "but who knows, maybe through an extra effort to stay with the spouse, or even try to reestablish a peaceful relationship, the unsaved spouse may just get saved?" And may I say that this would be the greatest victory that a person could have when through their devotion and faithfulness, even to an unsaved spouse, that spouse would come to Christ. This is a terrific goal for any spouse who gets saved, because if he or she can influence his or her spouse to get saved as well, everything the saved person has been through will be worth the sacrifice. Again, I want to reiterate that a saved spouse must go slowly and walk carefully when he or she still lives with an unsaved husband or wife, but just like in my father's case, the end goal is for that unsaved person to come to Christ. This will never happen if the saved person moves too quickly and acts impatiently.

III. NOTICE THE ILLUSTRATED PATTERN FOR DOMESTIC LIFE. vs. 17-24

As we now move on to our next section of Scripture, let me say that it is very clear that Paul had been bombarded with questions coming out of the Corinthian Church before he wrote this epistle. And truthfully, some of the problems were unique to that day, and presently in our modern world, there would not be the same kind of problems. But, there are some similarities of what was going on in Corinth and what is going on in our modern world today. I want us to take a careful look at some more problems which Paul was trying to solve, and glean some truth which will help us today. I have called the content of these next verses an illustrated pattern for domestic life.

What I mean by the word domestic is our daily day-to-day living in our communities which will include our religious relationships with other professing Christians, and also, our relationships where we might work on our jobs. Let's look at these instructions to see what we can learn.

A. Please notice that this is a personal pattern for our home life. v. 17

In verse 17, we discover the word "walk." What this word refers to is living a life in the way God has planned for us. I would call this finding and living in the

perfect will of God. Paul is simply telling the Corinthian believers, and yes, us today that all of us have been called by God to salvation, and that He has also a personal will or calling for us in order to use our lives for the Kingdom of God. In other words, Paul stated that he had directed or prescribed this truth or purpose for every member in all of the churches where he had planted or started. We as God's people must just find His will for our lives and then use our talents and abilities to advance the Kingdom of God. And I believe that there is the implication here that if we are to be happy in our lives as a part of the body of Christ, then we must live and work in the perfect will of God for our lives.

B. Please notice that it is a positional pattern. v. 18-19

Now, this is a very difficult verse to interpret. But, I believe that what Paul was trying to tell the Corinthians was that whatever position they were in when they got saved, they should continue on in that position. As an illustration, Paul said that if the man getting saved was a Jewish man who had taken the covenant vow of circumcision, then, he did not have to try to undo the circumcision. And, if the man was in the position of a Gentile, then, he didn't have to submit to circumcision to make himself a Jew in addition to getting saved. This matter was completely decided by the Jerusalem Church in Acts 15, when Peter and James conducted the Jerusalem Conference in the city of God.

Therefore, the idea that Paul is trying to communicate to the Corinthians that they didn't have to add anything to their new position in Christ, regardless of their birth or heritage. The reason for this was because when we get saved, we have a new position in Christ which Paul so eloquently describes in Ephesians, Chapter one.

C. Please notice that it is a persevering pattern. v. 20

I am inclined to believe that some of the Corinthians were being taught by some false teacher that when they got saved, they would have to give up their job or position in this world and just start carrying out the Great Commission. But this is not necessarily true at all. God may just need the person who gets saved to just begin the Great Commission endeavor right where he or she is. And, I would be quick to say that it has been my pastoral experience that if people won't become a soul winner and carry out the Great Commission right where they are when they get saved, then, they probably will not become a soul winner in any other greater ministry in the world. So, at the time of our salvation, we should discover God's perfect will for the rest of our lives, and then, be solidly committed to sticking with our calling until we die or Jesus comes again. As Paul has so tremendously explained in Philippians, Chapter Three, we must push forward until we completely run the race which God has started us on at the moment of salvation. We must ever remember that the perseverance of the saints is not only an act of God keeping us saved for ever, but it is also a determined act of our wills to finish the course God has given to us to run. We must set a good example or pattern in doing this.

D. Please notice that it is a peaceful pattern. vs. 21-24

It is very obvious to me that Paul had some Corinthian people that may have been slaves at the time Paul planted the church there. I say this because as one point in the first century, 50% of the Roman Empire were slaves; most of which were slaves because of the heavy taxation. So, Paul is telling these believers that once they became free in Christ, this didn't mean that they would be able to walk away from their role as a servant or slave to a master. But, what he is telling them is that you don't have to change your circumstances in order to serve Christ, unless of course, you might be working on a job that presents a negative testimony after you get saved. I remember an occasion like this many years ago. We had a young man in one of the churches that I pastored who was driving a beer truck when he got saved. He came to me and asked me if he should give up his job now that he was a child of God. I distinctly remember telling him that yes, he needed to change jobs in order to not hurt his testimony as a new convert. I also told him that if he would commit the matter to the Lord, then God would give him a better job. I kid you not, it was only a short time until God gave him a new job driving a Pepsi Cola truck making more money than he did before. But, every person may not have to change their situation, unless of course, they are involved in a job which casts a negative testimony for a child of God.

The main thing Paul was telling the people who were new believers was that unless your present job or situation would present a negative testimony, then they needed to be at peace right where they were in order to just have a fruitful and joyful life. If they were in slavery, just stay at peace where they were until God set them free. If they were obligated to some employer or master, then, just stay faithful until God provided a better situation for you. Therefore, God still intends for us to set a peaceful pattern regardless of our situation, and if we have personal peace because we have gotten saved, then, we should become peace makers with others. When we do this, then God will use us who belong to Him to draw other people to Himself as the result of our testimonies and behavior.

So my friends, I would just remind all of us that we are not our own, but we have been redeemed by the price of the precious Son of God Who died on the cross for our sins. So, because of this, we should feel a strong sense of responsibility to show our appreciation to God by taking the Good News to the rest of the world.

Conclusion

Well, we have finished another section of this wonderful Scripture. During this chapter, we have looked carefully at Paul's advice about regulations and rules for marriage. We have looked at the principle for Christian marriage, some problems that might occur in our marriages when we become believers, and we have seen the type of pattern we should exemplify to others once we truly get saved and begin to live for Christ. It should always be our desire to live a sanctified life within our homes, in our church family, and also, out in the world in our every day lives. The most important thing is to bring glory to Christ regardless of where we are, our position in life, and especially in surrendering to the call of God. Therefore, I

do hope and pray that we have gleaned these wonderful truths from this study that will continue to help us demonstrate Christ for others to follow during all the days of our lives. And, I will add this, there is no greater place to honor Christ with a positive testimony than in our daily lives in our homes and families. I promise you that the effort will surely be rewarded if we will devote ourselves to doing this.

Chapter Thirteen

"Paul Gives Additional Advice For Marriage"

Scripture: I Corinthians 7:25-40

Introduction

As we continue this wonderful study, we need to see that there was another major problem in the Corinthian Church that Paul was trying to deal with. This problem had to do with one spouse getting saved, and the other spouse not yet being saved. The question was, "If one spouse got saved and the other spouse was not yet saved, should the saved spouse stay in the marriage with an unsaved spouse?"

The problem also included an obvious question about whether fathers should allow their daughters to get married once they were saved due to the belief in the shortness of time. In other words, the people in Corinth were very sincere in their desire to serve Jesus, but because obviously, Paul was teaching about the brevity of time and the second coming of Jesus Christ, the people used worldly reasoning to try and decide whether they should just forsake the demands of daily living, or just focus on spiritual things and wait for the coming of Christ. The people were very confused. So, Paul takes a lot of space in these last verses in this chapter to share his heart and wisdom about how the people should conduct themselves. So now, let's take a careful look at these 15 remaining verses and learn what Paul was trying to teach the Corinthians. So, the title of this chapter is, "Paul Gives Additional Advice For Marriage." Let's learn and practically apply the truth of this passage.

I. NOTICE THE PLAN OF THIS ADVICE. vs. 25-28

A. Paul reveals the source of this plan. v. 25

In this verse 25, Paul begins his answer to the first question that was being asked by telling the people that he had no direct revelation from God about whether the fathers should let their virgin or unmarried daughters get married. Obviously, there were some fathers that just believed that because of the brevity of time, there was no need for their daughters to get married, build a home, and maybe even bear children. So, Paul needed to answer this question by telling the people that he didn't have any direct revelation from God, but that he believed that he could give them good personal advice from his own experience.

I don't have any firm Biblical truth that Paul had been married, but a lot of scholars believe he was because of his participation in the Sanhedrin. Of course, opinions about this requirement for the Sanhedrin are varied. Yet, at the time Paul wrote these verses here in our text, it is very obvious that Paul was not married at this time. So, Paul provides wisdom for the problem there in Corinth because he had been very faithful to Christ and probably pushed being single because of his belief in the brevity of time before Jesus would come again. So, the source of this plan which God gave to the Corinthians was from Paul's judgment.

B. Paul reveals the synthesis for giving this plan. v. 26

The word synthesis seems to be a great big word, but a simple definition for the word is just simply putting things together and coming to the conclusion on what to do. Therefore, in this verse 26, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that because of the problems they were facing in the church, and because of the brevity of time, it would be much better for them to come to the conclusion that people remain single. But, as Paul previously stated in verse 8 of this same chapter, "if a person can remain single and not be overtaken by temptation and the lust of the flesh, then go ahead and get married rather than to burn with lust." And, it would be quite alright for a father to allow his virgin daughter to get married if she too was tempted and attracted to men. The conclusion is, remain single if possible, but don't remain single if you are overpowered by the desires of the flesh.

C. Paul reveals the substance of this plan. vs. 27-28

Therefore, the total substance of Paul's plan for those who are not yet married, and also, for those who were presently married, just don't change your living conditions just because you got saved and want to spend time serving Jesus. But, just remain as you are faithfully dedicated to Christ. The substance of Paul's plan for those who get saved is to stay in whatever relationship they are presently in if it is a legitimate one, or if they had been contemplating getting married soon, then, go right ahead because this would not affect their relationship with God other than taking time away from their fellowship with Christ because they would have to give more time to the other family members.

At the end of verse 28, Paul makes a statement which bothers some people. Paul just simply says if you can remain single and go ahead serving Jesus, this is great. But, if a saved person needs to go ahead and get married, Paul would tolerate this and so would God. It would be God and Paul's tolerance of their choice because this choice would not be evil before God.

II. PLEASE NOTICE THE PURPOSE OF THIS ADVICE. vs. 29-34

"The Brevity Of Time"

As we look at this next section of verses, we have a problem with what Paul was talking about when he states, "time is short." Some people believe that he was just talking about the brevity of life for each person or child of God. I do not believe this is what Paul was telling the Corinthian believers. I sincerely believe that Paul was talking about his belief in the return of Christ to the earth the second time. Yes, I know that life is short, and I know this very well because right now I am suffering with many health issues which remind me that time is short, and maybe I will be going on to heaven soon. However, I just belief that Paul believed so strongly in the promise that Jesus would soon return again to this earth that he just wanted the Corinthian Church people to not become so concerned with the temporal things of life that they would forget the main thing; and that was the fact that Jesus is coming again. And, that He is going to hold all of us accountable for our commitment level.

Please notice what Dr. John Philips said about this in his commentary on First Corinthians. "All too often married people allow domestic duties to get in the way of their commitment to Christ. Matters connected with husband, wife, or children are allowed to take precedence over the things of God."⁴ So friends, what is really the true content of what Paul is saying here. He is saying that none of our earthly entanglements or connections, or any trial, or any pleasure, or any business, should ever take the place of our all out commitment to Christ. In other words, we should only reorganize our lives after we get saved if and when our present circumstances would keep us from serving Christ totally and completely.

A. This purpose demands personal examples. vs. 29-31

In these next few verses Paul uses some examples of those things which might have tendency to hold us back in our commitment level.

1. There is the example of the temptation to let our marriages become hindrances or obstacles to our commitment. v. 29

This must not be! Yes, we should love our spouses and be completely loyal to them, but our loyalty to our spouse should never take precedence over our loyalty to Christ. As strong as this might seem, Paul was saying that our commitment level to Christ should be so preeminent that it would seem as if we didn't even have a wife or husband. Now, Paul is not being negative about marriage, but he is stating exactly what Jesus said to those who wanted to follow Him in **Luke 14:26**, where He said, **"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."** Jesus was not telling His followers that they had to literally hate their parents, their wives, their children, and their own brothers and sisters if they were to follow Him. But, He was saying that our love for Christ should be so resolute that it might seem to some that we hated our family members; and yes, maybe even our friends.

This is exactly what Paul was telling the believers in Corinth. In this verse 29, he just simply stated that our marriage should not stand in the way of our commitment to Jesus.

2. There is the example of the temptation to let our despair, our depression, and our mourning become a hindrance to our commitment level and loyalty to Christ. v. 30a

Our love for Christ and His Kingdom work should be so great that we will refuse to let any of these things hinder us from being totally sold out to God.

3. There is the example of the temptation to let our pleasure and celebration stand in the way of our commitment to Christ. v. 30b

⁴ Exploring First Corinthians, by John Philips, Kregel Publishers, page 159.

Folks, this part of this verse is so relevant in these last days of pleasure seeking people. Everywhere we look there is some kind of entertainment, frivolity, celebration, athletic event, party, etc. Let me give some of Paul's final words to young Timothy, the pastor at the church at Ephesus. Pay close attention to the following verses. **II Timothy 3:1-4, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."** If these verses don't describe the time in which we are living today, I don't know what would. We are truly living in these last days before the return of our Lord.

As I so often have stated, I have been in the ministry a very long time. In fact, my wife and I have been serving Jesus for over 53 years together since we got married back in 1965. We have had the privilege of leading eleven churches during our many years of service, therefore, I believe I can make the following statement correctly and discreetly. The churches of America in this generation are in the worst condition that I have ever seen them, and truthfully, the large majority of them are as messed up as the Corinthian Church was. Therefore, it is going to demand a greater commitment to Christ than ever before just simply because of those who don't care any more. As I heard my wife pray this very morning during our family devotions, "Lord, a lot of pastors and church leaders are in the ministry just for what they can get out of it." And I will say, "this is why there is such a very little level of true commitment to Christ.

4. There is the example of the temptation to let our business or profit seeking endeavors stand in the way of our commitment to Christ. v. 30-31

Do you know anyone who has ever let his or her quest for money stand in the way of their commitment to Christ? Well folks, I do, and I could go on for hours mentioning the names of numbers of professing believers who have fallen into this category. Many of these people have sold their souls for the temporary substance of this world while attending churches professing to be saved and to love the Lord. But their level of commitment to Christ is just very shallow, even if they are genuinely saved. This is what Paul obviously was dealing with in the church in Corinth, and it is still what we are dealing with today. But my dear friends, I do hope you as a reader of this commentary are not one of these who has transferred your obedience to Christ over to your commitment to your job or profession. This truly is a serious matter!

B. This purpose demands a Pauline explanation. vs. 32-34

Some people who read or study these next few verses of Scripture may believe that Paul has really lost his mind. Others might say that he is spouting off because he may have had a broken marriage, or maybe even that his wife had died.

But, what I see in these three verses is that Paul just wanted to explain one more time the preference of not having too many ties to this world and its demands, but instead be totally and completely sold out to God; especially when we know that relationships and things on earth are temporary, while the things of God and eternity should be where our greatest commitment or allegiance to is. In other words, we should seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these other things shall be added unto us. Please read the words of Jesus, **Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all of these (other) things shall be added unto you."**

So, my dearly beloved friends, "Where are your priorities?" What is your commitment level to Jesus? You see folks, nothing, absolutely nothing, should ever take the place of Jesus and His work being first place in our lives. I sincerely hope you feel the same way.

III. PLEASE NOTICE THE PROFIT OF THIS ADVICE. v. 35

A. Paul's advice offers spiritual development. v. 35a

I believe this verse 35 is one of the most compassionate verses in all of the Bible. I say this because we can't help but see the genuine love Paul has for the Corinthian believers. This love just exudes from his state here. Paul is telling the believers that the only reason he is being so forthright with them is because he wants the people to benefit from what he is saying. He wants them to gather riches from what is true profit, rather than focus their lives on the temporary.

B. Paul's advice offers spiritual direction. v. 35b

Paul also doesn't want the believers in Corinth to become entrapped by Satan to believe that it is quite okay for the saints to be engrossed with the attachments of this world. Instead, Paul desires strongly that the connections and ties of this world, whatever they might be, must not ever become a distraction away from the most important thing of all, that is carrying out the perfect will of God. In other words, we need to check up on the main focus of our lives, and make sure that Jesus and His will for our lives is number one. My question to all of us is, "Do we have any distractions in our lives which are taking our attention away from Jesus and His will?" If we discover that we do, then for God's sake, and yes, for the sake of His Kingdom, let's get our focus back on Him and them, instead upon me and mine.

IV. PLEASE NOTICE THE PARENT WHO IS GIVEN THIS ADVICE. vs. 36-38

We now come to a little change in direction for the apostle Paul. Obviously, there was a man, or possibly some men, in the church in Corinth that had a very difficult question that needed to be answered. That question was, "In view of the brevity of time and the difficult circumstances for the Christians in Corinth, should the fathers allow their virgin daughters to get married?" Of course, don't forget what we have already discussed. Paul told these dear people that their main emphasis

should be upon spiritual things and not on the day-to-day temporal things. So, the question these fathers were asking was a valid one. But of course, don't forget that in those days of the First Century Church, the fathers basically always determined whom their children would marry. Now, let's look at these three verses a little more carefully and learn what we can.

A. First, the father is under no restriction to force his daughter to remain single.
v. 36

It is obvious to me that the father or fathers that were asking Paul to answer this question about their virgin or unmarried daughters were feeling guilty that they were not giving permission for the girls to marry. And, it would seem that they were taking very seriously what Paul told them about the brevity of time. So, they must have been saying no to their daughters' desire to get married because they were very concerned for them. On the other hand, they didn't want to commit a sin against God and the words of Paul by not allow these young women to move ahead with marriage.

Well folks, we live in a very different culture than was prevalent in the days of Paul in Corinth. But yet, there are some lessons here we as parents need to embrace. First, we must be careful about when we let our children get married, and of course, the kind of boy or girl we allow one of our kids to marry. And then, we need to have good solid Biblical principles for even the dating of our children. We should not let our children who are saved to even date an unsaved person. Then, when we finally give into to their dating, these dates should be under our approval and with many rules and restrictions on where the date should take place, the time that should be allowed for a date, and of course, the time your own son or daughter should be back in the house.

Also, I would mention that not one of our children should be allowed to marry a person who has not be introduced to our Christian family, questioned about the depth of the possible spouse's Christianity, questioned about the extended family's devotion to Christ, and when and how often do they go to church. This is so important because if a child is brought up in a professing Christian's home, but his or her parents are not faithful and dedicated in a good Bible-believing church, then there is a great probability that he or she will follow in the footsteps of his or her parents. And, there will not be any depth of wise spiritual decision making by the future spouse. This is the place that I should say, no Christian couple should ever be allowed to marry without a series of good Christian pre-marriage counseling by a solid Biblical counselor; preferably a pastor.

I could go on for hours talking about the preparations for Christian marriage, but let me just get back to what Paul told these fathers in Corinth. Under the pressured situation in which they were living, it was quite alright for the Dads to let their daughters marry, but only in the Lord.

B. Secondly, the father is rewarded for keeping his daughter single. vs. 37-38

These two verses seem to be a postscript to what Paul had already said. He wanted to get across to the fathers in Corinth that it was quite alright to let their virgin daughters get married, but it would be much better to try to stop the marriage because if the daughter did get married, she would have to share much time with her husband, and in the process, cut down on her loyalty to Christ and the Kingdom of God if she wasn't very careful. So, Paul said it would be okay for the father to let his daughter go ahead with the marriage plans, but it would be far better if he decided to not let the daughter go ahead and get married.

Of course, in this age of screaming about sexism and the horrible "Me Too" mentality, a father who should say no would be hated and ostracized. But, in the first century it was perfectly alright for a father to say no or delay the wedding of his daughter. And truthfully, in this age where anything goes, including sex before marriage, it would be far better if every father had more to say with loving input about his daughter's future wedding. And of course, the dear mother in our culture should have a huge part in these lifetime decisions!.

But, there is one more thing that I want to mention here. This is that God has promised to reward the father who takes a loving Biblical stand on the ins and outs of his daughter's marriage. Just like in all of life, when people obey God's Word and commands down to the smallest domestic decision, then God pours out his blessings upon the decision and the results of the decision as well. Therefore, when we look around us in today's generation, it is very obvious that a lot of fathers and mothers have been left out of the process of helping to choose a mate for their children. We would not have such a domestic mess with an epidemic of babies being born out of wedlock if Moms and Dads would take more of a positive part in the date life of their children, and most assuredly, the marriage of their children.

V. PLEASE NOTICE ANOTHER PERSON WHO IS GIVEN THIS ADVICE. vs. 39-40

We now come to the conclusion of this chapter in the Book of First Corinthians. In these two verses, 39-40, Paul addresses a question about what widow ladies should do if their husbands die. Paul gives explicit instructions that coincide with the teaching of the Old Testament law, and these instructions align very much with the New Testament instructions about widowhood as we now learn from the completed revelation of the New Testament. And by the way, we should never interpret anything about any problem in the New Testament that doesn't align with what God has given in the Old Testament. Yes, it is very important to always look at the cultural differences that might affect our interpretation, but we should never allow the culture of any generation to change the inerrant truth taught in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as well. So now, let's look at these very important two verses.

A. Please notice that there is a policy for the widow's remarriage. v. 39

Paul told the Corinthian believers and he is telling us today that when a saved wife loses her husband by death, she is permitted to remarry whomever she chooses, but the man she marries must be a believer. And I would say, this man

needs to be not only a believer, but a devout and dedicated man of God. The Christian widow is not to marry an unbeliever or someone who has been divorced. Now, I know that some of you might not like this statement, but it is a true statement. Just why would we think that God would demand that the saved widow marry a believer, but that it would be quite alright to marry a divorced man with a living wife. I will just simply say that we might like to change our doctrine to accommodate our sinful society today, but, God has never done this, and He never will. So, it is quite alright for a saved woman whose husband has died to prayerfully consider marrying again, but if she does, the man must be a devout and dedicated believer, and one that has not been divorced.

B. Please notice that there is also a policy for rejoicing. v. 40

In the very last verse in this chapter, Paul once again states that he feels that it would be much better for a widow lady not to remarry, but the choice is hers. However, if she doesn't remarry, she would be able to spend her primary time serving Jesus with no distractions. Then Paul adds, "this is my advice, but I believe that God has led me to give these instructions because I am led by the Holy Spirit of God Who lives within me." Paul was very confident that God had impressed upon him the truth he needed to share with widows, and therefore, he felt no shame or reservation for telling the widows the truth. In other words, he said that it was quite alright for a widow to remarry, but she would have more time to serve the Lord if she remained unmarried.

Conclusion

We now come to the conclusion of this very enlightening chapter. Obviously, the church in Corinth had many problems which Paul was trying hard to solve with his instructions. Now, the question was, "would the people practice what Paul had preached and taught?" Of course, this is the question we have to ask after any of us stand to preach or teach, or even, when we write books to try to help others. Will the people put into practice the truth that has been given? As I have said so often down through my many years of ministry, our preaching and teaching, and yes, even our writing, is a 50/50 proposition. We can do our best to give the people the truth from God's Word, but then, they have the serious responsibility to respond properly and put into practice what they have learned. So, even as I write this commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, I can only give you what God gives me. It is your responsibility as the reader to put into practice the truth I am trying to give you. You see folks, if I was not trying to so hard to help you and others that might read these materials, I would not spend literally days, weeks, months, and even years trying to complete this task of writing to help others. So, it is truly my prayer that here in this chapter that there might be some very practical Scriptural exegesis for practical living by husbands, wives, fathers, and children in their daily lives. If these long hours spent in trying to comment on these verses help to change the lives and produce Godly living by the recipients, this time will have been well spent.

Chapter Fourteen

"Paul's Advice Concerning Meat Offered To Idols"

Scripture: I Corinthians 8:1-13

Introduction

I have already stated several times in this commentary that the church at Corinth had many problems. We have already dealt with many of these, but here in Chapter eight, we will deal with another problem that the people did not know how to handle. This was the problem about whether those who got saved were able to eat meat that had been left over from pagan sacrifices to other gods or idols. The people were just confused about this. Some thought it was perfectly alright, while others thought that it was being a terrible testimony to those who were new believers and to those who had not yet been saved. Paul lays down some very practical truth concerning eating this meat, while on the other hand, he shares how doing so might do damage to others. So the conclusion of the matter is if a person has a clear conscience about eating this meat, then it is quite alright for him to do so with out shame or guilt. However, every man or woman must decide if their participation in eating meat which was left over from idol worship was offending others and hurting their testimonies and ruining opportunities to win other people to Christ, then, the meat should not be eaten. So, the real problem was not actually eating the meat in and of itself, but the problem was in what kind of negative influence would this practice bring to bear on others who were young in the Lord, or maybe even never saved.

Therefore, we will glean in this study that we must be careful what we participate in, or what we should eat or drink, or even what practices we should do, if this participation, this eating, this drinking, and our deeds have a negative influence on others whom we need to reach with the Gospel, or even to help new believers grow in grace. The point is that what might be wrong for you, may not be wrong for me. But, we must judge this based upon our circle of influence and whom we might set a bad example for. We must resolve to be careful about what we eat, what we drink, the things we do, the places we go, and yes, even the things we say because we can't recall these deeds and words once we have done them or spoken them.

My wife is really good with her ministry to children here at home in America, and yes, also with the children in Africa where we have worked so long. She loves to do object lessons and teach the children great lessons with these objects. One of the best that she does is with a tube of toothpaste. She tells the children that when we speak words, they can't be put back in our mouths just like toothpaste can't be put back in the tube. Therefore, because we can't recall them, we better be very careful what we say because the damage may be done, and the outcome may not be changed. This is what we will see here in these thirteen verses of I Corinthians, Chapter 8. I hope you will join me now in going through this chapter verse by verse to see what God wants to teach us.

I. FIRST OF ALL, PAUL ADVISES WISDOM ABOUT EATING THE MEAT WHICH HAS BEEN LEFT OVER FROM MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS. vs. 1-8

The chapter heading in my Schofield Bible says, "Meats, and the limitations of Christian Liberty."⁵ I have mentioned this because I really like what Schofield is referring to when he talks about the limitations of our liberty as believers. What he is saying is that for some of us who are saved, we might have a clear conscience about doing some things in our Christian lives, which others may feel that we shouldn't. But, the deciding factor should not be our liberty, but the decision should be based upon the sphere of our influence; whether good or bad.

A. This wisdom includes discerning the important. vs. 1-3

These three verses are really strong ones. Paul tells the Corinthian believers that sometimes we think we are smart and know what should be done in a situation, but we may not stop and weigh the outcome of our decisions. It doesn't matter how smart we are, or how much intelligence we might have about certain choices we have to make in life. But, the important thing is that we make our decisions based not only upon truth we know, but we must weigh the coming consequences of what we do. Please notice the following statement by Dr. Paige Patterson, one of the greatest exegetical scholars of this most recent generation. "The freedom which believers enjoy in Christ is a responsible freedom. When it becomes a careless expression of the untempered will, it ceases to be conceived properly and becomes a detriment to the work of the Savior."⁶

Did you get what Dr. Patterson is saying here? He is saying that just because we are saved, we do not have the right to live in such a loose way that in practicing our freedom, we go so far as to hurt other people; both saved and unsaved. God has not given us this liberty, and therefore we must be very careful to not infringe upon and harm others by our liberty.

It is very important that we catch the last phrase in verse one. Paul says, "**but charity edifieth.**" This means that it is much better to show love and compassion than it is to be right about certain things. And of course, we are talking here about the eating of meat which has been left over from some pagan's sacrifice to other gods. Of course, this happened everywhere in the first century A.D. Those who killed animals to sacrifice to their false gods would collect the leftover meat and take it to the market place to sell to others. Of course, this meat was usually sold at a reasonable price or cheaper than most meat because it was the leftover from the sacrifices. Therefore, many of the Christians who were trying to serve Christ had lost their jobs and had little income. So, they were looking for bargains when they went shopping. Therefore, the decision had to be made. "Can I buy this cheaper meat and use it on my table at my house without offending others by having a bad testimony?" So, Paul tells the believers that if they could eat it with a clear conscience, then go

⁵ The Schofield Bible, page 1218.

⁶ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Dr. Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 133.

ahead and do it. But, if there were neighbors or friends who lived nearby that might be offended, the people were told to not do so.

Therefore, the great truth is that what one of us might be able to do with a clear conscience, someone else may not be able to do so. So, we must take into consideration the outcome or influence of what we do before we make the decision to go ahead with our decision.

One of the things that comes to my mind as I study this passage is, "should I as a Christian shop in a store that sells alcohol, or should my family and I go out to eat where alcoholic beverage is sold?" This has been a hard decision for believers for many years. Years ago, it was much easier because very few grocery stores sold alcohol, whereas today, most of these stores sell this horrible stuff. And yes, years ago, there were many restaurants where we could eat without seeing alcohol being bought and drunk by people in the restaurants. So, these decisions today are much more difficult. I will say once more that our decision should be made with a clear conscience, but we must be careful about hurting others with our decisions.

B. This wisdom includes denoting the infinite. vs. 4-6

Now, as we come to verses 4-6, we find another very important truth which Paul gave to the Corinthians, and yes, to us today as well. You might say that what is emphasized in these verses is that if we do eat meat offered to idols or other gods, it really isn't any thing sacrilegious because these gods or idols that the meat was offered to don't even exist. This means that a person who eats this meat has not sinned, unless of course this person sins against a brother or sister who is very immature and is offended because of the action we take. Paul is trying so hard to get across to the Corinthian believers that eating this meat in and of itself could not possibly be sinful because these gods and idols are not real. But, if we hurt others who are very new in the faith, or even those who have yet to be saved, then our actions have become sin.

Then Paul emphatically declares to every truly born child of God, there is only one God, and He is the infinite One that we serve and will forever serve. Therefore, we might conclude that Paul is trying to teach a theology lesson on the fact that there is only one living and true God, and this person was revealed to us in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We must worship only Him because He is our Creator and our daily Protector and Sustainer. There is just no other God in the universe! This belief is called Monotheism, and we should forever be proud of this wonderful belief. And, may I say that we do not worship the same god of the Muslim religion which we hear preached and propagated so much today! Allah had no son, but our Jehovah God does, and His name is Jesus!

C. This wisdom includes detecting the injury. vs. 7-8

As we now look at verses 7-8, we come to the most important concern that Paul had about the Corinthian believers, and this concern was that if the Corinthian Christians ate leftover meat from the idol worship, there would be some very immature believers that might really be hurt by this action. So, Paul admonished the

people to refrain from eating the meat offered to idols if their young Christian friends were going to be offended by their action. In other words, Paul was telling the believers that they needed to be extremely sensitive to the damage or injury that might happen if they ate from the meat. Paul knew that there was nothing sacrilegious about eating this meat, but since eating this meat would not make them less closer or even more closer to God, they just should not eat it if some young believer was going to be hurt by their action.

Going back to the illustration I used earlier in this chapter, if going to a restaurant where alcohol was sold would be a detriment to other believers, or if doing so caused hurt or misunderstanding, then we should not go to these places. The main thing that we should always be concerned with is that no others get hurt or injured by our conduct as believers. But, let me add here that there are people who are always looking for some excuse to be offended, and therefore, I believe we should not allow all others to control our lives by trying to heap guilt upon us just simply because we do something that they don't agree with. I say this because there are times when people should have grown in grace, but years later they still are acting like children. And, I must tell you that I have spent much of my 53 plus years of ministry trying to keep from offending these babies in Christ who should have grown up a long time ago. Please pay attention to what Paul says in **Hebrews 5:12** about this very matter. **"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."**

The point Paul is making is that at some point in a believer's life, he or she should grow up as Christians and not continue to have to be taught the basic principles of the Word of God. These immature converts, if they are really saved, have to be coddled on and on, and maybe I should say, they have to be babied for years to come because they walk around with a demonic chip on their shoulders waiting for some believer to offend them. I have often said that these people are like little babies whose spiritual diapers have to be changed regularly to keep them from whining or crying because they didn't get their way. Or, they might be crying and whining because they just need someone to give them some additional attention, like giving them a pacifier or a milk bottle. And I will add, these are some of the most miserable people on earth, and they will never be satisfied unless they can make everybody else's life miserable like their own. I have recently been hurt tremendously by some of these people that my wife and I have had to baby for four years in our church. These are usually the people, who like Jesus said, hurt us without a cause. Like a little baby, these people are always seeking more attention.

II. SECONDLY, PAUL ADVISES A WARNING ABOUT EATING THIS MEAT WHICH HAS BEEN OFFERED TO IDOLS. vs. 9-13

A. Paul warns against turning liberty into a license. v. 9

Did you read this point carefully? Do you turn the liberty that you have been given by God into a license to do whatever you desire to do? I pray not, because our liberty in Christ is not a license to sin freely as if we will not be held accountable.

In his great book, "The Cost of Discipleship," Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated that if we turn grace into a license to sin, then grace has become a law unto itself." He later reiterated this in the following quotes. "Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession.....Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without a cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."⁷ So my dear friends, the cheap grace that we are hearing preached so much today is nothing more or less than a license to sin, and this license is being preached from multitudes of our pulpits across America today.

Therefore, we must understand clearly that when our liberty in Christ brought to us by His amazing grace becomes a license to sin, then, we cause others to stumble. And yes, we will be held accountable by God for this. So, as a man of God, I warn all us to not allow our liberty in Christ to become a stumbling block to weaker brothers and sisters in Christ.

In his commentary on First Corinthians, Dr. Paige Patterson made a tremendous statement concerning allowing the liberty that God has given to us to become a license of indiscretion. Please notice three things he brings out about this liberty. "Paul declared that liberty is not free (v.9), life is not private (vs. 10-11), and love is not simple (vs. 12-13)."⁸

B. Paul warns against turning light into a liability. vs. 10-11

Let me give you something else that Dr. Patterson says about this passage. "The Corinthians were also informed that the believer's life was not altogether a private matter. They were told that if a man saw one of the Corinthians who was possessed of the knowledge that idols were nonentities sitting at meat in an idol's temple, it was inevitable that this would be taken by the man of weaker conscience as an invitation to eat those things sacrificed to idols."⁹

"The question was not just of eating meat which had been sacrificed to idols and then sold in the market place, but apparently some of the Christians were continuing to go to the guild meetings or social gatherings that occurred in the pagan temples. While visiting these temples, they were always the prospect of being observed by a brother who was a relatively immature Christian still struggling with the whole question of the reality of idols."¹⁰

In other words folks, the light that God gives to us concerning what we should eat or not eat, what we should drink or what not to drink, or where we should go or not go, should never be a stumbling block for other immature believers. Perhaps it might be better stated that the light God gives to us should never be a liability for others who may have not received the same knowledge yet.

⁷ The Cost Of Discipleship, By Dietrich Bonhoeffer, page 44, SCM Press.

⁸ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 137.

⁹ Ibid, page 138.

¹⁰ Ibid, page 138

In verse eleven, Paul simply states that the light God has given to us whereby we can do certain things without feeling guilty, should never cause a weaker brother or sister to quit or backslide on God, and our conduct should never contribute to the eternal lostness of a soul for someone who is just confused or turned away from Jesus because of our behavior. Why? Because Jesus died for these other persons just like He died for us. So, we should not use our light to be a liability to others.

C. Paul warns against turning life into a lamentation. vs. 12-13

Please notice a brief commentary on these last two verses which was written by Dr. Paige Patterson. "Against the first interpretation is the reminder of the passage. When a man so sinned against the brethren as to strike or smite his weak conscience, he was actually sinning against Christ. The conclusion here is twofold. First, all sin is ultimately sin against God. Second, what may not be a sin in itself may become a sin if in the exercise of one's liberty he is hurtful to others."¹¹

This last statement on verse twelve is a great comment. We might be able to do certain things, that in and of themselves, they are not sin. But, when we insist on doing them to the point that others are hurt or they get a guilty conscience if they follow our example, then, the good thing we do has become a sin toward others, and if it becomes a sin toward others, then it become a sin to toward God.

Notice Dr. Patterson's comments on verse 13. "The conclusion is specific and formidable. If eating meat which had been sacrificed to idols offended a brother, then Paul concluded that he would not eat flesh until the end of the age rather than to risk causing his brother to be scandalized. The word translated "offend" is skandalizo. The vivid term presents the circumstances exactly. In the exercise of Christian liberty, we must always exercise that liberty that has definite bounds, recognizable perimeters which must not be violated. Those bounds are the ones that determine the reception of the gospel in any given society. While Christians may rejoice in their considerable liberties, they must always do so in the context of the understanding of their mission on the earth."¹²

Now, let me try to simplify the things that Paul said, and also, the comments that Dr. Patterson has made. The summation of this entire thought is that God may give us some liberty to do certain things which are not sin to us. But, if we insist on doing these things to the point of hurting others and making them feel guilty or if it brings them to shame and weeping, then we have turned our liberty in life into lamentation and weeping. So, we must be extremely careful that we don't bring sadness to others because of our willfulness to do something regardless of how others feel, because if we do, then we will end up with our own personal sadness as well.

¹¹ Ibid, page 139.

¹² Ibid, pages 139-140.

Conclusion

We now come to the end of our brief study in Chapter Eight of First Corinthians. This chapter has been quite different in that it has covered areas in our Christian lives that we don't usually think or talk about. These areas as we have seen, cover the parts of our Christian lives where we have to be extremely concerned about what we do in our lives, even if we have a clear conscience about what we are doing. The problem in Corinth had to do with eating meat offered to idols, but our challenge might just be participating in some activity, or going to some place, or even in eating something that our brothers and sisters, and yes, even some lost people might be offended by what we do. So, we need to realize that not only are we responsible for getting saved and getting our sins under the blood of Jesus, but we are responsible for our daily actions and activities which might be misinterpreted to the point of having a negative influence on others.

Therefore, we have a God-given responsibility to make sure that our behavior and activities don't hurt, harm, or turn others away from the Gospel, even if we have been saved for a long time. In other words, we must make sure that whatever we do must not be misunderstood, especially if it might lead others to sin or even reject the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, we must conclude that it is truly God's will for us to get saved and serve Jesus faithfully, but we must never forget our God-given responsibilities to those around us. We must just remember that if we contribute to the guilt and shame of others by what we do, we have sinned against God.

Chapter Fifteen

"Paul's Defense Of His Apostleship"

Scripture: I Corinthians 9:1-27

Introduction

Well now, as we move forward in this commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, I would like to say that I sincerely wish that this Chapter 9 was not in this book because of the subject matter it covers. As you know, we have been studying about some of the many problems in the Corinthian Church which Paul the Apostle had to deal with. But now, it is very sad to realize that one of the biggest problems Paul encountered with the Corinthians was their doubt of his apostleship and authority. In other words, they attacked him because some of the people were saying that Paul was not a genuine Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope you can get the clear picture of what was going on in the church in Corinth. Paul was trying to help them solve some tremendous problems which had produced a large number of questions from the people. But now, after all of the chapters we have already covered, these same people who were asking Paul for help began to doubt Paul's integrity and his authenticity. My question is, "How could people ask this man of God questions looking for his answers one moment, and the next moment attack him and question his genuineness as God's servant?" The only answer I can come up with is that Satan and some of his demons were working on the minds and lives of the Corinthians in order to indirectly attack the man of God.

May I say right here that I do understand exactly what Paul was going through because in the last few weeks of my ministry as a pastor, my wife and I have been under an enormous attack from some so-called professing believers who have just become vicious toward us. And, this attack, just like Paul's, has come after my dear wife and I have given four complete years of ministry to this new church which we planted and have tried to build. The attacks have come because after four years of trying to reach people and build the church family, our church became stymied in growth, and we had no genuine leadership. Oh yes, God did give us some wonderful blessings during these four years, but because of my deteriorating health, my doctors had told me that I needed to get out from under a lot of stress in order to hopefully get better. These instructions were given to me because I have had open heart surgery and four arterial stents for my heart. So, after months of praying, my wife and I have decided that it was God's will for us to close our church. We have planted or started four churches down through our years of ministry, but this is the first one that we felt led of God to close. During these past four years, we saw quite a few people get saved, and even our attendance bounce up to about 65. But, in recent months, the attendance dropped back down into the 40's and 50's with very little fruit.

Also, this small church became a high maintenance congregation. What I mean by this is that every Sunday and during the week, enough pastoral ministry was never enough. Why, almost every time we came to church for a service, people would stand at the door where I was trying to shake hands, and they would give me

a long dissertation of their many problems and bad circumstances. And during the week, I tried hard by sending the couple staff members we had to visit these hurting people, whether at home or in the hospital. But, in spite of everything we did, a lot of these people whined and complained all the time. And of course, this was adding much stress to my life and ministry. I say this because in addition to trying to pastor a new church, I am the president of a rather large African ministry working in many countries in Africa. I have been doing this for over 35 years. So, in addition to everything we were trying to do for this small church family, they never could be pleased.

So, when I recommended to them that we should close this stymied non-growing church, the people went berserk and began to attack me unmercifully. Now, please bear in mind that I have pastored eleven churches in my 53 years of ministry, and two of these churches had several thousand church members. I tell you this not to brag, but just simply to let you know that I believe I can evaluate correctly a church's health and well-being, and therefore, I have decided that our church needed to be closed.

And, I believe I need to tell you that my wife and I led this church for four years without receiving any salary or income, except for a Christmas gift in December or pastor appreciation gift in the month of October. But yet, it didn't matter how much we had done for them, now to close the church was a terrible thing; although for four years we have had no deacons, trustees, and no other church leadership. So, the people are angry and viciously mad. But like Paul, we will try our best to move on with the ministry which God has given to us.

Therefore folks, my wife and I have been under terrific attack, just like Paul was under by the whining Corinthian church members. Thus, this Chapter 9 of First Corinthians was written by this wonderful man of God in order to defend his ministry. And by the way, if anyone should have known the credibility of Paul, it should have been the Corinthians because he spent 18 months in Corinth establishing this church, and his stay there was the second longest that this evangelist/church planter had any where. The only other place Paul spent a longer time anywhere was in Ephesus where he stayed three years.

So my friends, let's now begin to exegete this wonderful hard chapter to see how Paul defends his apostleship. And, may we learn some great truth from these verses in order to hopefully help us when we get under attacks by carnal or lost people who profess to be saved.

I. FIRST, PAUL DEFENDS HIS POSITION. vs. 1-2

A. His was a position of an Apostle. v. 1a

Verse one of this text starts out with Paul asking some questions. And, it seems to me that there is a lot of sarcasm in these questions simply because Paul just can't seem to understand how any of them could doubt his integrity or genuine apostleship. We need to remember that back in Chapter eight, Paul discussed much about our Christian liberty whereby we could do whatever we wanted to do, if we had a clear conscience, and if we didn't hurt anyone in the process. So here, Paul just

simply asked the people if they didn't understand that he was God's Apostle chosen by God himself.

Now, many people might disagree with me, but I personally believe that when Peter and the other disciples cast lots and chose Mathias to replace Judas Iscariot in Acts, Chapter one, they got out of God's will as do many people who rush to take steps and make decisions without really spending time in prayer trying to discern the will of God before these steps are taken and these decisions are made. So, they chose Mathias as the new disciple replacement, but it is obvious to me that God had chose this Paul to become Judas Iscariot's replacement. I believe God did this in order to get the Gospel message to the Gentile world. Peter started the Great Commission with the Jewish nation, and then, Paul was chosen to be the main leader of the Great Commission to the Gentiles. By the way, after this choice of Mathias in the Book of Acts, he is never mentioned again in the Bible or even in Christian history. Therefore, I am completely convinced that Paul was God's choice to replace Judas Iscariot.

B. His was a position of authority. v. 1b

I can't be too sure, but in studying this second phrase in verse one, I am led to believe that Paul was being criticized by some people in the church about the liberty that Paul was taking in trying to straighten out the confused people in the church. It was as if they were saying, "Paul, who do you think you are?" But of course, we know who Paul was. He was God's choice servant operating his life and ministry in the liberty and power of the Holy Spirit of God. So, his authority came not from observance of the Law of Moses, but from God Who had chosen him and given to him his new role as a man of God.

I think I would like to interject something right here. We are living in a generation of young preachers and some few older preachers who seem to be completely confused about the authority of the man of God. On one side, we have the wild Pentecostal preacher who claims that everything he and yes, sometimes she, says to the people is the word of God given by direct revelation. But folks, we no longer need or receive this direct revelation because the 66 books of the Bible are complete, and we don't need any more revelation.

Then on the other had, we have powerless young and older preachers standing on platforms (not too many behind pulpits any more), declaring a message without any authority, other than the authority of what some other commentator or theologian has said. My point is that we desperately need to have genuine men of God back in our pulpits who will stand up unashamed and preach with the authority and power of God. And, we should not apologize for what we preach as long as we are declaring the truth. And beyond this, we need to have people sitting in the pews or chairs who recognize that if the preaching is the truth coming from God's inerrant Word of God, then the message should be received and respected just like it came from God. For in fact, if it is God's Word, then it did come from God who wrote it through 40 human authors over a period of 1,500 years. Thus, Paul told the people that his authority came from the God who called him.

C. His was a position of attestation. v. 1c

The third thing Paul mentions in this very first verse of this chapter is that his apostleship had been attested by his vision of the resurrected Christ. Now, we don't know for sure that Paul saw Jesus after the resurrection in Jerusalem area, but we can be sure that he saw the resurrected Christ on the Damascus Road when he got saved and gave his heart to the master. But, I am inclined to believe he did see Jesus here on the earth after his resurrection because of what is stated in **II Corinthians 5:16**. Please notice this verse. **"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."** Do you see the phrase, **"though we have known Christ after the flesh..."** Because of this phrase, I am inclined to believe that while Paul was still in Jerusalem before he got saved, he very well may have seen Christ in His resurrected form, but we can't be perfectly sure. However, we can know for sure that Paul was truly an Apostle chosen by God because he saw the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus when he got saved. This encounter gives attestation that Paul was truly an apostle, because an apostle had to see the Christ in a resurrected form. Please notice the following verse. **Acts 1:22, "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."** So, the requirement for every apostle was that he had to be chosen by God alone, and he had to have seen Jesus in his resurrection form. And, may I add here that there are no authentic apostles in this dispensation because if a person had the true credentials of an apostle today of having seen the resurrected Lord, then that person would have to be over 2,000 years old.

But, I would have you take a look at what Paul said about his own apostleship. Please notice the following verses. **I Corinthians 15:6-11, "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 (dead). After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all, he was seen of me also, as 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 labored 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."** Once we read these verses, it is absolutely impossible to be totally honest and not see that Paul was indeed a true apostle because these verses attest his genuineness.

D. His was a position of affirmation. vs. 1c-2

In the last part of verse one and in verse two, we find the authoritative affirmation of Paul's apostleship. In these verses Paul tells the Corinthian believers that if anyone on earth should know that he was a genuine apostle, the Corinthians should because it was through his ministry that they had been saved and changed. Paul even tells them that if others didn't believe he was the real deal, then they most

assuredly should believe it. Paul tells them that they are the proof that he is a real apostle sent from God. And, it seems to me that Paul's patience has about run out with these Corinthian believers. So, he really lays it on them about the fact that they are the living proof of his true apostleship. In other words, the best way to see if a man of God is the real deal, just look at the fruit of his labor. If there are no truly saved souls, then there is no genuineness in a person's works. And yet, sometimes today I get such skepticism and even castigation because I talk so much about people getting saved and giving proof to the authenticity of our ministries and yes, even our calling. If we are truly chosen by God, we will have on our minds what Jesus has on His; the souls of men, women, boys and girls.

II. SECONDLY, PAUL DEFENDS HIS PRIVILEGES. vs. 3-15

A. He had the privilege of a domestic relationship. vs. 3-5

As we move forward in our study of Paul's defense of his apostleship, we find a very unusual subject matter in verses 3-5, and in 6-11. These verses reveal to us that someone in the Corinthian Church was questioning Paul's apostleship because he was not married, and because he was not taking money from the people of God for his ministry. So, they must have been accusing him of not being genuine because he desired no wife, and because he did not want their money lest he be accused of preaching for money. But yet, Paul let them know emphatically that it was perfectly permissible for him to take a Christian wife if he so desired just like the other apostles and disciples like Peter. You will remember that we know for sure that Peter had a wife because in **Mark 1:29-31**, we find this evidence. **"And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them."** So, we know for sure that Peter had a wife, and what Paul was saying is that if he wanted a wife, he could have one. But for him to have a wife at this point in his life would probably require divided loyalty, which Paul did not want.

I do want to mention right here that God gave me the best wife that a man of God could ever desire. JoAnne and I have been married almost 54 years, and during all of these years, we have been actively engaged in ministry. She has been my supporter, my encourager, and my friend during all of these years. I honestly would not have wanted to live without my precious wife, and personally, Paul probably would not have had so much suffering to endure alone if he would have had a dear wife like mine. I know one thing for sure. If I had not had the wonderful wife that I have for the past several years since I have been so sick, there is just no way that I could have continued on in the ministry during all of these years of suffering. So, I might just say that Paul may have cut himself short by not having his own personal helpmeet. But, whether he had a wife or not did not give authenticity to him as an Apostle.

B. He had the privilege of a deserved remuneration. vs. 6-11

The second thing that Paul mentions here in our text is that the people must have been complaining about him not being a real apostle because he was not taking money from the church people to pay for his food and his other necessities of life. Of course, we know that Paul was a tent maker, or bi-vocational, as we call it, but had he chosen to receive funds from the people to have his needs met, it was very proper, and to be very honest, he should have expected it.

In verse six, Paul mentions the fact that if he and Barnabas had chosen to work to provide for themselves, this action certainly didn't negate the fact that the church should take care of its servants, and if Paul wanted to receive money from the church, it was quite alright to do so. In fact, I sincerely believe that it is God's perfect will for every church to take honorable care of its pastors and staff, and that church should also be very generous with the preachers or evangelists God sends to them. And, the church should be very supportive of the missionaries that God brings their way. There is one thing for certain, no church will ever be blessed of God if that church steals from His servants, or if that church doesn't show the man of God proper respect.

"In verse 7, Paul gives three illustrations to show that paying workers is customary. As he does in much of this chapter, Paul makes his point through rhetorical questions, the answers to which are obvious. The answer expected to each question is none.

Soldiers do not fight during the day and then work at a civilian job at night in order to eat, buy clothes, and have a place to stay. Soldiers do not serve at their own expense. They are provided food, clothing, arms, lodging, and whatever else is needed to live and fight effectively.

Farmers do not plant a vineyard or cultivate a crop for someone without being paid. They do not farm for free and then do other work to make a living. They eat the fruit of their farming, being paid either in money or with a share of the crop. (2 Tim. 2:6)

Shepherds do not work for free, either. They expect at least some of the milk of the flock in payment.

All three types of workers are paid for their work. It is customary, rightful, and an expected thing. Why should it not be true for God's workers as well?"¹³

The last few paragraphs which I have just given you were written by Dr. John MacArthur. I do not read a lot of John MacArthur because he has become such a hardened Calvinist, but these statements about this text are very good. So, I thought I would share them with you.

Before we move on to the next point, I want to insert two paragraphs from Dr. John Philip's Commentary on First Corinthians. These words simplify the

¹³ New Testament Commentary on First Corinthians, By: Dr. John MacArthur, Moody Press, page 202.

problems that Paul was facing as his apostleship was being debated. Please notice the following words.

"People are the same all over. In Jesus' day they criticized John the Baptist for his asceticism and they criticized Jesus for His accessibility. Jesus likened them to children at play; when one group invited the others to come and play at weddings, they refused to do that; and when they invited them to play at funerals instead, they wouldn't do that either (Matthew 11:16-17).

It was the same with the Apostle Paul. With some people nothing he did was right. If he accepted money for his ministry, that was wrong—he was just in it for the money. If he declined to be supported financially, that was wrong—he was being too independent. For him to remain single was suspicious, for him to get married would be wrong, too; it would hinder his freedom. If he were married but left his wife at home, that would be wrong—people would say they didn't get along. If he were married and brought his wife along, what kind of life was that for a woman? And besides, why should they pay her travel expenses as well as his!"¹⁴

C. He had the privilege of disciplined rejection. vs. 12-13

In verse twelve, Paul continues his thoughts about why it was quite all right for him to take money for his upkeep as a preacher. However, he rejected this idea because he didn't want to give anyone a chance to say that he was in it for the money. In other words, he did not want to hinder the Gospel in any way by giving people the idea that he was in the ministry for the income he could get out of it. So, Paul's main thought always was not having a negative testimony before others, even if they were sometimes evil and vicious toward him. What stands out to me here was that the people were not nearly as concerned with what they were doing with their lives as they were with what the preacher did. May I say to you that this still goes on in the world every day. Oh yes, the man of God should hold himself to a higher standard, but the wicked people should not attack him for everything he does.

Now, in verse thirteen, Paul reaffirms his right to expect the people to take care of his physical needs by mentioning that even the priests who wait upon the altars in the temples are privileged to be taken care of by the people. Thus, it indeed would not be wrong for Paul to receive money from the church to meet his needs, and neither is it wrong for a man of God to expect this today in this generation.

D. He had the privilege of diligent reverence. vs. 14-15

Paul begins verse 14 by telling the believers in Corinth that God had even ordained that if a man preach the Gospel, then he should live by the Gospel. In other words, this method came from God, and therefore, no human should be rejecting it or trying to prevent it from happening. Paul was simply saying that when a church family takes care of their church pastor's needs, then, this is an action of reverence for God who gave this plan for taking care of His servants. Not only should this plan

¹⁴Exploring First Corinthians, By: Dr. John Philips, Kregel Publishing, page 186.

not be rejected by the people, but they shouldn't even argue with the principle. Why? Because it is God's principle!

In verse 15, Paul digs way down deep in his heart to tell the people that the main reason he did not receive money or funds from the church at Corinth was because the only things he was concerned with were giving a positive testimony and preaching the Gospel with the right motive. No one would ever be able to accuse Paul of preaching for money. Yet, he had every right to expect the people to meet his needs, and this principle is still applicable in the church age in which we live today. Paul was simply saying that he wanted the Lord to be glorified in everything he did, even to the point of refusing to take gifts from fickle and self-centered church members who were always looking for something to criticize and condemn.

III. PAUL DEFENDS HIS PREACHING. vs. 16-18

In these next three verses, Paul just goes on to defend his ministry before the Corinthian believers. He is trying in some way to stop this gossiping doubt about his apostleship and integrity. It just seems that the hypocrites just never stopped attacking Paul, and these same type of religious hypocrites just keep on attacking God's men today. The last thing in the world that the Corinthians should have been doing was attacking the very one who brought them the message of salvation. Yet, it always seems that the people you do the most for are the ones that hurt you the most before they walk away and leave you. As I stated earlier, my wife and I are being attacked right now by people we have given four complete years of pastoral love and compassion. But the question always is, "What can you do for me right now, and not what have you done for me in the past?" Most Christians have a short memory when it comes to maintaining a spirit of gratitude toward those who have tried to help us the most.

I can really attest this presently because one man that used to be a great soul winning man has now become a vicious man attacking me because of a decision that God led my wife and me to make. Yet, many years ago at a growing church where I pastored, I spent literally hours and hours trying to win this vicious man's mother and father to Christ before they died, and to God's glory, they both got saved. Now, their professing Christian son is viciously attacking me, the one God used to bring his parents to Christ and keep their souls out of hell. It seems quite odd to me that a man would be more interested in getting his selfish way than he would be loving the man who helped lead his parents to Christ. I don't understand this, and I suppose I never will.

A. Paul's defense reveals the mandate of his preaching. v. 16

Paul the Apostle understood his mandate to preach the Gospel very clearly. He tells the Corinthian believers that he didn't choose to preach the Gospel, but that his preaching was the result of his call from God to do so. Therefore, because his preaching was not of his choice, but the result of God's call upon his life, he had nothing to glory in. Thus, all the glory was to go to Jesus Who called him.

Then, Paul goes one step further in this verse 16 by saying that he had no other choice than to preach the Gospel, for, if he did not preach the Gospel in obedience to the call of God, he stood to receive chastisement from God. Now, if you are one of those professing Christians who believes that a preacher decides on his own to go into the ministry, you need to pay attention to this. Why? Because if a preacher is truly a God called preacher, then if he refuses to preach or even to water down the message, he will be in big trouble with God. You see folks, when God calls or appoints his servants to serve Him, we do not have the liberty to change the message or even refuse to declare the unsearchable riches of God's Word.

May I say right here that the truth of this verse lies heavily upon my heart. Oh yes, there are those who say to us who are truly God called preachers to not raise the bar so high, and to not become so passionate about our preaching, but just simply present the truth that God loves people, and don't preach the necessity of total surrender to God. I must declare unapologetically that God did call me to the ministry, and I have no right, or even the privilege, to change the message to accommodate the sins of mankind. I must declare the complete revelation of God provided for us in His inerrant Word. To do less will get me in tremendous trouble with my Master.

B. Paul's defense reveals the motive of his preaching. v. 17

Paul's motive for his preaching was to bring honor to the One who called him. In other words, Paul didn't have a choice in the matter. Oh yes, he could have rebelled against God and refused to preach like one of my brothers did, but he knew that if he did not preach the Gospel willingly for the motive of honoring God, then, he would receive no reward. You see folks, Paul was not interested in the money of the Corinthians as his reward for preaching to them, but his interest was that one day in the future at the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive the rewards God would give to him for being faithful.

I would also like to add that having studied the life and ministry of Paul for almost 60 years, I am convinced that Paul's second motive for preaching was just simply to reach the lost world. I say this because Paul knew where he came from and what he used to be before he got saved on the Damascus Road. Therefore, he just wanted others to experience what he had experienced in the new birth, but he only wanted to preach the Gospel in such a way as to honor the Christ Who called him.

C. Paul's defense reveals the manner of his preaching. v. 18

I would love to have heard Paul the Apostle preach one of his long sermons like the one he preached in Troas when Eutychus fell out of the window and Paul went outside and brought him back to life again (Acts 20:9-16). If we could have heard Paul preach, we would certainly have known the manner of his preaching. Of course, we haven't heard Paul, but having written my Master's Thesis on Paul, I truly learned a lot about his style of preaching from my studies of his life. And obviously from the study of verse 18, we learn that Paul desired so much to preach in such a

way as to not abuse the Gospel message. I believe Paul preached with love, compassion, passion, forthrightness, and yes, in a very candid way, he preached the truth without fear or favor. Why did he do this? Because he did not want to abuse the Gospel or use it in any form or fashion to make him some money. May I say, this style of preaching is very foreign to most of the preachers in the pulpits of the world today. It just seems that more attention is given to merchandising the Gospel to draw big crowds and take big offerings than to declare with love the unvarnished truth of God's Word. So, what Paul wanted to avoid with his preaching, we are seeing this abuse almost everywhere we look today. Maybe we preachers in this generation need to examine our styles of preaching and also, our motives for preaching. I pray to God that within whatever time I have left, I will never be guilty of abusing the Gospel by manipulation and bragging about my power of authority. And yet, I desire so much that I be anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit every time I preach more than anything else in the world. If there is no power in our preaching, then, there can be no harvest when the net is drawn.

IV. PAUL DEFENDS HIS PURPOSE. vs. 19-27

Continuing on in this wonderful study, we now come to the last section of verses which Paul wrote to the confused and problematic church in Corinth. Paul will conclude this section of Scripture by sharing the supreme purpose of his life. That purpose could be summarized by saying that Paul's main purpose was to fulfill God's personal purpose for his life in a way that would bring glory to God the Father. Paul had no other reason for living, and this should be easily seen in these last verses of this chapter. In other words, Paul was ready to defend his purpose for living.

A. His purpose was to be a dedicated servant. v. 19

Paul begins this last section of this chapter by telling the people that although he is free in Christ and truly beholden to no man, he had voluntarily made himself a servant of others. The word for servant here in the Greek is the word "doulos" or bond slave. In other words, Paul's purpose in all of his life was to serve Jesus first, and because of what Jesus had done in his life, spend his life serving others as a bond slave of Jesus Christ. And the reason Paul wanted to serve others was because he wanted them to come to Christ and be changed as he had been. So, gaining the more means he wanted to win more for Christ.

B. His purpose was to be a diplomatic servant. vs. 20-23

Paul continues his discussion of servanthood in these next verses by telling the Corinthians that he was willing to humble himself and become whatever was needed in order to bring people to Christ. Because of his Jewish background, he could talk the talk and walk the walk as a Jew in order to win them to Christ. And, because of his Jewish background, he was very familiar with the Old Testament Law, and thus, he could use the Law to bring these Jewish people to the knowledge of their sins and come to Christ.

Then, Paul goes on to talk about those who were not Jews and were outside the Law. Of course, he was talking about reaching out to the Gentiles with the Gospel message so that they could be saved as well. So, as a diplomat or ambassador sent from God, Paul was ready to represent Jesus Christ and His Kingdom to all the Jews and to all of the Gentiles. And obviously, Paul would use his ancestral relationship with the Romans in such a way as to be able to relate to the Gentiles that needed Jesus. Paul truly had on his heart what Jesus always has on His, the souls of men, women, boys and girls. Paul's main purpose for living was to be God's representative to every class, every tribe, every nation, and every race. He was willing to become whatever he needed to become in order that he might win people to Jesus. Let me quote verse 22, just so you can see the true purpose for Paul's existence since his salvation experience on the Damascus Road. **"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."** In other words, this just means that Paul would become whatever he needed to become, but he would not compromise his righteous lifestyle in order to see people come to Christ. I insert this thought here because so many churches have lowered their standards under the presumption that if they lower the standards, they might slip up on the blind side of evil people and get them into the church assemblies, and maybe even get some phony false decisions from these worldly people. Paul became all things to all people in order to save some, but not if it would require him to align himself with the world. I know this from what Paul wrote in II Corinthians, Chapter 6.

One more thing here. in verse 23, Paul stresses the fact that he does what he does in trying to win people to Christ, so that he might be able to completely fellowship with those genuine believers who were themselves also burdened with winning people to Christ. Truthfully, people that don't have the same vision and purpose don't feel comfortable fellowshiping with others whose goals and vision are different.

C. His purpose was to be a disciplined servant. vs. 24-27

In these last few verses in Chapter 9, Paul really emphasizes the importance of a well disciplined and a well-trained life for every child of God if he or she wants to be a winner in the race. Of course, we all know that only one person wins a race down here on earth. But, for the well-disciplined child of God running in the race for our Lord, we know that more than one will win, because we all can be winners if we maintain a faithful servant attitude and keep our focus upon Jesus and the finish line. God has promised to reward every dedicated servant who runs this race well with the right motives and the right objectives.

And, we can assuredly know that the wreath or crown we are running for is not a corruptible one, but one that is incorruptible. But of course, I am sure that if we receive any crowns at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will gladly lay them down at the feet of Jesus because He is the one that recruited us through His plan of redemption. Therefore, He deserves all of the glory for a race that is run well.

In verse 26, Paul changes the analogy from a runner to that of a boxer or fighter. He tells the Corinthian believers that he doesn't just want to be in the ring

boxing at the air, but it is his goal to be in the real fight against Satan and all of his wicked cohorts. So, Paul states that he is not fighting with uncertainty, because he knows for sure that he is on the winning side.

I love verse 27 in our text. Here Paul tells the confused believers in Corinthian that he is ready to keep his body disciplined and under control in order for him to keep running the race to the very end, and also, to finish the boxing match for Jesus. What I see here is that Paul sincerely believes that no sacrifice is far too great in view of the fact that he knows what's up ahead for the winner of the race and also the boxing match.

Then, the very last statement in verse 27 is a tremendous statement. It reveals to me that Paul lived with a reverential fear, and that was, that he didn't want to have lived a life preaching to others, and then end up being a castaway. The word castaway in the Greek is the word *adokimos* which means to be disapproved. Paul's utmost desire was to finish well and receive the approval of the Savior at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul felt just as I do today that he didn't want to run the race and finish the course and discover that his efforts had been in vain or disapproved by our Lord. I feel the very same way. Thus, I want to be a disciplined servant all the way to the finish line in order to receive our Lord's approval. I sincerely pray that you feel the same way.

Conclusion

Well folks, we have now completed another wonderful chapter in this study of First Corinthians. Truly, if we have given God our best in this chapter study, then we should be ready to defend our calling to where God has placed us. We should not be intimidated by the religious phonies who are prone to attack us like some did of Paul in Corinth. We, like Paul, have been given a wonderful position in Christ, some marvelous privileges to serve Him, and the opportunity to preach and teach the truth of the Gospel message to scores of people. But, this can only happen if we understand our purpose for which Jesus saved and called us. No child of God will ever discover their purpose in being here on this earth until they seek diligently for the perfect will of God for his or her life, and he or she will never be fruitful and productive unless he or she carries out the purpose for which he or she was saved and called.

So, maybe I just ought to stop and preach a little bit right here in this commentary. Friends, are you working and serving in the perfect will of God for your lives, and are you fulfilling the purpose for which God made you? If you aren't presently doing this, then, this would be a good time for you to renew your vows and totally surrender your lives to Christ.

Chapter Sixteen

"Dealing With Temptation"

Scripture: I Corinthians 10:1-33

Introduction

Up to this point in our exegetical study of First Corinthians, we have seen many of the problems that Paul tried to help the Corinthian Church solve in their fellowship of believers. Some of these problems might be considered small, but truthfully, most of them have been extremely big. The sad thing about all of this is that Paul spent 18 months in Corinth as their pastor, and yet, when he moved on to win other people to Christ and plant more churches, many of the Corinthians acted like they didn't even believe he was a true apostle all though he was the one who brought them the Gospel message.

Truly, my heart goes out to Paul because my wife and I have been through the very thing that Paul was going through. We too have helped to plant churches, seen them grow, and then, when we have moved on to try and fulfill the perfect will of God for our lives, those to whom we have given our lives either get mad at us or they just simply have nothing to do with us from that time on. Paul was trying so hard to help these people he loved, but they didn't seem to be trying to show him any love and respect. Again, I will say that we have been there and done that! It truly does hurt, but there is nothing we can do about it.

As we now start our study of Chapter 10, we are going to deal with a major area of concern in almost every Christian's life. This is the area of temptation. It doesn't matter what kind of temptation we may have, there is a Biblical way of dealing with this temptation. Here in this chapter, Paul will mention several different kinds of lusts such as the desire for power, the desire to eat and drink improperly, the lust of fornication and sexual sins, and yes, even the desire to worship other gods instead of Jehovah. And believe it or not, Paul has to once again deal with the confusion over eating meat left over from idol worship. He has already dealt specifically with this, but obviously he felt that the people just wouldn't get the truth from his first discussion of this subject. So, the Holy Spirit led him once more to try and help the people to learn how to deal with their liberty in Christ, and not to make their liberty a license to sin against or hurt their brothers or sisters in Christ. Here again, the people were instructed to feel free to do what they had a clear conscience about, but to not use that liberty to offend those who were either spiritually immature, or even some which may not have actually been saved. So, let's take a close look at these 33 verses and ask God to help us learn how to deal with the temptations of life. I can tell you that if Jesus, our Lord, needed to know the Scriptures in order to quote it to the devil when under temptation, how much more do we need to know the truth of the Bible in order to withstand the vicious attacks of Satan.

I. NOTICE SOME POOR EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO DEALT WITH TEMPTATION. vs. 1-13.

A. Please notice the privileged liberties of these poor examples. vs. 1-5

In these next five verses, we are going to see just how blessed the true child of God is. We are going to look here at many of the liberties that God has given to every child of God who has genuinely been saved. But the question is, "how will we as God's children use these liberties?" We will use them by living in sin, or we will use them in a positive way for the glory of God. In these five verses, we will see that the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses did not use their privileged liberties very well. And as a result, they never were permitted to arrive in the promised land of rest, but instead, died in the wilderness. I pray this doesn't happen to any of us who are genuine born again children of God.

1. These poor examples were given the privilege of a personal salvation. v. 1

The first thing Paul mentions in verse one is the great privilege that God had given to the Israelites by bringing them out from Egyptian bondage by the leadership of Moses, God's called servant. Paul pleaded with the Corinthians to never forget or be ignorant of what God had done for them when He gave them personal salvation. You see folks, if we forget how wonderful it is to be saved, then we will fail to give God the glory and we will not be able to live the victorious life which was begun at the moment of our salvation.

You see folks, the crossing of the Red Sea indeed is a picture of our personal salvation. When the children of Israel crossed over on dry ground, God then placed the cloud of His shekinah glory over the Israelites to protect the people from Pharaoh and the many enemies of God, but it was also given to make manifest the sweet presence of God to those who would by faith trust Him for personal salvation. Certainly, we know that the Israelites did not get delivered collectively by collective faith unto salvation, but, each one of these Jews had to trust the word of Moses as the Word of God, and each one had to act upon God's word by faith and move forward out of Egyptian bondage. And, so it is for every sinner that wants to be delivered from sin and experience God's eternal salvation. There has to be a positive response by faith to the truth of God's Word, and then the person will be delivered and brought out of sinful bondage to walk in newness of life. This personal salvation has to happen, or the individual will never be able to overcome any of the temptations of life. I would just remind you of **II Corinthians 5:17**, which says, **"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."**

2. These poor examples were given the privilege of a powerful servant. v. 2

As we look at verse 2, we need to see the symbolism and typology which is used for illustration here in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Just like the children of Israel being immersed into the body of believing Israelites through the influence of Moses, we too have to obey the example of Christ and be immersed into water to give indication that we are serious about our newfound commitment to the Savior. The baptism here is a symbol just like I stated a moment ago. When we truly get

saved, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of believers, and the Holy Spirit comes to live on the inside of us to give us the preeminence of Christ in and throughout our lives. So, the people of Israel believed the Word of God which came through His power servant, Moses, and we too must believe the truth of God's Word presented to us through powerful servants of God.

Now, I need to mention that when the children of Israel were eventually freed from bondage by the blood of the sacrificial Passover lamb, they then had to follow Moses in separating themselves from the world and the sinfulness of Egypt in order to be completely delivered in a supernatural or miraculous way. Just remember that the people of Israel were not delivered until the blood was shed, and then, when this happened, they had to take the necessary steps of faith and repentance and separate themselves from the old life in bondage. And so it is with us today. When we truly get saved, we too must repent and take the step of faith in order to get us out of the bondage of sin, and into the resurrected life that is illustrated by coming up out of the water on to dry land.

So my friends, when we are faced with the many temptations of this life, we must remember that God delivered Israel from Egypt only because of the faith and action of each individual who would believe that Moses was indeed God's powerful servant sent to them to prepare the way for their deliverance. Therefore, there is utterly no way that any of us can ever be set free and have the power of God in us to overcome the temptation, unless we know for certain that we have been truly saved.

3. These poor examples were given the privilege of a pleasant sustenance. vs. 3-4

As we continue this wonderful study, we come to verses 3-4 where Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that after God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, which is a picture of our salvation, He graciously provided food (manna) for them everyday out in the wilderness. But more importantly, God provided spiritual food for them in and through the presence of God, first in the Cloud of Shekinah Glory and then, in the Fire that led them by night. Then, the Rock that followed them in the wilderness was the place where they received water to drink, but more precious, this Rock was none other than Jesus Christ. Now, some of you may say, "how could this Rock be Christ?" Let my good friend, Dr. Paige Patterson, answer this question in his commentary on First Corinthians.

"By the same token, there was the problem of finding water for such a multitude. Paul next called to mind Moses' experience in striking the rock out of which flowed an abundance of water for all the people. This reminded him that the people drank of the same spiritual drink, for they drank of the Rock that was Christ. This is no mere allegory. The actual history of the feeding of people with the manna and the miraculous rift in the rock are in no sense questioned in these verses. On the other hand, it is clear that Paul was making use of typological language; these experiences of eating the heavenly bread and drinking the water from the rock really were spiritual experiences of faith as much as they were actual historical incidents. They prefigured the sustenance that would be gained, first of all, in terms

of salvation and, second, in terms of general spiritual growth which would be derived from the spiritual food and drink for all men of faith."¹⁵

Of course, I do need to remind all of us that this Rock allegory, if we might call it this, reminds us that Moses also made a tragic mistake when later on as the people complained about needing water, he lost his temper and smote the Rock once more. This terrible decision cost Moses the privilege of going into the Promised Land, because it is a picture of crucifying our Lord a second time. And, most assuredly, all of us know that Jesus didn't have to be crucified but one time. And yes, when that crucifixion took place, the task was completely finished.

So therefore, we must conclude that these Israelites who rebelled against the plan of God and ended up lost in the wilderness, were the same people that had been given both physical and spiritual sustenance because of the goodness of God. Yet, they rebelled and lost the privilege of finding God's best and their greatest potential. I am sad to say that this is happening all over the world today in the lives of scores of God's children just simply because they don't realize the sacredness of their relationship with Christ, and also, because they don't recognize that the prize for humanities sin has been fully paid. Thus, these weak disbelieving believers are dying far short of their potential which God has given to them. When we as God's people succumb to the temptation to distrust God's Word and disobey His voice, then we will indeed suffer great loss.

4. These poor examples were given a planned submission. v. 5

Let me quote this verse for you here in our text. **"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness."** Please see the truth of this verse. These Israelites, who were and still are poor examples to the rest of the world in dealing with temptation, were given the privilege to submit themselves completely to God and believe His every word. But no, they disbelieved God's Word and suffered so much loss. Paul's fear for the Corinthian believers was that these fellow-believers would follow the poor example of the Israelites in the wilderness. And, having been a pastor for so long, I too fear that most of modern believers never fully submit to God's will and His potential for their lives. Thus, they miss out on so much good that God had planned for them.

B. Notice the personal lifestyles of those poor examples. vs. 6-10

Now, we must take a close look at the tragic mistakes of the Israelites which they made in disobedience to God, and they suffered disastrous consequences. These so-called children of God were given so many wonderful privileges, but they backslide on their commitment to God, and the end result was tragedy. Let's look at the sins of these professed people of God.

1. Their lifestyles included indiscretion. v. 6

¹⁵ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 157.

I got this word "indiscretion" from the terrible capitulation to the lust for evil things which the Israelites committed. God had blessed them in so many ways, but their desires for evil over-powered their desires to please God. The word lust here in this verse actually means "boiling over." In other words, the people became so vile and corrupt that they were boiling over with the lust for evil things every day in their lives. We might say that they had become so humanized and secularized that the things of God and the Word of God just didn't mean anything to them. They became poor examples to others because of their willful indiscretion.

May I tell you that this is just like the times in which we are living here in America. Our society has become totally turned upside down. Right has become wrong, and those who believe in righteous living are scorned and mocked by those who are obsessed with the lusts of the flesh. Everywhere we look, our churches have become worldly and often, even pagan because they have tried to mix the desires of the flesh with religion. So, Israel, which should have been God's exemplary nation after their deliverance from bondage were extremely poor examples when it came to withstanding the temptation of Satan.

2. Their lifestyles included idolatry. v. 7

Verse 7, in this text is one of the most disturbing verses in the Bible. I say this because it reveals the wickedness of the people of Israel after God had so graciously delivered them from Egyptian bondage. Paul is describing the behavior of the Israelites for the people of Corinth with an emphasis upon the absurd debauchery of the people at the foot of Mt. Sinai. While Moses was upon the Mount of God receiving the Ten Commandments, the people under the supervision of Aaron, were down at the foot of the mountain complaining about why Moses had not yet come back down. So, because of their past association with Apis, the sacred bull of Egypt, no doubt Aaron was trying to appease the angry people with the idolatry which they and their families had lived under for years and years. So, the people built a golden calf to resemble the sacred bull they had seen in Egypt for all the time that they were there under the control of Pharaoh. In other words, they just decided to go back to their previous pagan religion rather than dealing with the temptation of impatience while waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain of God.

Friends, this is just exactly what is happening in our world today; especially here in our secularized country called America. Everywhere we look, we see substitute paganism for genuine God worship and true Christianity. And sad to say, a lot of what we are seeing is the actual mixing of ancient Babylonian religion with our so-called modern churches. We now have brought Transcendental Meditation, Hinduism and yoga, and far-out dreams and visions back into our churches, and we are hell-bent on producing the Ecumenical Church, that we just believe we should allow any paganism in order to get along with this phony love agenda.

So, we have learned the hard way from hypocritical religious pretenders just like Israel was during the days of Moses, that many who claim they have dealt with the temptation of idolatry have in fact, capitulated to pagan rites and rituals just to try to get along with their hypocritical friends in order to be politically correct.

3. Their lifestyles included immorality. v. 8

Well, as a part of this pagan worship of a so-called sacred bull, there was a tremendous amount of sexual immorality, or as the verse mentions, sexual fornication. It is believed by many scholars that this terrible act was just like the sexual acts of prostitutes incorporated into the worship of the sacred bull of Apis. In other words, rather than waiting with expectancy for the new words from God called the Ten Commandments, weakly Aaron allowed these evil people to submit to the sexual temptation of paganism to try and satisfy the endless lust of the people pretending to be the people of God. And, as a result of this horrible behavior of immorality, God Almighty brought severe judgment upon the people.

In our text, Paul says that God killed 23,000 people with a plague in just one day. However, in the Exodus story found in Numbers 25:9, we are told that 24,000 were slain. Let me give you Dr. John Philips' commentary on this seeming discrepancy.

"Judgment fell swiftly. The judges of Israel were commissioned by Moses to slay all those involved in this affair. The 'heads of the people,' that is, their leaders, were taken and publicly hanged (Numbers 25:4). There was also a plague which broke out that caused an even greater number of deaths. 'Those that died in the plague were twenty-four thousand,' Moses says (25:9). This figure included the ringleaders who were hanged before the plague broke out. He does not give their number, but evidently it totaled a thousand men. The twenty-three thousand were those who 'fell in one day' in the subsequent plague."¹⁶

I would like to draw our attention to the fact that God doesn't always send judgment immediately when His people have succumbed to temptation in rebellion against His laws, but rest assured that He doesn't forget, and sooner or later, He will bring about His judgment on immorality and the desecration of the human vessel which has been created in His image for the purpose of bringing glory to His name.

Right now in America, we need to come to grips with the reality that the immoral conduct that is rampant in our country is not being overlooked by God, and unless our country repents in sincere brokenness and humility, judgment is coming upon our land. Do you remember how the people mocked Noah in the days when he was building the ark? Do you remember how the people of Israel disbelieved and defied the many great prophets of God throughout the Old Testament when they cried out against immorality? Do you remember the truth that Paul gave the Roman believers about the wickedness in their society? Well, I certainly do, and we are definitely on the verge of seeing this defiant rebellion brought to God's accountability very soon.

It could very well be that God is going to judge the immoral world just by simply turning these wicked people over to their own lifestyles of sin. Let's look at **Romans 1:24-27**, and discover the coming certain judgment on those who believe that wrong has become right, and right has become wrong. Notice these verses, **"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed**

¹⁶ Exploring I Corinthians, by John Philips, Kregel Publishers, pages, 212-213.

the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another: men with men working that is unseemly (or unnatural), and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet (deserved)."

So, God gave the Israelite people the opportunity to set an example before the entire world on how to deal with sexual temptation, and they blatantly failed. They were truly poor examples, and I must confess as an American nation, we too are poor examples in this age in which we live.

4. Their lifestyles included infidelity. v. 9

The word infidelity has many different meanings, but basically it means to betray someone you are connected with in a personal way. Another very serious word we may use for infidelity is the word treason. In other words, a husband may commit infidelity against his wife. Or, the wife may commit infidelity against her husband. Then, there are all kinds of betrayal like committing betrayal against one's country. In other words, this sin of infidelity is a very serious one.

In verse nine of our text, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that the Israelites in the wilderness had put God to the test in many ways, even to the point of being infidels against God Himself. The reference in this verse is found in Numbers 21, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness complaining against Moses and God and defiantly complaining about not having certain food or water. In other words, they were fed up with the manna which God provided every day, and they didn't like drinking water from the rock. So, they complained to Moses and to God, and as a result, God sent venomous serpents which started biting the people and the people began to die. Of course, you may remember that the people did repent, and God had Moses to make a serpent of brass and raise it upon a pole. Then, if those who had been bitten by the poisonous snakes would look by faith toward the brass serpent, then they would live. This was truly a picture of the coming crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Who would be lifted up on the cross for our sins, and if we would repent of our sins and put our faith in Him, then we could be delivered from the terrible spiritual death produced by sin.

So my beloved friends, the Israelites were forgiven for their defiant treason against God, but this didn't happen until they admitted their wrong, repented of their sins, and put their faith in the Word and truth of God. They had rebelled in infidelity as a terrible example of how to deal with temptation, but when they truly did repent, God forgave them.

5. Their lifestyles included impatience. v. 10

Now, let me ask this question, "why do people give into temptation so easily, when in fact, they know the serious consequences that will come when they succumb to this temptation?" The answer is that people let their emotions and

desires of the flesh cause them to be very impatient, and thus, they murmur and whine until they satisfy the temporary lusts, but they never get true satisfaction. The reason is that only God and a personal relationship with Him through intimacy with Christ can bring power over the lusts of the flesh and produce a lasting peace in one's heart. Therefore, my dear friends, maybe we ought to just slow down and evaluate the evident consequences which will come if we give in to temptation. I assure you of this, that if we don't stop and evaluate these consequences, the outcome will be that not only will the individual get hurt, but more than likely, all of his or her friends around them will suffer injury as well.

C. Notice the practical lessons from these poor examples. vs. 11-13

Many years ago my father, who is now gone to heaven, used to tell me, "Stan, you better learn from your mistakes." I can tell you emphatically that my Dad was correct. I have learned so much from so many of my own mistakes and failures, but I have also learned from the failures of others as well.

History tells us that probably no man failed more in his early life than Abraham Lincoln, even to the point of where he probably had a nervous breakdown. But yet, all of us know how God used this Christian Republican man to free the slaves when there was so much viciousness from the southern Democrats who were the majority of plantation owners. God supernaturally used Abe Lincoln after scores of failures, but then, his stand for what was right cost him his life.

As we have been looking at the failures of the early Israelites who were such poor examples of people trying to deal with their fleshly lusts, we need to look at the practical lessons which we can learn from these terrible examples.

1. There is an inevitable consequence for capitulating to temptation. v. 11

In verse eleven, we come to a tremendous warning that we should learn from those who gave in to temptation. In fact, Paul says in this verse that the things that happened to the Israelites during their days in the wilderness were allowed by God to happen to them in order to warn all of us who would come later and deal with the same kinds of temptation. My friends, there are consequences to giving into temptation that far exceed the temporary pleasures that may be gotten from committing the sins which Satan brings our way. Thus, we should open our eyes and look to see what actually happened to the Israelites who lived to satisfy the lusts of the flesh. I promise you that the end results of their giving into to selfish temptation were truly catastrophic, and they will be for us as well. Therefore, we better not nonchalantly make a joke about our temporary sins to bring short term pleasure to our flesh.

The last phrase of this verse is one that has been debated for a long time. Paul tells the Corinthian believers that the main reason we should learn from the poor examples of the Israelites were allowed by God to give us a warning about the same mistakes because time is short and the end of the world is to come. Truly, this is an urgent warning! Because we are now living in the age of grace almost two thousand years since Paul wrote this great Epistle, we should realize the urgency of staying

victorious over the temptation of the flesh, because we are going to give an account of this before God at the end of time. Of course, I believe that we as Christians will have to give an account to Jesus at His Judgment Seat just after the rapture takes place here on earth. In other words, we are going to give an account for our lives, for our failures, for our mistakes, unless we have confessed our sins for making these mistakes. As someone has so rightly said, "there is a payday someday." Therefore, we need to remember another statement that was made many years ago by a great older preacher. He said, "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you want to pay." How true this really is.

2. There is the imminent catastrophe for castigating temptation. v. 12

This is a very short verse, but one with lasting truth. The verse reminds us that when we become so arrogant and egotistical to believe that others might sin, but not us, we are in a sad state. Why? Because this cocky attitude always precedes an imminent fall resulting in a imminent catastrophe. And, I will tell you that through my many years of ministry, I have seen this happen so often.

One example that I will give you is a former very successful American evangelist who God used mightily to win thousands to Christ, but as his success got greater and greater, his arrogance blossomed with his success. Then, one time while my wife and I were on a cruise ship with this preacher and his wife, we saw this arrogance reveal itself in this man through his self-sufficiency which led him to lower his guard and begin to talk in an ungodly way. I remember that when my wife and I walked away from this man on the outside deck of the ship, my wife said to me: "I don't trust that man." And may I say that my dear wife has always been very right in most of her assessments of other men and women, even after just knowing some for a short while. Well, this is what happened this time. This formerly great preacher took a terrible fall in a few months when he committed sexual sin with the young daughter of one of his preacher friends. He thought he would not be the one who would fall, but his arrogant self-sufficiency and presumed self-righteousness became the tools of the devil to bring him down. Today, he has tried to recover from this tragic disaster by getting his marriage back together, but he will never be the spiritually powerful man that he once was. I plead with all of us to not ever come to the place where we think it wouldn't happen to us.

3. There is an inclusive commonness for certain temptation. v. 13a

We now come to verse 13, which is a very explicit verse about temptation. In the first part of this verse, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that temptation which any man might give into is not unusual to any human because all humans are susceptible to the temptation that comes their way. And, the word for temptation here in the Greek is the word "peirasmos", which may also mean testing as well being induced to commit some sin in the flesh. In other words, even sometimes when we believe that we are being tempted to commit fleshly sin more than others, or if we believe we are being overtly tested more than other people, we really aren't.

These temptations and tests are common to all mankind because we all are made in the same way with the same make up, even if we are different and have different personalities because of our gene structure. Therefore, what we do with overcoming the temptations and overcoming the tests will be decided by the choices of the individuals. Thus, we cannot blame God for our sins because He gave us desires of the flesh. But, He gave us these desires for different reasons such as to bring pleasure, produce children, and other reasons. But, He demands that we deal with these desires by living by His rules and regulations. To do otherwise, is to ask for disaster.

So, my dear friends, we cannot sit around and excuse our sins because we believe they are common to everyone, and because everyone has the desires of the flesh to fulfill them. We have to decide to deal with these temptations according to God's plan, and if we do, we don't have to capitulate to these desires, because He has given us the power of the Holy Spirit and through His Word to be victorious over all the temptations of the flesh. And, I will also say that we cannot make excuses for wanting to give up or quit because we all have these same temptations or trials. We just have to decide that we alone cannot overcome the flesh, but with the help of Jesus we can.

4. There is an immutable comfort for confronting temptation. v. 13b

The latter part of this verse is a very comforting and promising statement. Paul tells the believer in Corinth that they don't have to give into temptation because God has promised that He will never allow any temptation or test to come their way that they can't overcome if they will depend upon the Lord's power. And, Paul implies that even if they begin to be drawn into the temptation, God will provide whatever would be necessary to overcome the temptation. But, I would like to insert the thought that it is completely impossible to overcome any temptation if we don't resolve to say no to the seduction of Satan. The point is that God does not promise to deliver us from this test or trial unless we make the willful choice to appropriate His power and rebut the enticement of the devil. In other words, folks, the choice is ours. We will either confront the temptation that comes our way by claiming the power of the resurrected Lord, or we will capitulate to the temptation and then suffer the guilt and consequences of our sins. We truly must learn from the poor examples of the Israelites, or we too will be setting poor examples for future generations. Let's make sure that the examples and patterns that we provide will be clear demonstrations of the power of God over the temptations and trials of the devil. Just remember that in Matthew, Chapter Four, Jesus quoted the written Scriptures to confront Satan, and so should we!

II. NOTICE SOME POWERFUL EXHORTATION FOR THOSE WHO DEAL WITH TEMPTATION. vs. 14-22

In the first point of my outline for this wonderful passage of instruction, I have tried to provide some strong warning from God through the Apostle Paul by directing our attention to the Israelites who completely failed in their surrender to

fleshly temptation. Now, in our study of our second point we are going to see some tremendous exhortation or encouragement on how to really deal with the temptation that God allows to come our way. So, let's take a good look at the following verses and glean the truth of these powerful warnings coming to us through Paul.

A. To overcome temptation, there is the exhortation to flee from idolatry. v. 14

As we look at verse 14 in our study, Paul tells the Corinthian believers who are having trouble with temptation that the first thing they have to do is to immediately flee from idolatry. Of course, as we have already learned, it was the idol worship of the children of Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai, which led to the wicked immorality which the people committed. Therefore, Paul tells the believers to immediately flee. This means to run aggressively away from idol worship because when people rebel against God and turn to idols, this is just the beginning of unrighteous living.

The word exhortation means to admonish immediate action, or to strongly encourage some activity. Thus, the professing Christians of Corinth were admonished to get away from, stay away from, and never return to idol worship regardless of what the idol might be. In the context, this means whether it is the "Sacred bull of Egypt," or the "Golden Calf" at the foot of the mountain, God's people are to get away and stay away from idolatry.

So now, I need to remind all of us that this idolatry doesn't have to be a statue, or a handmade bull or goat, it might just be money, success, power, or even some recreation activity like golf, fishing, or hunting. Any or all of these things can become idols which we are prone to worship. If you are guilty of having any idol that leads to more wickedness or the neglect of the worship of the one true God, then you need to flee immediately and go in another direction with a new priority in your life. Yes, even good things can become an idol if we are not very careful.

B. To overcome temptation, there is the exhortation to flee from ignorance. v. 15

Verse 15 is a very unusual verse. In this verse, Paul is telling the Corinthians that they needed to flee from ignorance and embrace the truth he was telling them with genuine wisdom. And of course, the truth which Paul is talking about here, is the truth he had been sharing with them throughout this tenth chapter. If the people did not hear, digest, and embrace the truth, which Paul was giving them, then they would be willfully ignorant. And, if they insisted on their ignorance, then they would have no excuse for slipping into sin and capitulating to temptation.

What I mean by this is that sometimes when people give into temptation, they either blame God for allowing the temptation, or they blame the devil for bringing the temptation, or they blame others for their disobedience; just like Eve blamed Adam, and Adam blamed God. But truthfully, we can't blame anyone for our sin, even if we plead ignorance when something happens.

C. To overcome temptation, there is the exhortation to flee from impropriety.
vs. 16-19

To continue our study of Paul's instructions about temptation, we now come to a comparison which Paul makes for the Corinthians. He had just stated in the previous verses that every believer is faced with many temptations, but each believer doesn't have to give in to temptation. In fact, there is the power of our Lord Jesus to overcome all temptation. But, as we look back into the context of this chapter, the problem we see is that the Israelites who should have been giving a good example for others to follow were simply not doing it. Truthfully, they were capitulating to the terrible temptation to worship idols which resulted in every kind of immorality known to man. Yet, these Israelites were the people of God, but they had chosen to identify with idol worship down at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

So, what Paul is doing here is explaining to the Corinthian people that they become identified with whatever they worship, and if they worship idols, they are not properly worshiping the true Jehovah God. Therefore, in verses 16-19, Paul shows the people that if they are really saved, they will have no part in idol worship or the natural consequences of this idolatry. In comparison, those who are really saved will identify with Jesus as is revealed in the observance of the Lord's Supper. In other words, whoever you associate with, and whatever you do with your worship, will in fact reveal whether you are really saved or not.

Thus, we need to stop and realize that if we partake of the Lord's Supper, then, we are identifying with the death of Christ on the cross and the shedding of His precious blood. So, the question is, "how could any people who call themselves Christians give into the temptation to worship idols?" The answer is pretty obvious! These people are either not really saved, or if they are, they have backslidden so much that only the world and its enticements mean anything to them.

Let me add something else right here. When we hang out with the wrong people and participate in the sins that they commit, we are not identifying with Jesus, but we are warming up to the enemy and all of his temptations. Thus, how can we expect to be victorious over temptation if we in truth identify more with the wicked and idolatrous world than we do with our Lord Jesus Christ? And much to the dismay of genuine Christians, how could a truly saved person place all of his or her emphasis upon worshipping the idols of this world, when truthfully, idols are nothing but imitations or replicas of the true God? So, we need to remember what **Exodus 20:4**, says. Please pay attention to this verse. **"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."**

Therefore, dear friends, we are to quit living an improper or indecent life by always being hooked up with some form of idol worship. As I stated before, it doesn't have to be a statue or a golden calf. It might just be that we have sold our souls to activities, money, possessions, fame, achievement, and many other things that have become idols in our lives. Thus, may I ask you if you are living a proper life as a child of God, or are you living a life of impropriety?

D. To overcome temptation, there is the exhortation to flee from impiety. vs. 20-21

The word impiety means profane, blasphemous, irreverent, and even godless. This is truly a strong word, but one that is very appropriate when considering what Paul is telling the professing Corinthian believers here in our text. He is telling them that any worship of other gods, idols, statues, materialism, or whatever, is totally diabolical because if we are not worshiping the one and true God, then we are in fact worshiping demons or the devil. Paul reminds these people in Corinth that what they had been doing was representative of pagan Gentiles who were under the control of Satan. And, for them to continue to associate with this kind of people would only lead them to give in to further temptation, but it would also negate their profession as true children of God.

Therefore my friends, do you understand that you can't live in two worlds if you truly have been saved. Paul says you can't fellowship with the devil's crowd, and at the same time fellowship with the Lord's people. To think we can is utterly nonsense, but yet, there are multitudes that try to do this every week just simply by going to church on Sunday, and then, living like the devil throughout the week. This is totally paradoxical, and yes, down right hypocritical. Therefore, we must come out and be a separate people as Paul has taught us in **II Corinthians, Chapter 6:17**, where he says, **"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you."** What Paul is saying in this verse is that we cannot be accepted and received by our Lord as one of His true children unless our lives are very different from the rest of the wicked world. Honestly, God needs to be able to take pleasure in His children as we adults love to take pleasure in the activities of our earthly children. Could I ask you a question? Do you bring pleasure to the heart of God by the way you are presently living? I surely hope so, but if you aren't, today would be a wonderful time for your to renew your vows to our Lord Jesus Christ and begin to live a separate life and show to the world that we belong to Him.

E. To overcome temptation, there is the exhortation to flee from infidelity. v. 22

Verse 22 is a little complicated, so, let me share with you what Dr. Paige Patterson says about this verse in his commentary. "Thus far the argument has been that (1) those who sacrifice to idols are sacrificing to demons, and (2) one cannot have a common experience with both the Lord and demons. The third phase of the argument is once again presented in the form of a rhetorical question. Would the Corinthians then provoke the Lord to jealousy? Did they think for a moment that they were more powerful than God? The suggestion is rather obvious. Since the Corinthians had proclaimed at the Lord's table their fellowship with Christ, for them to approach the table of demons would provoke the Lord to jealousy. The case was exactly the same as if a man pledged his vows of marriage to a woman and then become promiscuous in his sexual behavior. His lack of faithfulness to his wife would provoke her to jealousy. In the pledge of his vows of fidelity, the man would have indicated a fellowship with her alone, which he then actually prostituted. The Corinthians would be doing the same thing if they prostituted their allegiance to

Christ by eating at the table of demons. Of course, in the case of a man and his wife, the man might very well be stronger than his wife, but such is not the case with the Corinthians. To have God jealous over His people is a potentially hazardous circumstance. Paul simply raised the question, 'Are you able to live promiscuously and still stand against God?' The answer anticipated was an emphatic no!"¹⁷

III. NOTICE SOME PRINCIPLED ENLIGHTMENT FOR THOSE WHO DEAL WITH TEMPTATION. vs. 23-33

As we have studied this tenth chapter of the Book of First Corinthians, we have to this point looked at the poor examples the Israelites manifested in the wilderness on how to deal with temptation, and then, we took a look at some exhortation given to those who were dealing with temptation. In this third main point, I want us to see some wonderful principled enlightenment given by Paul and our Lord to those who deal with temptation. You see folks, it is one thing to be exhorted to do right, but it is another thing to be shown how to do right when dealing with the temptation that Satan brings our way. So, let's look closely at the following principles and learn better how to deal with the constant attacks of Satan through various kinds of temptation.

A. First, there is the principle of expediency. v. 23a

In the first part of this verse, Paul tells the professing believers in Corinth that there are many things that he might have the liberty to do as a believer, but all these things might not be expedient. The definition of the word expedient is bringing things together, or to make profitable the things which we do. In other words, as we studied earlier in this book, there are certain good things that we might do with the liberty of God, but doing these things might not be profitable to others or to the body of the church. So, when faced with these different kinds of temptation, the first thing we need to ask is, "will Jesus be glorified if I do this, and the second thing is, will there be profit to others and myself as a believer in Christ?" These are strong questions, but we must ask ourselves the questions if we expect to be victorious over temptation.

B. Secondly, there is the principle of edification. v. 23b

Going right along with what I just said in the first part of this verse, we must decide that we will not take advantage of our liberties if what we do doesn't build others up in the faith. The word is edification, and it means built up or enhance the lives of others. And folks, this would be a good time for me to remind all of us that when we really get genuinely saved, our lives will be about Jesus and others. In other words, He and them will take preference over our own selfish desires. A temporary pleasure for the flesh will never take preference over ministering to

¹⁷ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, pages 169-170.

others, or helping others to grow up in the Lord. I do not mean that we should not care for ourselves, but at the moment of salvation, if we really get saved, our priorities change from us to Him and them.

C. Thirdly, there is the principle of evaluation. vs. 24-29

As we come to these new verses, Paul continues his discussion of the liberties that we have been given as children of God. However, we are never to use our liberties to harm or negatively influence others. But, with every situation we are faced with, we must make an evaluation of what we are about to do in order to not hurt or offend other people; especially the lost. But, we are also warned to not use our liberties to discourage other believers.

To better explain this, I have found an old commentary that I want to quote in the discussion of the verses 24-29. The writer which I am going to quote is Charles Hodge, but please know that even if the following quotes are great truth, I don't agree with Charles Hodge about his end time theology, because he believes that the church has become spiritual Israel, which the Bible does not teach. However, the following paragraphs are really good as interpretation of these present verses.

v. 24- Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

"That is, let every man, in the use of his liberty, have regard to the welfare of others. The maxim is indeed general. It is not only in the use of things indifferent, but in all other things we should act, not, in exclusive regard to our own interests, but also with a view to the good of others. Self, in text, however, shows, that the apostle intended the maxim to be applied to the subject under discussion. Another's wealth is another's welfare, according to the old meaning of the world wealth."¹⁸

v. 25- Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, (that) eat, asking no questions for conscience' sake:

"The general principle that sacrifices might be eaten under any circumstances which deprived the act of religious character, is here, and in what follows, applied to particular cases. Meat, when exposed for public sale on the market, lost its character as a sacrifice, and might be eaten with impunity. The word shambles is a Latin word which passed into the Greek, and means a meat market."¹⁹

"Eat, asking no questions for conscience's sake. This clause admits of three interpretations.

It may mean, 'When you go to the market, buy what you want, and make no matter of conscience about the matter. You need have no conscientious scruples,

¹⁸ Commentary On The First Epistle To The Corinthians, By: Charles Hodge, Eerdmans, page 197.

¹⁹ Ibid, page 197.

and therefore ask no questions as to whether the meat had been offered to idols or not.' This is the simplest and most natural interpretation. These verses contain the conclusion of the whole discussion. An idol is nothing; the sacrifices are nothing sacred in themselves; but as the heathen are really worshippers of evil spirits, to join in their worship by eating their sacrifices, is idolatry; but to eat them as a meat is a matter of indifference; therefore do not make it matter of conscience. This interpretation is confirmed by the following verse, which assigns to the reason why we need to have scruples in the case.

Or, the meaning may be, Ask not questions, for fear of awakening scruples in your own mind. A man might eat with a good conscience of meat which he knew not was a sacrifice, when he would have serious scruples if informed that it had been offered to an idol. Therefore it was wise, for his own sake, to ask no questions. Paul, however, would not advise men to act blindfolded. If a man thought it wrong to eat meat offered to idols, it would be wrong for him to run the risk of doing so by buying meat in the markets where sacrifices were exposed for sale.

Others say the apostle means to caution the strong against instituting such inquiries, for fear of giving rise to scruples in others. In favor of this view it is urged, that throughout the whole discussion the object of the apostle is to induce the strong to respect the conscientious scruples of the weak. And in verse 29, he says expressly that he means the conscience of others. The former of these considerations has not much weight, for we have here general directions suited to all classes. Having shown in the preceding paragraph, that it was idolatrous to eat of these sacrifices under certain circumstances, it was perfectly natural that he should tell both the strong and the weak when they might be eaten without scruple. As to the second argument, it is rather against than in favor of this interpretation. For if, when he means the conscience of another, he expressly says so, the inference is, that when he makes no such explanation, he means the man's own conscience. Besides, the following verse give the reason why we need not have any scruples in the case, and not why we should regard the scruples of others."²⁰

Now, if the above long paragraphs seem to be difficult to understand, you are right. But, the simple interpretation is that if the Corinthian believers went into the meat market to purchase meat, they just simply should not even ask where the meat came from. Therefore, they could eat it with a clear conscience. But, if while in the market someone volunteered to tell them that the meat has been left over from idol worship, then maybe they should not buy it, because it could be offensive to those who knew where it came from. So, the complete thought is, "Eat what you desire, if you can eat it with a clear conscience. But, if others might be offended by your actions, then, don't eat the meat." I would illustrate this by saying that if we were in a restaurant and we knew there were some Jews there that didn't eat pork, then, it would be offensive if we ate bacon or ham in their presence.

I believe the main point Paul was trying to make to the Corinthian believers was to just make sure that whatever you eat, or wherever you go, or whatever you do, you should not be hurtful or detrimental to others. All of these verses from 24-29, are trying to help us make the right decisions about our Christian behavior as it

²⁰ Ibid, pages197-198.

is related to others who are saved or lost. So, the thought is that we must be careful about what we do, what we eat, or where we go, because our actions might just offend the conscience of others. And, this is considered very wrong!

D. Fourthly, there is the principle of exaltation. vs. 30-31

These next two verses are wonderful verses, and they come to us at the conclusion of Paul's lengthy discussion of living so as to not hurt or offend others; especially those who are immature believers or yet lost in their sins. In verse 30, Paul tells the believers in Corinth that he had been a recipient of God's saving grace, and therefore, whatever he was, it was all because of the grace God had given to him. Thus, Paul wonders out loud, why people would criticize him unjustly just because he was trying to live a Godly life beyond reproach. And, may I say right here that I too wonder about this as well. I say this, because the more my wife and I have tried to become more dedicated to Christ down through our years of ministry, and live a life above reproach, the more attacks and criticism we have received by others. And yes, truthfully, no one ever gives us a valid reason for criticizing us, but they just simply make up some lie in order to give their argument some credibility. But, as we here in America have learned so vividly in our political battles, people who have no credible arguments to defend their absurd behavior have to make up lies to give some phony credence to what they are saying.

Now, in verse 31, we discover a great truth which is brought out in this principle of exaltation. That truth is that whatever we do, whether in our eating, our behavior, our activities, our accomplishments, and everything else, we must give God the glory for it all. Why? Because if anything of eternal value is ever to be accomplished, it will only happen with God doing it by working through us. So, He gets the glory for everything!

E. Fifthly, there is the principle of encouragement. v. 32

The truth we discover in verse 32 is a very difficult one to live by. In this verse we are told that in all of our lives, we must strive to not be offensive with all others as much as we can; whether they be Jews, Gentiles, or church members themselves. This is a very difficult task because we have an enemy called Satan who constantly tries to cause others to not understand or agree with what we say or do. Thus, they get mad and sometimes even vicious, because when we try to live lives of integrity, they become guilt ridden, and then, call us "those old holier than thou" people who believe they are better than everyone else. But yet, we must try to not be offensive if possible, but we must be careful to never compromise truth in order to not offend others. Why, because truth is always offensive to those who don't want to live by it. And, I must tell you that one of my spiritual gifts is prophecy, which demands the preaching of the truth against sin, even when people don't like it or want it. But, we must not back down from our call because God requires our faithfulness, regardless of the uncomfortable circumstances. But, we should try our very best to be encouragers, if those we try to encourage accept it, instead of rejecting the truth which God has called us to declare.

F. Sixthly, there is the principle of evangelization. v. 33

I love this verse, because it is all about why I live. My wife and I live to win people to Christ and to fulfill the Great Commission. In this verse, Paul tells the Corinthians that he is willing to give up his pleasure and comfort in order that others might respond to the Gospel and get saved. And may I say to you the reader, if you are born again and Christ lives in your heart, then your desire as well as mine, should be to become all things to all men in order that some might be saved. Let's look back in Chapter 9 of this Epistle and see again what Paul had already stated he would do in order to try and win people to Christ. **I Corinthians 9:22- "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."**

If we live as Paul did, then we will live under the banner of, "All people must hear the Gospel and get saved." This is the way Paul lived, and this should be the way we live every day. The main emphasis of our lives should be to win people to Christ, and as I have stated many times already in this commentary, "we must have on our hearts what Jesus has on His; the souls of men, women, boys and girls."

Conclusion

This chapter has been a very difficult one in many ways. There has been difficulty with trying to interpret these many verses correctly. There has also been difficulty in trying to glean the steps and principle whereby we can overcome temptation. And, there is much difficulty in trying to learn how to deal with the temptations of the flesh without offending immature believers, and those who have never been saved.

We have taken a look at the poor examples of the Israelites in the wilderness who didn't deal with temptation very well. We have also looked at some powerful exhortation on how to deal with temptation. And lastly, we looked at some enlightened principles for dealing with temptation. It is my prayer that all of us may have learned some valuable things on how to face and overcome the temptations of life; especially those dealing with the lusts and desires of the flesh. Life is truly too short to spend all of our years being failures in dealing with the temptations Satan brings our ways. I assure you that there never can be peaceful victory in our lives unless we have learned how to deal with the daily fleshly temptations. We must always remember that temptation is not sin, but capitulating to temptation is sin. May we now move forward into our next chapter where Paul changes the direction from problems with the flesh to problems in the worship services of the Corinthian believers. Truly, the Church at Corinth was a very troubled church, but may we learn as the Corinthians did that there is triumph over these troubles if we will deal with them God's way.

Chapter Seventeen

"Some Requirements For Participation In The Worship Service."

Scripture: I Corinthians 11:1-30

Introduction

In our previous chapter, Paul gave some strong principles and practices for dealing with the temptations of the flesh. We learned many things, which I pray will give us victory in many areas of our fleshly enticements and seductions. Now, in this chapter, Paul changes direction and begins to deal with some more obvious problems that were occurring within the Corinthian worship services, which needed desperately to be corrected. So, we will now take a good look at Chapter 11, and see what God is trying to teach us even for this generation. Bear in mind, that the culture in the days of the Corinthian Church was certainly different from today, but still, there are many things we can learn from this chapter, which should help us to learn to worship with more reverence and focus. I ask you to give your best attention as we move forward in this in-depth study of God's Word.

I. NOTICE SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE WORSHIP SERVICES. vs. 1-16

Folks, we live in one of the most messed-up ages that the church has ever been in. There is very little reverence in the modern church. And, there is so little respect and dignity for the place of worship in most churches today. Also, the modern church is so ritualized on one side, while it is extremely disorganized that it seems every church is just strictly formal with no genuine life, or it is so emotionally based that truth is no longer expected. Instead, we have a form of godliness with no power, or we have a mass of undignified entertainers who want to show how bewitchingly they can mesmerize or hypnotize the congregation into shucking and jiving with them. The real purpose of worship is usually distorted, or it just doesn't exist at all. In fact, most of the preachers in the modern church have so tried to contextualize the Gospel message to the point that it offends no one, until too often there is not even any conviction. So, without conviction, there will be no genuine salvation decisions.

Thus, it is obvious that Paul was trying very hard to deal specifically with some of these problems in the Church at Corinth. Let's pay close attention and learn some great truth for our participation in our worship services in our modern day churches.

A. To participate in worship, there must be an attitude of obedience. vs. 1-2

The first thing Paul tells the Corinthians is that they needed to follow the example or pattern that he had set for them because he followed the example of

Christ. The word follow here means to imitate or reproduce oneself in the likeness of another person. In order for anyone to follow or imitate the pattern or example of another person is to willfully volunteer to live in obedience to the truth the pattern displays by his or her life. You see folks, if we want to become like another dedicated child of God, then, we must be willing to pay the disciplined price that was paid by the pattern for our example. However, I am convinced that most believers today have no desire to be like another child of God, or even like Jesus Himself. They want just enough of Christianity to have eternal fire insurance, but they don't want to live in obedience to Christ, because this obedience may require a lot of disciplined effort. And truthfully, most believers just aren't ready or willing to pay the price to become more like a devoted child of God, or like Jesus Himself.

May I tell all of you that it is completely impossible to be a dedicated child of God without living in obedience to Jesus Christ. Please notice what A.W. Tozer said in a book he wrote. "What we must remember is that only he who takes orders from Jesus Christ belongs to Him. The evangelical church is in the process of compromising this very thing and ignoring 'thus saith the Lord.' Yes, we want any benefits that Christ may confer upon us. We want His help, protection and guidance. We even get misty-eyed over His birth, life, death, teaching and example. The problem comes when we will not take order from Him. Christ cannot save the one He cannot control. To claim to be saved while ignoring His commandments is to live in utter delusion."²¹

Folks, did you catch what Dr. Tozer said? He said "to claim to be saved while ignoring His commandments is to live in utter delusion." So, what is your response toward living in obedience to Christ or to one of His servants like Paul? Do you say that it is impossible, or do you say, though it requires much more from me, yet, I will surrender to doing it. Paul told the believers to follow the example he had given them because His goal was to follow Jesus Christ.

B. To participate in worship, there must be an appreciation of order. v. 3

Paul now gets down to the real problem, and that problem was that in the church at Corinth there had to be those who were not living there lives and practicing worship in the order which God had given to man and woman. So, Paul simply reminds the Christians that God had instituted an order for men and women, and for His only begotten Son while He was down here on earth. The head of Christ is God the Father, and the head of every saved man is Christ, and the head of the saved woman is the man. Now, this might be too strong for some of the Me-Too Movement which is contributing to the destruction of our society, but this is the order which God gave to us when He created Adam and Eve. Yet, they had problems in the church in Corinth over this very thing. And so, Paul had to remind the church how God had created this order.

Obviously, there is a resist movement in America that puts down order in the home, in the government, and yes, in the church. For instance, as we will see shortly

²¹ The Dangers Of A Shallow Faith, By: A.W. Tozer, Bethany House, pages 35-36.

in this text, God never intended for women to be ordained preachers or teachers, and yet, we have this horrible out of order mess going on in our churches. These forthright aggressive people who have determined to rebuff God and His order are causing major problems in our society and especially in our churches. And, this was especially true in Corinth.

It is very ironic, but this morning as I have been writing on this commentary, my telephone just rang, and on the other end of the line was a dear pastor who had called to share with me about the tremendous splurge in church growth at his church in the mountains of North Carolina had recently had. In fact, he told me that scores of new people were coming now, and just this past Sunday, God saved six people when He manifested His magnificent power in the service. But, as it always happens, one of his older couples in church demanded a meeting with the pastor to tell him that they were leaving the church because they just couldn't take all of these new people coming into "their church." They didn't say it was Jesus' church, but it was "their church."

Then, the pastor said to me, "the person causing this problem is the man's wife." She is in charge, and he sits back as a wimp. And, having been a pastor over half a century, I have seen this over and over again. When husbands and wives reverse the God-given order for the home, it usually blows up and from their twisted and fantasy position, they usually cause a huge amount of problems in the church. This is happening everywhere today in the church, and it was happening way back in the First Century in Corinth when Paul wrote this great Epistle. Folks, when we twist and reverse God's plan of order for the homes and the churches, nothing but problems are ahead. And, I don't care if you are a modern-day feminist or not, we just can't change the order which God has given us, if we are to expect His blessings upon our families and churches. The Head of the man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man. Therefore, it is a completely secular and humanistic idea that men and women are totally equal in their roles, when in fact the husband is the head of the home, while the woman is the heart of the home. So, let's quit messing with God's plan to politically accommodate the homosexual and lesbian movement in the land today. And, we better open our eyes to the twisted perverted mess that is going on in the name of gender neutrality. We learned years and years ago in the Book of Genesis that in the beginning God created male and female for each other, and He emphatically didn't create people in a state of confusion so they would have to decide which sex they are. This is absolute heresy, and even if the American Supreme Court passed homosexual and lesbian marriages, which they did, nothing has changed about how God made us; male and female. And, if you think this is correct before God, then you are absolutely foolish and willfully blind.

C. To participate in worship, there must be actions of ornamentation. vs. 4-7

The word ornamentation actually means to adorn or decorate a place with a certain purpose in mind. In other words, if you decorate a room for a birthday celebration, the purpose is to honor the person with the birthday. If you decorate a room for an anniversary celebration, the purpose and emphasis is upon the couple who is celebrating their anniversary. Therefore, we should have no

misunderstanding when Paul tells the Corinthian believers that when they meet for the worship of our Lord God Almighty, then the decorations and decorum in the place of worship should be to glorify and magnify God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Thus, whatever one wears to worship should be respectful of God and God's created order, and only draw attention to God Himself. So, the problem in the church at Corinth had to do with men and women twisting and confusing the created order of God, and with both men and women failing to understand the order of God with respect and reverence.

However, when we look at our churches in this modern world today, we see ill-dressed women and men trying to present some proposed truth about God, but in fact, they are really just drawing attention to themselves and leaving God out of the picture. For instance, just look at the ridiculous dress of preachers and pastors in the pulpits today with their faded blue jeans with holes in the legs, shirts open to where you can see the hairs on their chest, and their feet shod with tennis shoes as they pretend to declare a message about the "awesome" God of the universe who wants us to live in purity and righteousness. May I say to you that this is one of the most corrupted wicked things that is going on today in our religious world. Yet, we know that this twisted confusion started back in the First Century church, and it is worse today than ever before.

In verse 4 of this text, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that a man should not stand up in the church to teach or preach with his head covered. And truthfully, this is a little ironic that Paul would say this when he had grown up in the Jewish religion where no man was to stand and read or teach from the Torah without having his head covered with a yarmulke (head covering). I personally believe that what Paul was doing was to try and teach the people that the preacher or teacher should never take precedence over Jesus Christ, Who is the Head of the Church. And also, I believe Paul was reminding the people that as Christ is truly the Head of the man and the Head of the church, then, the man is head of the woman. Therefore, the woman who was teaching in the church should have her head covered, or as some scholars believe, the woman was to wear a complete veil on her head and face. Now, I think it is quite obvious that what Paul was doing was simply to give respect to Christ, the man, and also, to the woman who would understand what her role truly was. There is absolutely no truth here that Paul subjugated the woman below the man with a lesser significance, but in fact, he was trying to get the saved woman to not be identified with a pagan woman who often not only didn't wear anything on her head, but would often times shave her head to reveal the fact that she was not a religious woman. Truthfully, many of the prostitutes in the days of the First Century would shave their heads in order to let the public know who they were, and what they did. They would just do this to draw attention and get new business.

In verses 5-6, Paul says that if the woman in the church is going to teach publicly, then she must have her head covered. If she doesn't have her head covered, then she might just as well shave her head and identify with the woman of the world or paganism. In other words, folks, a Godly woman had to reveal her godliness by dressing like a genuinely saved woman. But if she did refuse to put a covering on her head, then the implication seems to be that she should just go ahead and dress like a pagan woman of the world. In other words, there must be a distinguishable

difference in how a believing man and woman dress every day of their lives, but especially when they go to the house of God. If a woman were to refuse to cover her head at church in that pagan culture, then she would dishonor her own husband, and truthfully, other Godly men in the church.

Now, I think that I will just go a little further and say that a Godly woman should dress like a Godly woman when she is at church, but also, every day of her life as a truly born-again lady of God. She should not dress properly at church, and then go home and out in the public dressing immodestly like a pagan woman. What I am saying is that when we get saved, we become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, we are the church spiritually, but when we go to the actual worship facility, we should be even more concerned about presenting Christ in a modest and pure way.

In verse 7, we find a verse of tremendous importance. In this verse Paul reveals the significance of men not covering their heads while at church because man is the creation of God. Therefore, when man stands to preach or teach, he must reveal the glory of God which was given to man at the time of creation. Please look at the following verse found in **Genesis 5:1, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; Male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created."**

"The original Hebrew word translated 'man' is Adam. God did not name Adam and Eve 'the Adams.' He named the Adam. The woman and the man equally bear the name of man, and they equally bear the image and glory of God. They are equal in status and importance before God. The male, however, is called upon to manifest a certain aspect of the glory of God that is different from that of the woman."²²

"What do we mean by glory? As used here, the word refers to something in which one takes delight. As Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica, **'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?'** (I Thess. 2:19) So when humanity was created, God made man and woman to reflect the nature of God, and God takes great delight in humanity."²³

When I read these words from Ray Stedman, I couldn't help but think about the Sunday mornings across America when grungy shabbily dressed preachers stand to supposedly preach and teach the inerrant infallible word of God. I wonder if God takes delight in them because of the image they are presenting of God to the world.

D. To participate in worship, there must be acceptance of one's origin. vs. 8-12

In these days of the Feminist and Me Too Movement, it is very difficult to get anyone to understand the Divine order in which God brought man and woman into this world. But yet, God did create Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in a unique

²² Letters To The Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 152.

²³ Ibid, page 152

way. God formed Adam from the dust of the earth, and then, when God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone, He put Adam into a deep sleep, and took a rib, or the side, of Adam and built woman. In this act of creation, God presented the proper order by which men and women should live, and also, by which communities and churches should be built. To alter this order in any way will always go against the plan of God, and it just welcomes confusion, chastisement, and ultimate judgment. Therefore, this is what Paul was dealing with in the Corinthian Church which was causing such discord in the body of believers. Dr. John Philips has given to us one of the greatest commentaries on this Divine order of man and women that I have ever read. So, I want to include what this dear man of God, who is now with Jesus, said about this difficult text.

"When God made man, He made him to be ruled from his head. When he made woman, He made her to be ruled from her heart. The distinction is as real as the physical difference between men and women. The fact that man is made to be ruled from his head and woman to be ruled from her heart does not mean that women cannot think. We all know some women who can out-think some men. Nor does it mean that men cannot feel. We all know some men who can feel far more deeply than some women. Just the same, the basic fact remains. Men tend to be ruled from the head, women from the heart."²⁴

"What Satan did in the temptation was to reverse God's order. He first of all directed temptation to Eve's head and engaged her in an intellectual discussion as to whether or not it was right to do something God said was wrong. His attempts to fend him off were all too clumsy. Three times she misquoted the two verses which, for her, constituted the entire Word of God and which was her sole defense. He raised in her mind a doubt about God's Word, followed it up with a denial, and ended with a delusion. He offered to set her free from the hampering restrictions imposed upon her by God's Word and bestow upon her godlike status and power. This overwhelming appeal to her intellect and vanity was more than she could withstand. She was deceived and overthrown."²⁵

Then, reversing his tactics, Satan directed temptation to Adam's heart. Indeed, he made no attempt, himself, to storm the citadel of Adam's soul. He let Eve do that. When Adam saw Eve in her fallen condition, he was overwhelmed. He loved her. He listened to her. He looked at her. He was not deceived. He knew what he was doing. It was 'through one man's disobedience' that sin entered (Romans 5:12; 19). God does not attribute the Fall to Eve but to Adam, who was given the headship and the responsibility. Thus Adam was disobedient and Eve was deceived, all because the Evil One was able to twist God's order."²⁶

"The angels, it seems, were witnesses of all this. Lucifer, their one-time lord in the guise of a serpent, engineered the whole thing. Hence, the reference here to the angels. They are watching with keenest interest those things which have to do with the church (I Pet 1:12). They look to see God's order reestablished and

²⁴ Exploring I Corinthians, By: John Philips, Kregel, page 238.

²⁵ Ibid, page 238.

²⁶ Ibid, pages 238-239.

reaffirmed in the church—and God's order calls for the woman to cover her head when she prays or prophesies (testifies or teaches). "²⁷

Folks, what Paul was trying to do with the Corinthian believers, both men and women, was to install the same order in the church that God had installed or instituted in our origin at creation. There was no male chauvinism in Paul at all. He was just concerned that the men would not cover their heads like the Jewish men in the synagogues did, and he was concerned that the women maintain their role as modest ladies by keeping their heads covered when they were teaching the women and children in the churches. By the way, in Paul's letter to First Timothy, he gave some tremendous instructions concerning what a woman is to do in the church fellowship. He stated very clearly in **I Timothy 2:9-12**, how a woman should conduct herself in the local assembly of believers. Please notice these verses. **"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."**

Now, some of you ladies might begin to react to these verses by believing that Paul must have been a male chauvinist, but this is not true at all. What Paul is saying here to young Timothy was that when God created man and woman, He did so with an order whereby Christ is the head of the husband, and the husband is the head of the wife. Therefore, a woman within the church assembly is not to usurp authority over her husband or any other man by being elevated to the point of subjugating the man or men in the church. Thus, Paul tells the women to remain silent in a public gathering, and to make sure that the women dress modestly like real Christian ladies. In other words, the ladies were and are not supposed to wear any clothing or highly attractive array that will draw special unholy attention to themselves. They are not to be flamboyant, but they are to be quite and meek in the public arena of the church gathering.

So, from all of Paul's writings, we have learned that a woman should not be the teacher of men, but she should be the teacher of other ladies and children. These requirements were based upon the order of God's creation. And, we must remember that living in the order by which God made us does not debase the woman, but rather, it reveals the obedience of the godly lady until she is revered by others. And, whether we like it or not, we cannot change God's order and still expect to have his blessings upon our homes, our communities, or our churches.

E. To participate in worship, there must be attention to the obvious. vs. 13-15

We truly live in a mixed up age when it comes to gender and the different sexes. We just seem to be so confused about all of this, and truthfully, the confusion has become so bad because of the wickedness and change of morality in our American nation. Regardless of what we are being told by homosexual, lesbian, and other radical groups, God has always, and still differentiates every human by male

²⁷ Ibid, page 239.

and female sexuality. No man or woman is given permission by God to change their sex, regardless of the foolish information that is being propagated by the lost and violent world. So, we must proclaim that there is a evident difference between men and women, and God planned for both sexes to have different roles to play in our homes, our societies, and yes, even in our churches.

So, based upon the evident reality of the difference in men and women, we must understand that God has provided some rules or instructions that must be followed by both men and women, if there is to be harmony and peace in our relationships within all of our lives. So, to the church at Corinth, Paul instructed to the people to be wise enough to use common sense. He just simply told them in verse 13, that a woman praying in the church should have her head covered because if she didn't, there would be people who thought that she was a woman of the world. Therefore, we must use common sense and dress and conduct ourselves in a modest and truly Christian way so that we will not be associated with the pagans and immoral people in our societies. In other simple words, we should just walk the walk and not just talk the talk.

Then, let's look at verse 14, and see what this verse really means. "The comeliness of a woman praying in a veiled state should have been apparent to the Corinthians because nature itself seems to teach that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him. Paul recognized that nature is not responsible for short hair in men and long hair in women. On the other hand, nature itself seemed to have provided that men and women would maintain a clear distinction between the sexes. One of the ways by which this takes place would be a relatively short style of men's hair as compared to the long style of women's hair."²⁸

"Generally, men throughout all biblical periods wore hair styles shorter than women. Indeed, except in the rare case of the Nazarite vow, long hair was considered a mark of shame to the man."²⁹

Now, let me give you some wonderful words on these verses from the late pastor, Ray Stedman, who is now with the Lord. Please pay close attention to his interpretation and explanation of this difficult passage.

"The universal custom in the Roman world was for women to declare the principle of headship by wearing a veil, so there's no point in debating the issue. We, of course, do not live in the first-century Roman world, and women in our culture do not wear veils. What, then, is Paul saying to us in this passage?

First, Paul has a message for men: Take seriously your responsibility as spiritual leaders in your home. Your head is Christ, and you have a responsibility to your Head to know the Word of God and to see that it shapes and molds the lives of your family members. You're a leader—but that doesn't make you a boss. It makes you a servant. So serve your wife and children everyday by being a Christ-like servant—leader in the home."³⁰

²⁸ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, pages 190-191.

²⁹ Ibid, page 191.

³⁰ Letters To A Troubled Church, By Ray Stedman, DHP, page 155.

"Second, Paul has a message for women: Take seriously your calling to voluntarily place yourself under the headship of your husband. This teaching may not be in step with our culture, but it is in step with God's truth and with nature. A woman will never know true fulfillment as long as she is in rebellion against God's plan for gender roles.

The secular women's movements claim to give women freedom of choice. Yet many women today do not feel free to make the kind of choice Paul urges women to make. In I Corinthians 11---the voluntary choice to place themselves under the headship of a man who is himself under the headship of Christ. Women fear being scorned by their feminist sisters if they make the wrong choice, the old-fashioned choice, the politically incorrect choice. Isn't it tragic that so many women, in the name of freedom of choice, are made to feel they have no choice in how to live their lives?"³¹

"Third, Paul has a message for the church: When women minister in public worship, they are to do so with humility and respect for the true headship and authority of the church. May we, as men and women under the headship of God, live as true leaders and servants and bearers of God's truth."³²

F. In order to participate in worship, there must be an avoidance of offense. v. 16

In this last verse before we move on to Paul's regulations for partaking of the Lord's Supper, we find an unusual statement once again. Paul tells the Corinthian Church that if there was any person in the church that wanted to be contentious and argue about the need for the covering of the heads, or even the veils that women wore, they were not to tolerate these arguments and contentions. He just emphatically states that in the church, we cannot arbitrarily demand these things, unless of course God has required. But yet, I personally believe that men in the church should be very distinguishable as men, and there should be no dress among the women that would cause people to give these women their attention rather than God the Father in worship. And, once more I will state, women should not be allowed to teach men, but they can assuredly teach the other women and children. We must not confuse the sexes as so many wicked people are doing in this generation, especially here in America.

II. NOTICE SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE WONDERFUL LORD'S SUPPER. vs. 17-34

As we continue on in this study we learn that there must have been some other serious problems in the church at Corinth that were really causing division and discord among the professing believers. This problem was the desecration of the Lord's Supper. Undoubtedly, the people had come to the point to where they were attaching the observance of the Lord's Supper on to the end of a love feast which usually got out of hand. The people would bring food and drink from their

³¹ Ibid, page 155.

³² Ibid, page 156.

homes and gather in a particular place. The people were prone to eat like gluttons and drink alcohol to the point that they would not even be able to clearly understand the significance to the Lord's Supper which was usually at the end of the love feast. So, this continuing partying and then observing the supper was bringing tremendous division and disagreement into the church. Thus, the very supper which should have brought to the people a spirit of unity and remembrance had turned into a wicked party of debauchery. Therefore, Paul gets very candid with the people and addresses this unbelievable sin.

Of course, there are those commentators who believe that the disagreement may have been over how often to observe the Lord's Supper, or possibly some other practice that the people didn't like. But, I don't see anything in this text about the problem of when the supper should be observed. So, I just believe that the people who pretended to be spiritual people were desecrating the true meaning of the Lord's Supper because of the partying atmosphere, and because of the sinfulness of their hearts. So, our beloved brother Paul really blasts the people for their argument and division. Let's look at the true requirements for participating in the Lord's Supper.

A. There must be a refusal to desecrate the supper. vs. 17-22; 33-34.

1. Please notice that it can be desecrated by sinful divisions in the fellowship.
vs. 17-18.

In these two verses Paul's tells the professing Christians in Corinth that he had heard about the confusion and division in the church. And, it seems that he had heard about how some of the people were trying to cover up their division by observing the Lord's Supper more often. Of course, I don't find anything in the Bible about how often the supper should be observed, but instead, I find where it should be observed as a reminder of Jesus' sacrificial death until He comes again. Personally, I believe the religious pretenders in Corinth were trying to cover up their sin by ritual observance which they thought might placate Paul and maybe even God. I must tell you that I see a lot of this in the liturgical Catholic churches who teach that the Lord's Supper becomes the actual blood and body of Jesus just because of the prayers of the priests and the blessings of the Lord. Nowhere in God's Word does it teach this which is called transubstantiation where the elements of the supper literally become the sacred body and blood of Jesus. But, because so many Catholic people teach this, they have been deceived to believe that there is partial salvation in partaking of the cup. This of course is not true, and truthfully, I have never found any true Biblical doctrine in Catholicism which can forgive sin or provide salvation. It is all a farce, and Catholicism is the biggest mess of deception to ever come to the world. And yet, millions of people have bought it hook, line and sinker, without even knowing that most of Catholicism came out of the Babylonian Religion started by Nimrod and his supposed wife, Semiramis.

On the other hand, there is the liturgical Protestant churches who teach that the very essence and/or the very presence of God is within the bread and the cup, and thus there has to be forgiveness for sin in the elements. This belief is called

Consubstantiation, and is practiced by a lot of Lutherans, Episcopalians, and some other very ritualistic churches. But again, the idea of Consubstantiation is not taught in the Bible, and if people partake of the supper believing that it brings forgiveness of sin, then, then these people will likely go to hell lost without Christ if they are just trusting on the Eucharist as they might call it for their salvation. We must remember that there is only one way to heaven and that is, by putting your faith and trust in the finished work of Calvary, and believing that Jesus dies alone for our sins, and thus, it is only through Him that we must be saved (Acts 4:11).

2. Please notice that it can be desecrated by strange doctrines in the fellowship. v. 19

We have already discussed some strange beliefs that may have caused the early Corinthian Church a lot of problems, and I have discussed some modern day problems brought on by liturgical Roman Catholic Churches and some Protestant Churches as well. So, let me mention one more modern problem that is causing a lot of problems when it comes to the Lord's Supper.

Most every child of God who knows anything about the Jewish feasts knows that fermented wine was not used. In fact, the Jews didn't even use leaven bread in their ceremonies or meals. Why? Because, leaven is considered evil when it has yeast, and it is the yeast which produces the fermentation process. Therefore, if the Jewish people would not eat bread with yeast in it because it would be contaminated with bacteria which would make it go bad, then, why would they want to drink fermented wine which would be contaminated with bacteria as well? The truth I am trying to get at, is that the leaven-free bread which was used by Jesus in the institution of the Lord's Supper was pure because it represented His sinless body. Therefore, the cup of new grape juice would have to be free of bacteria as well in order to properly symbolize the sinless blood and life of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, for people to insist upon using real fermented wine in the Lord's Supper is truly an attack against the innocent blood and life of our Lord Jesus Christ. If anyone were to use the unleavened bread in the supper, then why on earth, would they insist on using real fermented wine? You might say that those who desire to do this have truly a double standard, and I must attest, that there is a point they are trying to prove. In other words, don't tell them that they can't use a little fermented wine, because they are really looking for a permit to drink some socially. And, this concept has been proven right here in our little rural community because some of the churches want to get the freedom for their deacons and church leaders to drink socially. In other words, use the Lord's Supper as a means to justify drinking alcoholic beverage. I don't think so!!!

Just to give some validity to my presentation of truth on these verses, let me give you some brief information about how people kept new grape juice from fermenting during the early Biblical times. Please pay great attention to the following article.

"It is often supposed that in Bible times, grape juice inevitably fermented if kept for any length of time, and that therefore whenever the Bible mentions 'wine', it is referring to the alcoholic beverage commonly called 'wine' today. However, ancient civilizations had several ways of preventing fruit and fruit juices from

fermentation, and thus were able to have non-alcoholic wine (grape juice) throughout the year.

1. One method involved boiling the juice and reducing it to a syrup that could later be diluted with water.
2. Another way was to boil the juice with minimum evaporation and then immediately seal it with beeswax in airtight jars.
3. Drying the fruit in the sun and then reconstituting it with water, adding sulfur to the fruit juice, or filtering the juice to extract the gluten were also methods that would prevent the juice from fermenting.

These means of preservation were known to the ancients, who also practiced boiling fermented juice to eliminate the alcohol."³³

So folks, we can see that Paul was dealing with some obvious problematic situations which were causing great difficulties in the Corinthian Church, and yes, we are still dealing with some of these same type problems in the Christian church today. I would mention that the word "heresies" in verse 19, means strong opposing words or actions in the Greek New Testament. Therefore, some of the people who were causing the problems about the Lord's Supper and possibly, even the love feasts, were very loud and aggressive; and no Christian should act like this in order to get his or her way.

3. Please notice that it can be desecrated by shameful deportment in the fellowship. vs. 20-22; 33-34.

Now in verse 20, Paul really puts his foot down on the ongoing problems they were having in the Corinthian Church over the love feast and the Lord's Supper observance. Obviously, things had gotten out of hand with the gluttony and drunkenness at the love feast to the point where nobody could partake in the Lord's Supper in the right state of mind to bring praise and pleasure to the heart of Jesus our wonderful Lord. And, in verse 21, we discover that at the love feast there must have been some very poor people who could not afford to bring food with them. Thus, the selfish people who could afford to bring food and drink for themselves did not share with those in need who came to the feast. So, they had on one side gluttony and drunkenness, and on the other side, they had people starving and being neglected by those who professed to be great Christians. Therefore, the supper which should have been used to unify the people, had become an attachment to this partying atmosphere. Thus, Paul had righteous indignation and I must say, that I couldn't blame him for having this disgust with these phony church members. We have so much of this kind of phony behavior in our Catholic and yes, many Protestant churches here in America today.

³³ Bible Info.com, page 1.

Just before we move on to another point, let me mention again that in verses 33-34, Paul really nails it down by telling the professing Corinthian believers that if they don't get things right very soon, he is going to come to visit them, and when he gets there, he will indeed set in order what yet needs to be dealt with. May I say that I strongly admire Paul for standing for what is right, even when it is not popular to do so. We need a lot of Paul the Apostles in this age.

B. There must be a realization about the design of the supper. vs. 23-26

As we move on in this wonderful study, I would like to say that for over 53 years, I have used the following text over and over again to conduct the Lord's Supper in the eleven churches where I have pastored. I have also used the account of Jesus establishing the Lord's Supper as it is described in the Gospels. But, I feel deeply that neither of the presentations in the Gospels can prepare people to observe the supper as Paul described it for us here in these verses.

I would just like to say that there is much order in the observance of the supper, and we should conduct it in the right way in order to get the full meaning out of the observance. And, as we will see in the next few verses, it is extremely important that every truly saved believer who comes to partake of the supper to have his or her heart right with God before they participate in this observance; one of the two ordinances of the church. The other, of course, is water baptism by immersion which the Bible teaches.

1. The supper is designed to remember the body of Jesus. vs. 23-24

Paul tells the professing believers that what he is going to tell them concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper is not an idea he had, but that he had directly received it by divine revelation from Christ Himself. Thus, what he was telling them could not be argued with or debated.

Paul tells the Corinthians that on the same night that Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, our Lord took the bread and broke it in remembrance of His body which was about to be broken with His forthcoming arrest, trial and crucifixion. Of course, we do know that Christ's flesh was whipped, beaten, cut, mutilated, and ripped from His body. But, as prophesied in the Old Testament concerning the sacrificial lamb (Exodus 12:46), not one bone was to be broken. So, not one bone of our Sacrificial Lamb was broken in order to fulfill the type of the sacrificial lamb found in the Passover feast. But, we do know that Jesus suffered unmercifully on the cross and endured more pain and agony than could ever be described because He died with the sins, the sicknesses, and the sufferings of all humanity upon Him because of His marvelous love for humanity; not just a predestined elect. He died for every man, women, boy and girl in the entire world. And, we as God's servants must remember that the entire population of the world cannot be saved and placed in the body of Christ, unless each one of them appropriates the sacrificial death of our Savior, who bore our sins in His body on the tree called Calvary.

Therefore, we must never forget the price He paid for our redemption, and every time we observe the Lord's Supper, we must reflect back and meditate on the price Jesus paid for us.

2. It is designed to remember the blood of Jesus. v. 25

Verse 25 is a powerful verse. This verse reminds us that the Lord's Supper was and still is a symbol of the New Testament (covenant) which Jesus has made with His children. Therefore, we must remember His sacrificial death and the shedding of His blood every time we drink the cup during this special ordinance of remembrance. Hear me friends, we must never, never, forget the price that was paid for our redemption. That price was the broken body and shed blood for our sins in order that we can be forgiven, and then of course, because of the resurrection enjoy eternal life.

3. It is designed to remember the burial of Jesus. v. 26

And, every time we participate in the observance of the Lord's Supper, we must remember that Jesus was placed in a borrowed tomb after His death on Calvary, but praise God, He never remained dead, but He arose again on the third day. The tomb was the encapsulation of our Lord's long journey to the cross. It was truly a sad sorrowful time for the disciples and others who had put their trust in Him, and now, He was gone so they thought!

Therefore, we need to remember that after Jesus started His three and one half year ministry, He really never had a place to call home. In fact, the Scriptures tell us in **Luke 9:58, "And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."** Jesus came into the world in a manger in Bethlehem, escaped into Egypt with Mary and Joseph, and then, a short time later He returned to Nazareth where he grew up in the peasant home of Joseph and Mary. After that, He began His ministry all over Galilee, Samaria, Judaea, down into the wilderness at Jericho, in the city of Jerusalem, and it was there that He died and was placed in a borrowed tomb. He had no place to call home here on earth. The truth was and still is that He was the visitor from heaven who came to purchase our salvation, and it seemed that it would all end in the tomb. But, we readily know that this was not the end, but in truth, it was just the beginning. So, when we observe the supper, we must always remember that yes, He did go to the grave, but He didn't stay there. Praise the Lord!

C. There must be a recognition of the dangers in the supper. vs. 27-32

We have now come to realize that it is very important to observe the Lord's Supper in order to remember the body, the blood, and the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, we do remember that many religions have corrupted the meaning of the supper to the point of believing that there is saving efficacy in the supper. But, we know this is not true because it is just a symbol, and it is one of the ordinances of the local church. So, when we participate in the Lord's Supper, it is a very serious

participation and practice. But now, pay attention to the next statement I want to make. When we observe the Lord's Supper, there are some very evident dangers when we partake of it in a non-proper way. We must be careful that we know what these dangers are when we observe the supper in order that we don't bring the judgment or chastisement upon ourselves. Let's look at some of these dangers.

1. There is the danger of sacrilege. v. 27

In this verse 27, Paul warns the Corinthian Christians about being very careful when they partake of the supper in order that they don't receive it unworthily (in an unworthy manner), because if they do they will invite the judgment or chastisement of God on their lives. There are many speculations about what this unworthy manner might be, but I just believe that it means that no one should partake of the supper in a sacrilegious way, but that each believer should see it as a serious matter, and they should receive it seriously with the understanding of the true significance of the act.

I would just simply suggest that this unworthy manner might refer to coming to the table with a causal (take it or leave it) mentality, and not really remember that the truly born-again child of God must regularly remember the price that indeed was paid for our salvation. If we don't remember the seriousness of the occasion, then we might just have to suffer the consequence for our shallow actions.

2. There is the danger of sin. v. 28

In this verse 28, we find a very strong command of Paul to the Corinthian believers, and to us today. Before we partake of the Lord's Supper, we need to examine our lives to see if there is any unconfessed sin in the way we are living. We should not come to the supper to remember the sinless Son of God/Son of man, and do so with sins that have not been repented of before our wonderful Lord. You might say that we need to make sure that we are truly saved, and if we are, then, we should come to the table with all of our sins (plural) confessed to Jesus so that we can approach His table with cleanliness. This is the strong reason that we must never believe that forgiveness is in the observance, but our forgiveness comes from the One whose body, blood, and death we are commemorating. Therefore, the time to bring our sins to Jesus is before the observance.

I suppose some of you will think that I am crazy, but I must tell you that down through all of the many years of my ministry, I have always given an invitation for people to publicly deal with their sins before they eat the bread and drink the juice. I do this because of my genuine concern for the physical welfare of these professing believers. And, I will tell you this, that there have been several times in my years of ministry when I have pushed people to get right with God before the supper when I knew how they have been living. For if the Bible is true, and it is, then even truly saved people who are backslidden on God are in jeopardy if they partake of the supper with unconfessed sin in their lives.

I want to illustrate what I am talking about here by telling you about something that happened in my ministry as a pastor many years ago in a church

which I used to pastor. This church was running about 450 people each Sunday, and it was a time when I was making regular mission trips to Africa. One day when I got back from one of these mission trips, I discovered that one of the husbands in our church had committed adultery with a single mom that sung in our choir. And to share the truth explicitly, the wife of this man also sung in the choir. Well, I had to spend a lot of time in dealing with the problem for several weeks. We stopped the adulterous woman from singing in the choir and she of course, got mad and quit coming to church; which was all right with me under the circumstances. Well, after counseling this couple for many weeks, we were able to get the husband and wife back together, but I knew that it was really going to take a lot of healing if the marriage was to last.

Then, one Sunday evening we were observing the Lord's Supper with the wife sitting in the choir, and her guilty husband sitting down in the congregation. We had just distributed the bread in the supper, and were just getting ready to give out the juice. In preparation for the supper, I had given the warning of how serious the supper was, and that there were some dangers involved. Well, before we could take the cup, the husband stood up and stopped me from moving forward with the supper. He was crying with tears running down his face. And he told the entire church family that he had to repent publicly because he had sinned against God, against his family, and against his church family. And, he was afraid to partake of the cup that represented Jesus' blood without true repentance. So, when he did this so honestly, I told our church family that they had to forgive him, and then try to do everything to help restore him to fellowship in the church, and also, to help him restore his home. Then, we moved forward with a tremendously moving observance of the supper. I was thrilled at how God worked in his life before the supper was complete, but I am sad to say that he and his wife eventually divorced, and truthfully, they have suffered ever since.

My whole point is that when we approach the observance of the Lord's Supper, it is not something that we should take lightly. In fact, what we must do is to approach the observance with the assurance of our personal salvation, and with all of our sins confessed up to date. We need to observe the supper with a clear conscience and a clean heart if we are going to reflect upon and remember seriously what the supper represents. So folks, as we study this great text from God's Word, it is my prayer that all of us will glean the truth from this text which God has been teaching us.

3. There is the danger of scourging. vs. 29, 31-32.

In these next three verses, Paul continues his thought about the seriousness of observing the Lord's Supper with a clean heart, a clear conscience, and with all of our sins confessed up to date. Paul tells us that if a person doesn't approach the supper in the right way, that person (yes, a believer) will receive the chastisement of God. In this point, I have used the word scourging because I sincerely believe that God will seriously spank or whip the believer with chastisement in some form if the Lord's Supper is not observed properly as Paul is teaching us in the text.

And, I just need to remind every born-again child of God that our Lord is very serious about the way we live our lives, even if we do know for sure that we are saved. Let me give you some tremendous information from Dr. Paige Patterson to expand the truth of this passage of Scripture.

"Obviously the Corinthians had failed to grasp these nuances in the Lord's Supper. In their greed, haste, gluttony, and thirst, all aided by the divisiveness which existed in the church, they had approached the table of the Lord 'unworthily.'" Thus to approach the Lord's Supper, eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord 'unworthily,' was to incur guilt as concerns the Lord's broken body and shed blood. The sense in which such guilt is incurred is revealed in verse 29. 'Unworthily' (anaxios) is an adverb which refers to attitude and deportment at the Lord's table. It is not a question of worth or worthiness, since all would be excluded upon that basis. Our worthiness to approach the Lord's table is dependent upon our experience of forgiveness of sin and full salvation in Christ. The Corinthians' failure was that of their generally cavalier approach to the Lord's table."³⁴

"The question may then be asked, 'How should one approach the Lord's table?' The answer provides the six purposes of the Supper. One is to examine himself, and, as a result of this spiritual diagnosis, he is then to eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord's Supper. 'Examine' (dokimazoi) means 'let a man put himself on trial.' This trial is not an exposure of himself to the judgment of others, but rather an intense searching of his own heart with the desired end of locating those features of life which may be unacceptable to God. Having confessed these, one is to approach the Lord's table. All six of the purposes of the Lord's Supper are now before us. To review, we have noticed that it is (1) a eucharistic feast, (2) a fellowship feast, (3) a memorial feast, (4) an evangelistic feast, (5) an eschatological feast, and (6) a diagnostic feast. While one scarcely has time to concentrate on each of those elements in any single observance of the Supper, the conceptualization of these purposes will greatly aid in producing a meaningful observance of the Supper and will certainly prevent one from making his approach to the table 'unworthily.'³⁵

Before moving on to discuss the solemn ways that God might chastise His children, I just want to remind all of us that it is a common thing for a loving heavenly Father to spank or whip His children. Please notice the following verses from **Hebrews 12:8-11**, **"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards (illegitimate), and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."** Therefore, brothers and sisters, chastisement from our heavenly Father is quite normal if we really belong to Him. In fact, if we don't receive chastisement when we do wrong, then we are not really saved because God the Father always

³⁴ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 200.

³⁵ Ibid, page 200.

corrects His children in order to show them His love and ownership of those who have been truly saved.

4. There is the danger of sickness. v. 30a

This is a very scary verse. Paul told the Corinthian believers that there had been some of their congregation who desecrated the observance of the Lord's Supper, and as a result, God allowed sickness to correct them. Now, I know that many professing believers today just don't believe that God would do such a thing, but if you don't, then maybe you ought to study the Book of Job in the Old Testament. Yes, God does indeed allow sicknesses of all kinds to come one's way in order to get His child right with Him and back to the place he or she needs to be. This is not too pleasant, but neither is desecrating the Lord's Supper, and in truth, re-crucifying Jesus because we approach His table with sin in our lives. So, dear friends, it is very important that we approach the observance of the Lord's Supper with a clean heart and clear conscience as I mentioned earlier. To do less, is to invite the chastisement of God, maybe even in sickness.

5. There is the danger of sleep. v. 30b

Well now, the last part of verse 30 is a stinging reminder. This verse tell us that some people in the Corinthian Church had approached the table of the Lord unworthily with sin in their lives, and as a result, God brought death to them. I get the term death from the word sleep. This word in the Greek is the word (koimaomai), and is the word from which we get our word cemetery. Therefore, it is a truthful stated fact that it is possible to observe the Lord's Supper unworthily with unconfessed sin in one's life, and then be chastised by God with sickness, or even death if the person doesn't repent and get right with God before they partake of the Lord's Supper. Now, maybe one of you readers can tell me that observing the Supper is not a serious matter. But, if you do, you are not deceiving anyone but yourself. And, if this is your attitude, you may not even be saved because it seems that you don't truly fear God the Father. Yes, He is truly a God of love, but He is also a God of righteousness, and when He demands cleanliness and holiness, it is no joke to be played with. So, we sincerely better take the Lord's Supper seriously!

Conclusion

Well, this chapter has been a very difficult one, but yet, one with a tremendous amount of truth; especially the explanations and warnings that Paul has given us about public worship services. He has addressed the issues how men and women should dress when they come to church, and he has addressed some issues about the tragedy of divisions in the fellowship of believers. He also has addressed in this chapter the seriousness of participating in the observance of the Lord's Supper, and he has illuminated the truth that this commanded observance from our Lord is very serious, and it is never to be taken lightly. We have learned that if we approach the observance of the Lord's Supper with unconfessed sin in our lives,

then we may just be inviting serious chastisement because this one ordinance is a constant reminder of the broken body and shed blood of our Lord. And to approach the supper with unconfessed sin, is in truth to figuratively crucify our Lord again; and God is not going to let this happen. Oh yes, one who is genuinely saved cannot and will not lose his or her salvation if they approach the table unworthily, but this mistake may just cost the guilty the loss of their health, or maybe even a premature death. And, according to I John 5:16, there is a sin unto death which a believer might commit if he dishonors the sacredness of some vow he or she has made to God; such as approaching the Lord's Supper improperly. And, I would remind all of us that we would be no match for Moses, the great servant of God, but yet, God let him die in the wilderness because he smote the rock the second time when God had told him to speak to the rock. In other words, Moses, because of his disobedience to the command of God, sold himself short and missed going into the promised land. This is found in **Deuteronomy 34:1-8**, and it should be a reminder to all of us that if we don't obey the commands of our Lord, we may miss the promised land of blessing. And by the way, the promised land in Israel does not portray us going to heaven. I know this because there were enemy tribes in the promised land, and there was sin there. There will be no sin or enemy tribes when we get to heaven. So folks, please pay attention. If we approach the Lord's table unworthily with unconfessed sin in our lives, we may just sell ourselves short and then get just a glimpse of what could have been, just like Moses. Now, I believe we should believe that observance of the Supper is a serious matter.

Chapter Eighteen

"Paul's Concern About the Corinthian Charismatics"

Scripture: I Corinthians 12:1-31

Introduction

Today as we move forward with this wonderful study, the first thing I want to do is to tell you that the next three chapters (Chapters 12-14) are some of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted chapters in all of the Bible. Obviously as we have already seen in the troubled Corinthian Church, Paul was having to deal with one problem or issue after another. Truly, the church at Corinth had been planted well under Paul's eighteen month ministry there, but now, the church was almost like a battle field by the time Paul had to write I Corinthians, and even later, II Corinthians. The people just seemed to never get things together as a body of unified believers. And, I am very sorry to say that this is also true, even today, in so many modern churches. And for certain, the misinterpretation of the next three chapters are causing many of the problems that are destroying the churches. So, as we study these next three chapters, hopefully, we will be able to come to God's interpretation within the context of what Paul was trying to deal with way back there in the first century. But, please remember that although these chapters are directly connected to each other, we will deal with the content of each chapter, but somewhat under the umbrella of the interpretation of all three. Now, let's begin our intense study of Chapter 12.

Without a doubt, we are living in a very confused world today when it comes to the use and misuse of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. I have been in the ministry for almost 54 years, and I have never seen a time when there was so many extremes as there are today in the area of grace gifts. On one side we have the churches with extreme dead ritualistic formalism, and on the other side we have the wild confusion of totally emotional worship services that sometimes hinge on the edge of cultism. In the ritualistic church there is very little spiritual life, which tends to bore people until they cannot take it any longer and so, they leave the churches. While on the emotional side, we see people acting in weird ways as they contribute this emotional wildness to God working in their midst. I sometimes feel that God must be looking at all of this and asking, "what in the world is it going to take to get my people to find the balance of an intimate personal relationship with Christ while operating their lives under the power of the Holy Spirit in an orderly and fruitful way." It is very obvious that all of this mass confusion in the churches today is providing a negative testimony to a lost world and it is driving people away from our churches and our Lord Jesus Christ. May God help us to discover this balanced Christian life and worship which will produce positive fruit and make an impact for Jesus in the lives of men and women. As we will study later in Chapter 14, "God is not the author of Confusion."

Please forgive me, but in order to really understand the truth of Chapters 12-14 which are so connected, I want to say a little more about all three of these just before we jump right into Chapter 12.

Today as we approach this study, it is my goal to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to us His truth from these three very misunderstood chapters from the Book of I Corinthians. As is the case in all Bible study, in order to really see what God is saying to us from these Chapters twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. As is the case in all Bible study, in order to really see what God is saying to us from these chapters, we must approach them from a Hermeneutical context whereby we interpret them in the light of what was going on in the city of Corinth at the time Paul wrote this Epistle. I ask you to please approach this study with an open and objective mind, and not with a preconceived and biased interpretation. We must allow God to show us what He is trying to say to us in a clear and concise way. We must remember that when Paul wrote this letter, he was addressing one of the most troubled churches you will find in the Word of God. And, from the study of our previous chapters, you should have already seen this. Therefore, it is a dangerous thing to base one's doctrinal beliefs on someone's personal experiences, whether it be the experience of others, or even one's own. And, we must never interpret Scripture according to our experiences, but we must measure our experiences by the truth of the Scripture.

Now, let me ask you to pay attention and see what God wants to show us as we seek to interpret these next three great chapters expositionally and exegetically. God has much to tell us, and may we have ears to hear and a heart to believe and respond. May God help us to learn how to confront the chaos that we are witnessing today without throwing the baby out with the bath water. The Kingdom of God, our churches, and the lives of literally thousands of people are at stake, and may we be found faithful and correct in our interpretation of His Word.

I. PLEASE NOTICE THAT CONSECRATED CHRISTIANS SHOULD COOPERATE AS A UNIFIED BODY. vs. 1-13

Unity is often dreamed about in the modern church, but it is very rarely found to come true. Truly, it is God's will for His bride to be genuinely unified in and through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, but because of the constant bickering over what doctrine is true and what isn't, it just seems that unity is a rare ingredient in the contemporary church. Yet, I sincerely believe it is very possible for a church to be unified, even with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, if the church will come to understand the doctrines and basic principles which can and will bind us together if we believe and follow them. So, let's now look at some of these doctrines and principles which should help unify our churches.

A. All Christians are unified by one salvation. vs. 1-3

We must understand that there is only one way to be saved, and that is through our Lord Jesus Christ. As I quoted earlier in this book, there is only one name by which we might be saved. Pay attention to this verse. **Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."** So, if we have only one way to be saved, then, the same salvation should unify us together in the body of believers.

1. The Spirit leads them to receive Christ's salvation. vs. 1-2

Do you know folks that it would be absolutely impossible for any lost sinner to be saved were it not for the conviction of the Holy Spirit. And of course, this is one of the major problems today as it has always been. Because of our old fallen sinful natures, we would not ever get saved if the Holy Spirit didn't show to us our lostness. Therefore, the same Holy Spirit would not lead to two or three ways of salvation. So, when we look at all of the ways people believe they can get saved, (good works, baptism, church membership, observing the sacraments, etc.), it is no wonder there is so much confusion. So, we need to get back to what the Bibles says; not what our denomination, our synod, or our association says. If we would just come to grips with the one way of salvation, we would be on our way to unity.

a. This means being led out of spiritual ignorance. v. 1

Paul starts out this chapter in verse one by revealing that there had to have been some questions and concern about the ignorance of some of the people who called themselves Christians when it came to the spiritual gifts. So, Paul just jumps right in and tells the Corinthians that he would not have them to remain in ignorance, but in fact, it seems that Paul might have believed that the people in Corinth were willfully ignorant. In other words, they were still ignorant by their own choice because they had lost their teachableness. And, let me say emphatically that this willful ignorance is the main problem that we have causing so much confusion today in our churches. We have man-made doctrines by many charlatans who are trying to get rich and big from the gospel; although most of the time, it is another gospel they are preaching. Paul also rebuked the Galatians for their willful ignorance when he said, **"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel (Gal. 1:6).** So friends, what we have in our modern churches is willful ignorance about the way to be saved, and therefore, we have mass confusion.

Notice another comment by Dr. Paige Patterson. "The pneumatika or charismata had come to occupy a place of stupendous importance in the church at Corinth. The mystical, mysterious, and ecstatic nature of the various Greek oracles was still an influence with which to be reckoned in the first century. That the pagan element, having come into the Lord's church in Corinth, would have a tendency toward the reproduction some of the ecstatic features of their former faith is sad but understandable."³⁶

b. This means being led out of sinful idolatry. v. 2

So, the church at Corinth had tremendous problems over the use of the spirituals or spiritual gifts, and without a doubt, they had mixed the mysterious from their pagan worship in Greece with the true grace gifts given by God at the moment of salvation. This is truly what was causing this big problem in the church;

³⁶ Ibid, pages 206-207.

pagan utterances and mysterious sounds and practices which the people believed to be of their gods before they heard the true Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"The reason Paul admonished the Corinthians in verse one is made clear in this verse. He reminded the Corinthian readers that formerly they were Gentiles who were carried away to 'dumb' idols. 'Dumb' (aphonos) literally mean 'without a voice;' yet these very idols did exercise power over the populace through maintaining communication with the people via certain oracles, such as the Pythia and Delphi. Consequently, the rather unusual language of the verse suggests that idols, void of voice, nevertheless carried away the people, leading them through the mysterious experiences associated with the mantic oracles. Paul was concerned that in the Corinthian Church the worship remain pure and Christ-honoring without reduplication of the characteristic pagan temple worship."³⁷

Therefore folks, the people in Corinth had just determined to mix pagan idol worship with what should have been singular worship of our Lord God. Yet, after over 2,000 years since the first century, we still today have church leaders, and sad to say, some professing God-called preachers, who are mixing the world and worship of other gods in with the true worship of God the Father. This is just absolutely sick and wicked.

2. The Spirit leads them to receive Christ's sovereignty. v. 3

Today in the Calvinistic culture within our Baptist churches, I am a little afraid to use the word sovereignty when it comes to our Lord. Yet, I fully believe that God is completely Sovereign over all the world, but He does not predestinate some to heaven, while predestinating others to go to hell. I don't believe in the limited atonement, and I don't believe even stronger in irresistible grace. God loved man enough to give him the freedom to choose. But, I do believe in the Sovereignty of Christ as it is demonstrated in how He uses those who really get saved; and yes, how He supernaturally directs the use of His Spiritual gifts.

a. Paul points out what the Spirit will not do. v. 3a

In this verse three, it is obvious to me that there was someone standing up in the church at Corinth calling Jesus accursed. And, he believed it was God who was leading him to do it. Paul emphatically shuts down this false pronouncement by telling the guilty Corinthian or Corinthians that this foolishness had to stop. Paul said that he was going to make them understand the truth, regardless of what they might be believing.

b. Paul points out what the Spirit will do. v. 3b

So, Paul tells the people that there is no way that a person could declare that Jesus was accursed by God's Spirit, but a saved person can be filled with the Holy Spirit and without question call Jesus Christ the Lord of his life. In fact, this is what

³⁷ Ibid, page 207.

every saved person will do if the person is really saved and controlled by the Spirit. I have not doubt being sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit if I am trying to live in His will, and if my life is clean in order to be used by God. The Spirit will empower us to use our spiritual gifts for Him, and He will make our lives very fruitful as we serve the Lord of our lives.

B. All Christians are united in one Spirit. vs. 4-7

It only stands to reason that if the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, then He will unify the body of Christ with one purpose and goal. Thus, whatever spiritual gift or gifts God provides to any believer, that person should desire the unity and fruitfulness that other believers would likewise desire. In other words, he or she will come to realize if they are filled with the Holy Spirit that whatever gift or gifts God has given them, these gifts are to be used to edify the body of Christ; and not be used for selfish and parading purposes.

1. The Spirit unites them into one body. vs. 4-6

Get the picture, folks! When a person is truly spiritually empowered by the Holy Spirit, that person will want to use his or her spiritual gifts to enhance and grow the body of Christ. And remember, this body is the engaged bride-to-be which will finally be married to Jesus after the rapture of the church.

a. It is God who gives the privilege of service in the body. v. 4

What a thrill it is to be a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was trying so hard to get the believers in Corinth to understand that it is truly a great privilege to be in God's service. And as an older preacher who God called as a teenager from a rural country setting to preach the Gospel and serve Christ our King, I will never get over, and I don't want to get over, the privilege and thrill to be of service to the body of Christ in any way that I can. The very fact that I am writing another commentary on this Book of First Corinthians is a living testimony to the sovereign choice of almighty God. I never want to get over the wonder of it all.

b. It is God who gives the position of service in the body. vs. 5-6

At the risk of being misunderstood, I would like to say that it thrills me when we as an American nation recognize with respect and appreciation those who have served in the military or police forces in order to protect our freedom, and yes, our people as well. But, I believe we might just over do this sometimes. Now, I am not trying to belittle these veterans who have put their lives on the line for the sake of freedom and safety. However, I feel that it is a much greater call to represent the Kingdom of God with our service because our Lord saw fit to come to where we were, and then direct us on to much greater things in His work. And, I just praise God for the soldiers, airmen, sailors, and others that protect us all the time, but their protection is temporary. However, as a servant of God in the army of the Lord, if we

are fruitful in our service, then the outcome will be eternal if we are truly good servants of the Lord. So, I pray that I will never get over the thrill of being in God's service. And, I hope everyone of you readers feel the same way I do!

2. The Spirit unites them in one business. v. 7

Why does God supernaturally give spiritual gifts to those whom He saves? He does so in order that these saved people will be faithful and serve in the roles and places where God places them. And, Paul really drives this point home in this verse seven. He, more or less, is just simply saying, God saves a person and then manifests His Spirit through that individual in order to make him fruitful, or profitable as the verse mentions. In other words, with the same Holy Spirit living in and empowering every believer, the ultimate goal is that we should be about the business of the King. There is no place for quitters or lazy people. There is a task called the Great Commission, and we need to be extremely busy about this Christ-given task everyday that we live. This should be our business because this is His business. In other words, as I state often, we need to have on our heart and minds what Jesus has on His.

C. All Christians are united in one service. vs. 8-13

We now come to the listing of different gifts given by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Some people are given just one gift, but others may be given more than one. There is no evidence in the Bible that anyone is given all of the gifts. But, with these God-given spiritual gifts being different, Paul tells the Corinthians in these verses that every gift is important to the body of Christ, and frankly, they were needed back in the early years of church history, and certainly many of them are so desperately needed today in the modern church.

Please remember that yes, different gifts are given to different people. But, the uniqueness of the each person's gifts is very important, but more important is the unity that the use of these spiritual gifts must produce in the fellowship of believers. Therefore, there should be no parading of the gifts, no bragging about one gift being more important than another, and every gift should be used with sincere humility. Now, let's take a look at these six verses and see what we can discover about these spiritual gifts. But before moving on, I want to remind all of us that Paul discusses the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit in this passage in First Corinthians, but also, in Romans Chapter 12 and in Ephesians Chapter 4. Then of course, there are those who argue about how many gifts there are. Some say nine while others list 18. We will just take a look at the gifts listed here in Chapter 12, and see how appropriate these gifts are for this dispensation of time, and how some of them may be a little different in this age since the apostolic dispensation.

1. Christians are unique in this service. vs. 8-10

In verse 8, Paul talks about the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge gifts, which were given to members of the early church. Let me give you some very

clear explanation by Dr. Paige Patterson, and then I will share with you my sincere belief about this verse.

"This verse specifies two such spiritual gifts: the 'word of wisdom' and the 'word of knowledge.' The distinction between the two seems to be that the 'word of knowledge' refers to a supernatural comprehension of the facts of a particular situation, whereas the 'word of wisdom' refers to the supernatural endowment of being able to take what is revealed in the word of knowledge and apply it correctly to the circumstances and situations of life in a pragmatic way."³⁸

Let me try to make this even clearer. I sincerely believe that before the completion of the entire Old Testament and New Testament in written form, God did indeed provide special divine knowledge for some of His children to reveal what the will of God was for the early members of the church. This special knowledge may have been given to saved people through divine illumination or revelation, but it had to be specific for a person to understand it. Therefore, God chose to illuminate the minds of some people with the gift of knowledge.

When I am in Africa and preaching and teaching to our school students, I also say that this gift of knowledge is 'knowing what to do,' while the gift of wisdom is 'knowing how to do what you know you should do.' In other words, all believers were to seek the will of God, but some in the body of Christ were given the special illumination revealed supernaturally in order to be able to discern God's will more easily. However, I know that in this era since the completion of the written Word of God, we don't need special revelations, but we do need the illumination of the written Word of God in order to ascertain the will of God in every situation. So, I truly believe that God has uniquely given some believers this special gift of understanding the word of God with more clarity. And, I do believe that this special gift is not just for a person's own special knowledge, but I believe God gives to one, two, or more in the body of believers in order to help others interpret the Word more easily, and discover for themselves the will of God for their lives. Thus, we need to remember this when we are trying to help counsel those that are seeking to find the perfect will of God for their lives. Therefore, we might have to humble ourselves and ask for help from those who are specially gifted with Bible knowledge. Truthfully, it is my prayer that by writing this commentary, one of you readers might get some help to better understand God's will for your lives.

The second spiritual gift that Paul mentions here in this verse is indeed the 'the gift of wisdom.' As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, I have always taught my church members and all of the students in Africa that the gift of wisdom is God revealing to a committed believer the special gift for understanding how the will of God should be done. For, it is one thing to know the perfect will of God, but it is truly another thing to know how to carry out the will of God. And of course, we are told in Proverbs 9:10, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Please notice this verse. **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."** This is one of the greatest verses in the entire Bible because it tells us that if we are going to have wisdom to carry out the will of God, we must begin with a reverential fear of God. And, it is also stated in this wonderful

³⁸ Ibid, page 211.

verse that having knowledge of God's perfect will demands that we spend time with our holy God in an intimate way. This is not just knowing about God and His will, but it is having intimate knowledge of God by a regular experiential relationship with God.

a. Their service is unique because their gifts are different. vs. 8-11.

In verses 8-10 of this text, we are not only given the listing of several spiritual gifts which are distinguishably different, but they are given by the same Holy Spirit. This means that there are no super gifts while some gifts are little. This of course takes away the propensity to have pride about the gift or gifts we have been given. Thus, we have nothing to boast in except for the goodness of God for allowing us to receive these gifts and use them for His glory.

We have already covered the gifts of knowledge and wisdom which we find listed in verse 8. Now, let's look a little further at some other spiritual gifts that are given to believers to edify the church which is the body of Christ.

In verse 9, we discover that there is a gift called the gift of faith, and then, another gift is listed, which is the gift of healing. Notice once more what Dr. Paige Patterson says about these two gifts.

"Two additional gifts are added here in verse 9: faith and healing. Of course, every believer possesses faith, or he would not be saved (Eph. 2:8-9). However, the faith that is included here as a spiritual gift apparently is an extension of saving faith which enables the possessor almost always to see beyond the circumstances of the moment. Amid the most dire circumstances, faith encourages the brethren by pointing repeatedly to the adequacy of God's power and the perfection of His purpose. It is the compatriot of a vision and confidence in God."³⁹

Folks, I just believe that the gift of faith is given to some believers in order to allow them to believe God when others don't. Also, I believe this gift is given so that the recipient can indeed look beyond the negativity and trust God to bring to pass what He has ordered for our personal lives in His service. And truthfully, I have worked with some of these people with this gift down through the years, and it is amazing how their faith has moved mountains.

Let me give you one illustration of this. Many years ago my wife and I planted a church, but at that time we had no property or facilities. So, one day I heard about 16 acres of property that was for sale along a high traffic road and in a very presentable place. The man who owned the property was asking \$150,000 for the 16 acres of land. I went to my small number of deacons and reported that I had found the property. I asked them what they thought we should do about purchasing the property. Some of them, including this pastor, were somewhat skeptical because we had very little money. But, we had one deacon who just said, "God brought this land to us, and we need to buy it." Well, the owner agreed to finance the \$150,000, and so, we bought the land. In just ten months our small congregation paid for the property, and we were on our way to building a new church facility. Why did this

³⁹ Ibid, page 212.

happen? Because we had a man who believed in God's power more than most of us meeting that day. This dear brother who is now in heaven truly had the gift of faith.

And, I must tell you that after this incident in the early years of my ministry, God gave me more faith and a larger vision to move forward when God opened doors for us. The gift of faith looks beyond the present and trusts God, even when our friends don't. I sincerely believe this was a gift in the early New Testament Church described here in Corinth, and I truly believe this gift is still in operation.

"Next, the apostle mentioned the 'gifts of healing.' All healing comes from God. Though it is also recognized that remarkable natural abilities are given to those in the medical profession, the gifts of healing certainly refer to a bequeathal which transcends the natural abilities. Some have suggested that the rather unusual emphasis upon the plural 'gifts of healing' emphasizes the fact that the gift is given situationally. It is true that the other option—there are different kinds of gifts of healing—is highly unlikely and totally unverifiable in the light of Scripture. What might indicate support for the idea that gifts of healing represented gifts given by the Holy Spirit only in certain situations is the fact that even the apostle Paul seems to have possessed the gift, and yet on occasion he either chose not to use it, or did not have it to use."⁴⁰

Let me insert something very significant to me personally. All of my ministerial life, I have believed that the gifts of healing were basically used by the Jesus and the early apostles for the purpose of authenticating the Gospel message. I still believe this completely. However, I do still know that God supernaturally heals even to this very day. I say this because I can give personal testimony to this.

Back in the year of 2011, while traveling on a trip to Togo, West Africa, I contracted an incurable lung disease called bronchiectasis, which ordinarily is incurable. There is no cure for it medically, and most people who contract this disease die within four to five years. I was told this, and certainly, it was a tremendous shock to my wife and me. I remember just after getting this bad news, that my wife and I were making a long trip to South Texas where I was going to preach a revival meeting. Truthfully, we cried almost all the way for the 1,400 miles we traveled because we just felt my time was short. But, we keep pushing on, and we got people all over America, Africa and in other parts of the world, praying fervently that God might spare my life. For three years, I traveled back and forth to the Baptist Hospital in Winston Salem, North Carolina for three years. But then, in January of 2013, I went for a visit to my lung specialist, where she conducted an extensive lung test. When this terrible test was done, my doctor told me that my lungs were normal except for a little residual damage already done in my bronchial tubes. So, my wife and I left the specialist's office praising God for the miraculous healing of my lungs.

So, my friends, I do know that God does still do miraculous healing, but it is not his will to heal every sick person. I know this by 72 years of life experiences, and by the examples in the Scripture where Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20), and where he could not do anything to heal Epaphroditus, who was ill to the point of death but then was graciously spared by God. Also, don't forget

⁴⁰ Ibid, pages 212-213.

that Paul did have the gift of healing many people, but he did not even heal himself when he prayed for God to remove the thorn in the flesh, "God said no, but He would provide sufficient grace for Paul to endure it (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)."

The next Spiritual gift that is listed in verse 10, is the gift of working miracles. "In the Greek, this phrase means, "the energizing of powers." This refers to the ability to release the power of God in a supernatural way, much as Jesus did when He turned water into wine and walked on the water. Although there are claims of miracles taking place in our day, and those claims may be true, it seems that the release of miraculous power is rarely given today.

As you read the story of the early church in Acts, you see that many miraculous events take place in the early chapters. Those miraculous events become increasingly rare in the later chapters of Acts. It may be that in those early days, soon after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, the church needed the unleashing of miracles, healings, and other supernatural signs in order to establish the fledgling faith of the new believers. Remember, there were no mature, longtime Christians in the early church; everyone was a new Christian. But, as the church became established and mature, the need for supernatural signs seemed to diminish. This may explain why we rarely, if ever, see the gift of miracles legitimately exercised today."⁴¹

But, I do want to say that I am not one of those who believes that miracles can't happen today, but I believe with the completion of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, there should not be the need for giving credibility to the Gospel message by supernatural miracles. The Word of God has its own credibility just because it is God's final and inerrant word to mankind, and because it is the final absolute authority.

"Next, Paul writes, 'to another prophecy.' This is a common gift—and a vitally important one. In fact, it may be the most important of all of the gifts. I say this because Paul devotes a whole chapter to this gift—1 Corinthians 14. When we hear the word prophecy or prophesying, we tend to think of predicting the future. But that's not what the Bible means when it speaks of this gift.

In the Bible, the gift of prophesying is the ability to speak forth the mind of God. It may include an element of prediction, but usually the gift of prophesying involves speaking about what God is doing in the present world. It involves knowing what the Scriptures say, and understanding God's activity in history, and setting it forth in such a clear way that people can relate His will and His workings to their everyday lives."⁴²

I would like to add to the paragraphs by Ray Stedman, that I do sincerely believe that the gift of prophecy was given to the early church in order for those with the gift to cry out against sin in the society and the culture where they live. And, if they do this, then yes, they do predict sometimes the coming judgment of God, or even the Second Coming of Christ. But the main gift of prophecy in this dispensation has to do with confronting of sin in society with the truth from the Bible. Many people certainly don't like to be confronted, and neither did the people

⁴¹ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, pages 173-174.

⁴² Ibid, page 174.

in the days of the Old Testament prophets. Paul even said in the New Testament, **"Have I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).** Truly, people don't like to be shown their sin, but the truth is, if they are not shown their sin, then there is no way for them to repent. I don't like taking shots everyday for my diabetes, but the sting of the needles isn't nearly as bad as dying from out of controlled sugar.

The next spiritual gift that is listed here in verse 10, is the gift of "discerning spirits." "This means the ability to spot a phony and detect false doctrine is a much—needed spiritual gift. There are religious leaders, preachers, authors, and speakers who are charming and persuasive, who speak wonderful sounding words that seem to fall from heaven itself—but they are deceivers. Many people follow them, support them financially, and hang upon every word—yet these are false teachers. They enrich and empower themselves at the expense of the gullible. Every church needs a few people with the gift of the discerning which spirits are of God and which are from Satan."⁴³

I would go one step further and say that in the early days of the first century church, I do believe that God supernaturally gave this gift to some people to help keep the church clean from hypocrisy and falsehood. And, I believe it was desperately needed because the Scriptures had not been completed. But today, I have had the privilege of pastoring a few unique people who truly had this gift of discernment because when every discussion ran out of serious input, these with the gift of discernment could still provide tremendous wisdom and insight.

For instance, I used to have a very hardworking mountain man as one of my best deacons. His vocation was an automobile mechanic, and he worked laboriously every day to support his family. But, when our deacon body needed special wise discernment on any given serious matter, Brother Albert was there to give us clear and almost perfect insight upon which we should act. He truly had the gift of discernment.

The next spiritual gifts listed here are "speaking in various kinds of tongues (languages), and the gift of interpreting these languages." Now, let's look at Dr. Paige Patterson's discussion of these last two spiritual gifts listed here.

"The last two gifts mentioned in verse 10 relate again to spoken utterance. The first mentioned is 'kinds of tongues' and the second is 'the interpretation of tongues.'" The two are mentioned together in clear anticipation of Chapter 14:27-28, where it is argued that tongues should not be allowed in the assembly except where there is an interpreter. But the question remains: to what does the expression 'tongues' refer?"

'Tongue' (glossa) demonstrably means the ability to speak various known languages which had not been studied by the one possessing the gift. The purpose of the speaking was twofold: (a) the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ to those who otherwise could not have understood and (b) the authentication

⁴³ Ibid, page 174.

of the gospel messenger and his message. Two lines of argument establish this as the genuine intent of the apostle of the real meaning of the gift."⁴⁴

""First, in Chapter 14:21 Paul argued that the law contained the prophecy that God would speak to His people with 'other tongues and other lips.' This quotation of Isaiah 28:11 most certainly refers to the use of actual existing languages. The second line of argumentation derives from the first instance of the use of the gift of tongues, namely, the Day of Pentecost which is recorded in Acts 2. In that passage when the miracle occurred, the people coming together 'were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.' (Acts 2:6). They further expressed their amazement by saying, 'and how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?' (Acts 2:8) And again, 'We do hear them speak in our tongues (glossa, the same word) the wonderful works of God' (Acts 2:11). That the gift of tongues is then a reference to the use of a language, not heretofore studied, for the purpose of communicating the gospel and authenticating the gospel messenger seems irrefutable. The question remaining as to whether or not a second gift of tongues was present at Corinth will be answered in Chapter 14."⁴⁵

Having just quoted words from Dr. Paige Patterson's, I want to go on to say that nowhere in the precious Bible are we taught that there is such a thing as an ecstatic prayer language which people speak after they have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. As we will indeed see in Chapter 14, this second so-called prayer language is truly a farce, and one that is being used by Satan all over the world to confuse and dupe the body of Christ. We will truly see in Chapter 14, that Paul even used sarcasm when he told the people to go on and speak in tongues if they insisted. Let me say it again, the ecstatic prayer language is not found in the Bible, and those who say it is, are using deception to gain a following. Most of this comes from the wild-Pentecostal movement, but some others experiment with this false doctrine as well. Satan always has a counterfeit for every good thing that God does for His people. I will say what Dr. Stephen Olford, one of the greatest expository preachers who ever lived, said many years ago. I heard him say this in the pulpit at a large crowd of preachers in Greensboro, North Carolina many years ago. He said, "the modern speaking in tongues is one of the following: First, it may very well be a counterfeit tongue given by Satan himself. Secondly, it could be a learned experience which someone else has demanded and taught. Third, it might just be a psychological imitation phony prayer language to make people think you are super spiritual. And, it might just be a self-made-up jibberish, which is designed to sell others on your unique spiritual relationship with God." But, the truth is that all of these are false and phony, and there is no such thing as an ecstatic prayer language to authenticate the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And by the way, we are baptized into the body of Christ with the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation. However, Satan has deceived the world into believing that there is a supernatural secret

⁴⁴ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, pages 215-216.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pages 215-216

prayer language for those who really get baptized by the Holy Ghost. We will talk more about this in Chapter 14, as I have already mentioned.

b. Their service is unique because their gifts are derived. v. 11

Verse eleven is a very simple verse, but yet, one with a tremendous amount of truth. Paul tells the Corinthians who were having problems over the gifts that regardless of the gifts which someone is given, there is no reason to boast because they all come from the same Holy Spirit for one purpose, that being to edify the body of Christ in unity. And, no believer is to ask God for any of these spiritual gifts, but our Sovereign God gives to whomever whatever gifts He has planned to do so. We just simply need to discover our gift or maybe our gifts, and then develop them so that God can use us to the fullest potential in the work of His kingdom to win people to Him. These God-given gifts are not given for us to display, but for us to minister to those in the body of Christ, and to hopefully, use them to win the lost to Jesus.

2. Christians are united in this service. vs. 12-13

Isn't it an amazing thing that any professing Christian could believe that his or her spiritual gift or gifts were better than others when we are all in the body of Christ as members of Christ's engaged bride? Yet, that is what must have been happening in Corinth, and I know it is happening by silly preachers today, like Kenneth Copeland, Jessie Duplantis, Creflo Dollar, Joel Osteen, and many others, who teach that you can be a super-Christian if you choose to reach your destiny. But, sad to say, these people and many more, have gotten filthy rich by using false doctrines and false spiritual gifts to entice shallow believers, or maybe even some lost professing Christians, to send them money so that these charlatans can become even wealthier. There are no superior gifts given by God, but all of the gifts of the Spirit are very important to the total body of Christ.

a. All Christians are united in the Savior's body. v. 12

Well, in verse twelve, we once more see Paul the Apostle repeating that all members of the body of Christ are important. So, when the same Holy Spirit gives individuals different gifts of the Spirit, each person using these gifts to edify the church body is under the same authority of Christ Himself. Therefore, all of the true sincere spiritual gifts that are needed and being used in the body today are not the same in value, but they are needed because God has given them responsibility to be a blessing and encouragement to the entire body.

b. All Christians are united in the Spirit's baptism. v. 13

I have already addressed this subject earlier in this chapter, but we are just being reminded that we are all baptized at the moment of our salvation into the body of Christ, or into the family of God's children, if we would rather look at it this way. So, whether we are Jewish, Gentiles, slaves, free, black, white, red, oriental, or

some mixture, we are all the same in the body of Christ because the same Holy Spirit birthed us into His family, and with this act of regeneration, we have been given gifts plural, or at least one gift singularly. In other words, every genuinely born-again child of God has been given some spiritual gift to enhance the body of Christ.

And by the way, there is a difference between spiritual gifts and personal talents. Even lost people have been given some great talents to benefit himself and his society, but lost people don't have spiritual gifts because these are only given at the moment of salvation when the person is baptized into the body of believers with the Holy Spirit.

Therefore friends, if we are genuinely saved, we should use the gift or gifts which God has given to us in order to bless the entire body of Christ. Gifts are not just for our benefit to receive glory, but, as God gives individuals their gift or gifts, and then, these gifted people will use the gift or gifts in a positive way for the church, the body of Christ, then Jesus alone gets all the glory.

II. PLEASE NOTICE THAT CONSECRATED CHRISTIANS SHOULD COOPERATE AS AN UNSELFISH BODY. vs. 14-26

Well, here in America it goes without saying that we are living in the most selfish age that I have ever seen in my entire lifetime. It just seems that everywhere, and including our churches, there are self-centered, egotistic, and pride-filled people every way you look. I mention this because within context of what we have been studying together here in Chapter 12 of First Corinthians, we are seeing the same kind of problems that Paul was dealing with in the church in Corinth.

The Corinthian Church had every kind of problem almost known to man, and most of it was caused by the things I just mentioned. Obviously, from what we just studied on this point of our outline in this chapter, there was a problem over who had the greatest spiritual gift in the church. And, I believe there were problems over who should be first when it came to recognition; which of course is not a motive at all for how we serve Jesus. So, in verses 14-26 of this chapter, Paul gets very specific about how the church should not be divided over spiritual gifts, and he demanded that the people in the church be right with God and live in harmony. Therefore, we need to take an in depth look at these verses and see if we can find some of this selfishness in our lives.

A. Christians should cooperate as a harmonious body. vs. 14-20

1. In order to produce this harmony, there should be no murmuring in the body. vs. 14-17

In verse 14, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the body of Christ has many members, but that there is only one body. Then in verses 15-17, Paul uses some sarcasm when he asks the question if one limb didn't like another limb, or if one organ didn't like another organ of the body, does that make the other limb or organ of no use. The implied answer is, "certainly not." The summary of what Paul is saying is that every member, every limb, and every organ in the body is very

important to the welfare and productivity of the body. Paul once more is trying very hard to get the people to stop murmuring to each other about the less needed parts. In other words, he was telling the Corinthians that every member is important as he has already stated in this book several times. But, it seems that the church wasn't listening too close to this man of God.

So, I will admit that in our modern churches today, we do have far too much murmuring and complaining which usually leads to gossip about and criticism of others in the church body. A church cannot ever be unified until we stop criticizing each other, and as Paul said in Philippians 2, we need to esteem others higher than we are. When we do this, we will not begin to feel that our spiritual gifts are superior to other people's gifts. This will produce harmony and peace.

2. In order to produce this harmony, there should be no mutilating of the body.
vs. 18-20.

What Paul is saying is that when we rip people apart with gossip and criticism because of our feelings of superiority, then we literally mutilate or tear the body of Christ apart. This is a horrible way for people to conduct themselves when they claim to have been baptized into the same body by the Holy Spirit of God, and because we are drinking spiritual water from the same spring or well. Therefore, whatever we do toward others in the body of Christ should be for edification and encouragement, and not to destroy the church that Jesus has built.

B. Christians should cooperate as a healthy body. vs. 21-26.

If the body is not healthy because of some problem in any area of the body, the entire body will be in pain. This is true for us physically because this is the way God has made us, but it is also true spiritually for the entire body of Christ. When one part suffers, it should cause the entire body to grieve for and provide comfort for that one who is suffering. This is called empathy, or as one of my Pastoral Care professors said many years ago in a seminary classroom, "the best way to minister to people is to get into bed with them." Of course, we knew what he was talking about, and it wasn't that he wanted us to physically get into bed with the sick people. But, what it meant was, we must put ourselves mentally in the place of the hurting and suffering people in order for us to really feel their pain. And in fact, this is what we find in **Hebrews 13:3, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them: and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."** The writer of Hebrews, whom I believe was this same Apostle Paul, was just saying again, we need to feel their pain, and mentally put ourselves into their place of suffering, if we really want to identify with them and show genuine empathy toward their bad condition.

I would also add that if we put ourselves in the place of our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we will begin to feel what they feel, fear what they fear, and yes, learn to appreciate the struggles of others instead of just feeling sorry for ourselves like often we do. Thus, my brothers and sisters, the time has come that we should be truly unified with the other members of the body of Christ, rather than

dividing the body because of selfishness, pride, ego, and other negative sins. And only God knows, how serious the situation is in America churches, and yes, those in Europe, and even many in the countries of Africa where we work.

Now, let me just give you three additional points about how to cooperate with the body of Christ in order to keep the body healthy. I will not try to exegete these verses and point again because it would be somewhat redundant and repetitious to do so. Then, after these next three points, I want share a few paragraphs from some other tremendous commentators.

1. God sets no useless members in the body. vs. 21-22
2. God sets no unlovely members in the body. vs. 23-24
3. God sets no unloved members in the body. vs. 25-26

"I never cease to be amazed at the unloving attitude many Christians display toward fellow believers. All too many Christians seem to think they don't need the rest of the body. They have their own ministry, their own vision, their own gifts, their own priorities—and they don't want anything to do with anyone else. They look upon other ministries and individuals in the church as competitors, not partners.

As Paul observes, the eye can't say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' The head can't say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' The parts of the body of Christ that receive less honor should be singled out for special honor. One of the great tragedies of the church is that we do so little to honor the more modest members of the body."⁴⁶

What Dr. Stedman says in these two paragraphs is so true today. We are in a very troubled time just like the Corinthians, and the churches are fighting each others. Why, right here in our home county in North Carolina, our churches used to get together for crusades, soul winning training, camps, and other collective events. But now, many of these same churches won't even associate with one another based upon status in the community, the different education for the pastors, some different doctrines, and other very silly things. Thus, the lost world is going to hell because church people are fighting among themselves about their spiritual gifts, their standing in the church, and even many legalistic concepts and ideas. Truly, we need to get back to loving one another and using the body of Christ to try to bring lost people to Him. But, let me remind you, we don't have to compromise our Biblically based convictions and standards just to love others who say they are saved.

III. PLEASE NOTICE THAT CONSECRATED CHRISTIANS SHOULD COOPERATE AS A USEFUL BODY. vs. 27-31.

We now come to the last five verses in this great chapter of God's Word. The theme is still what we have already been talking about; being together in the body of Christ as dedicated members edifying and encouraging one another. Truly, this is a wonderful goal for any genuinely saved child of God.

⁴⁶ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 180.

A. Each Christian is a unique person. v. 27

Once again in this study, Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians that they are unique because they are in the body of Christ. Not one person is greater in this body than another. But, I will go so far as to say that God does use some people in much greater ways because they are more dedicated and more completely surrendered to Jesus.

In the last phrase of verse 27, Paul says that we are members in particular. This is referring obviously, to the individuality of every believer. We have different personalities, different backgrounds, different skills and talents, and yes, we have been given individual spiritual gifts if we are truly saved and in His family. And, I will emphatically say that every person with a different individuality is responsible to Christ to give Him his or her very best, because if he or she doesn't the body will miss out on the special spiritual gift or gifts which God has given to these individuals.

1. They are unique because they are in Christ. v. 27a
2. They are unique because they are individual Christians. 27b

B. Each Christian is a useful person. vs. 28-31

We come now to the 28th verse, where Paul simply repeats the spiritual gifts which he had already given, except for the fact that he does add the gift of an apostle. We don't know why he didn't mention apostleship back earlier when he described the gifts, but we do know that the gifted apostle was a unique gift given only to those in the first century church who witnessed Christ in His resurrection body. So, Paul does call himself an apostle later in Chapter 15, verse 8, where he says, "**And last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time.**" What Paul is saying here is that he is an apostle because He had a supernatural encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road who truly did call him to become the apostle to the Gentiles.

Because we now live in a terribly messed up age when it comes to the spiritual gifts, I want to share some information from one of my previous books, entitled, "The Chaotic Crisis In The Contemporary Church." I hope these next couple of pages might help all of you to truly learn who the apostles were in the first century, and also, that no man or woman has apostolic credentials in this present age.

What Are The Biblical Qualifications Of A Genuine Apostle?

"In order for us to understand why there is no New Testament Apostles alive today, we need to go back and see what the purposes and credentials of the earlier apostles really were. Please pay attention to the following point and then you decide if anyone alive today may be a true apostle. All of the following purposes and qualifications are listed in the book entitled, 'Charismatic Chaos' written by John

MacArthur pages 148-151. We will just list these but not quote the paragraphs verbatim.

1. The first purpose or qualification of a New Testament Apostle was that the church was founded upon the apostles. According to what Paul said in **Ephesians 2:20**, the apostles were to be apart of the foundation stones for the building of the church. Pay attention to these words. **"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; "** Therefore, the early apostles were stones upon which the church was to be built. If this is true, and we know it is, then why would we need foundation stones for the church now over 2,000 years since the building was started. This makes about as much sense as putting the foundations on top of the house once it was almost done or completed.
2. The second purpose and or qualification of the early apostles was that they had to be eyewitnesses to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Please notice the words of Paul once more. **I Corinthians 9:1, 'Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?'** **I Corinthians 15:6-10, "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 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 labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.'** The only exception to the very first apostles seeing Jesus in His resurrection form was when Paul obviously saw Him on the Damascus road. However, there is a great possibility that Paul saw Him in Jerusalem before Paul even got saved on the road to Damascus. Therefore, no living person today could possibly have ever seen Jesus Christ in His resurrected body, thus negating their insistence on being a valid apostle in this generation.
3. The third purpose or qualification was that all of the early apostles were chosen personally by Jesus Christ and not by themselves or another person. 'Jesus may have spoken Hebrew or Aramaic when he chose His apostles (scholars disagree on that point). But if he spoke Hebrew, He would have used saliah for 'apostle'. In Hebrew a saliah is the proxy of the man he represent—a surrogate, a representative who stands with full authority to act on behalf of his master. The apostles were appointed by Jesus to represent Him in that way.'⁴⁷ 'Therefore,

⁴⁷ Charismatic Chaos, By: John Mac Arthur, Zondervan, page 149

any man-chosen apostle in this day could not possibly be a true apostle because he would have been selected by another man, or self-declared as an apostle. So, if Mr. Wagner believes that God is selecting new apostles today, then he is obviously wrong and teaching a falsehood. Therefore, we must be very careful not to believe what this man or others are now teaching about this "'New Apostolic Reformation.'

4. The fourth purpose or qualification for apostles in the first century was that they were authenticated by special miraculous signs.

I believe that this is the right time for me to tell you, our readers, that much false information has been disseminated down through the years about the miracles and signs which accompanied the ministries of the early apostles. We have been told in the past, and even more so in recent years that all of the miracles and signs which were performed in the first century by the apostles can and will continue to be performed today, and yes, even until the end of the church age. But, I want to scream, 'No way my friends!' Why? Because those early miracles by the early apostles and their appointees were performed in order to authenticate the message of the New Covenant and the Gospel as those apostles began to carry out the Great Commission.

We must remember that yes, the early apostles did heal people of many of their diseases, and even Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (**Acts 9:36-42**) as is described in the text just mentioned. And, we assuredly know that Paul healed people and probably brought Eutychus back to life after he fell out of the window when Paul was preaching a long Gospel sermon (**Acts 20:6-12**). But folks, as we have already mentioned, the purpose of these divine miracles was to authenticate and give certain validity to the message these apostles were preaching, not to stir up the people into an emotional frenzy just to draw attention or to prove how powerful these servants of God were. 'We need to remember that no miracles were ever performed in the apostolic era by anyone other than the apostles and their appointees.'⁴⁸

5. The fifth purpose or qualification of the early apostles was that these apostles had absolute authority. 'The apostles had much more authority than other prophets, whose utterances had to be judged as to their accuracy and authenticity. When the apostles spoke, there was no discussion. They were already recognized as the revelatory agents of God. In his brief letter of warning to the church Jude said, **'But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were**

⁴⁸ Ibid, page 150.

spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Jude 17).⁴⁹

In other words, folks, because these apostles were chosen by our Lord Jesus Christ personally, the people did not have to have extreme miracles to believe that the apostles' message was coming from God. Yet today, we have people like Peter Wagner trying to convince multitudes of church members that he has proof that God has chosen him to be a late-day apostle. This proof, he says, is in the new revelations which God is giving him that add to the completed written Word of God, and by the divine miracles he is able to do, even to raise the dead back to life. Yet, there is no genuine evidence that any of Wagner's new revelations actually occurred. Instead, he tries to come up with some kind of additional sign to give credibility to his new revelations.

Let me give you some more information from Dr. John MacArthur about these so-called new revelations from God. 'Instead of enhancing people's interest in and devotion to Scripture, the Charismatic Movement's chief legacy has been an unprecedented interest in extra-biblical revelation. Millions influenced by charismatic doctrine are convinced God speaks to them directly all the time. Indeed, many seem to believe direct revelation is the main means through which God communicates with His people. 'The Lord told me.....' has become a favorite cliché of experience-driven evangelicals.'⁵⁰

'The notion that God is constantly giving extra-biblical messages and fresh revelation to Christians today is practically the sine qua non of charismatic belief. According to the typical charismatic way of thinking, if God is not speaking privately, directly, and regularly to each individual believer, He is not truly immanent. Charismatics will therefore fiercely defend all manner of prophecies, even though it is an undeniable fact that these supposed revelations from on high are often—one might say—usually—erroneous, misleading, and even dangerous.'⁵¹ "Put simply, modern prophecy is no more reliable in discerning truth than a Magic Eight Ball, tarot cards, or a Ouija board. And, it should be added, it is equally superstitious. There is no warrant anywhere in Scripture for Christians to listen for fresh revelation from God beyond what He has already given us in His

⁴⁹ Ibid, page 150

⁵⁰ Strange Fire, By John MacArthur, Thomas Nelson, page 113.

⁵¹ Ibid, page 114

written Word. Going back to Deuteronomy 18, Scripture unsparingly condemns all who speak even one word falsely or presumptuously in the Lord's name. But such warnings are simply disregarded these days by those who claim to have heard afresh from God.⁵²

6. The last point I want to make about apostles is that they have an eternal and unique place of honor. Pay attention to **Revelation 21:14, 'The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.'** 'The names of the twelve apostles are sealed forever into the wall of the New Jerusalem in heaven. (Theologians can argue whether the twelfth spot should go to Paul or Matthias or possibly to both.) Their names are unique; their office is unique; their ministry is unique; the miracles they did are unique. The apostles were unquestionably a special breed; they had no successors. The age of the apostles and what they did is forever in the past.'⁵³

So, to all of the Peter Wagners and other charismatics or wild Pentecostals, the day of the apostles is over. But, I will allow and yes, promote the role of the true servant of God who fulfills the meaning of the word apostle, which is 'the sent one' or 'missionary.' The Lord knows so very well that our mission fields are begging for true 'sent ones' to go to the fields and tell the lost world about how Jesus is the only way to heaven. And the greatest demonstration of His divine power is not in the physical healings or new revelations some phony servants come up with, but this demonstration of His saving power is when Jesus Christ saves a person and then comes into that new-born believer's heart and empowers him to live for Christ and tell others about Him. Pay attention to the following Scripture. **'Then saith he unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.'** (Matthew 9:37-38) What we truly need is not more so-called apostles who want to draw attention to themselves and steal the money of truly fickle people from our church congregations, but we need compassionate, and passionate people who will become soul-winners and take the true Gospel to the lost world. As I have already stated in this book, "we need people who will have on their hearts what Jesus has on His; the souls of men, women, boys and girls."⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid, page 115

⁵³ Charismatic Chaos, by John MacArthur, page 151

⁵⁴ The Chaotic Crisis In The Contemporary Church, By: Dr. Stan Frye, Systel Publishing, pages 50-54.

Therefore folks, we took up a little time and space to provide some very important information about apostles. But now, let's look at verse 28 once more. In addition to describing the spiritual gift of apostleship, Paul now mentions some of the same gifts we discussed earlier in this chapter. Those gifts were prophecy, working miracles, gifts of healings, and diversities of tongues. Then, he adds here in this text the gifts of teaching, the gift of helps, and the gift of governments. Of course these latter gifts Paul mentions are to be used to edify the body of Christ as he mentioned earlier, in addition to all of the other gifts.

Then, we read on in verses 29-30, where Paul asks some questions with obvious answers. Do all believers have the same gifts? The obvious answer is absolutely not. If this were true, then we would really have a parading of the flesh in attempt to demonstrate their gifted superiority in our churches. So, the answer is: we all don't have the same gift or gifts, and no person has all of the gifts.

Let me now give you the remaining points about every Christian being a useful person.

1. Each person in the body of Christ is given a divine gift v. 28
2. Each person in the body of Christ is given a different gift. vs. 29-30
3. Each person in the body of Christ is given a dynamic gift. v. 31

In the last verse, 31, Paul told the Corinthian believers that they should covet earnestly the best gifts. "'Coveting the gifts' (zeloo) means to have a strong affection towards' or 'to be ardently devoted to' it may, in fact, mean 'envious' or 'covetous' and is so translated on occasion. Here it is better rendered 'ardently desire spiritual gift.' However, there was a particular kind of spiritual gift that the Corinthians were told to desire—namely, the best spiritual gift.' There is no way to avoid the clear intention of Paul in this text. He was indicating that some spiritual gifts were intrinsically of greater value than others. Those gifts which involved continuing ministry to the church of God would naturally be of greater significance than those which affected his physical life. In this regard, the gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, and miracles would all fall into the category of the less important gifts, while gifts such as teaching, prophecy, counseling (governments), and others would have strategic importance for the spiritual development of the life of the church."⁵⁵

When Paul told the believers that he was going to show them a much better way, he told them that even the best spiritual gifts could not compare with the more excellent way. Some believe this last phrase was intended to be with the beginning of the next chapter on love. But, it doesn't really matter because Paul's more excellent way was indeed that love was more important than any other of the gifts. Thus, the people should stop their murmuring and whining, and begin to demonstrate love to one another. We will see much about this amazing love in the next chapter. May we vow today to love others like Jesus loved us!

⁵⁵ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, pages 227-228.

Conclusion

As we conclude this Chapter 12, I would just say that during this entire chapter we have covered so many problems that Paul was trying to help solve in the church at Corinth. The people were acting like children, and they were trying to parade their spiritual gifts. Truthfully, they were filled with pride and they were just being ego-centric and just plain wicked, while at the same time they were trying to prove how spiritual they were because of the superiority of their particular gift or gifts. They were just destroying the unity of the church.

Therefore, Paul basically just tells them to grow up in the Lord, and start aiming for unity in the body. They needed to understand that no gift was superior to any other that another person might have. So, there was no place in the body of Christ for this kind of carnal behavior.

The one thing that most of the trouble-making professing Christians had forgotten was that whatever gift or gifts plural they were given by God, they were given these gifts to edify the body and encourage others to become more committed in their service to our Lord. Paul used the importance of every limb and every organ of the body to illustrate the value of every person in the body. The truth he was trying to get across to the Corinthians was that every person's gift was very valuable to the flock, but no one's gift or gifts gave any room for parading themselves. Therefore, the people needed to come together and love and respect one another as we will see so explicitly in the next chapter. So, my dear readers, I do hope and pray that you have gleaned much from the study of this chapter, and I pray that everyone of us, if we are really saved, will be humbled by what we have learned from this study, and that our primary goal will not be to put our gifts on display, but rather that we will demonstrate love to our church family, with the ultimate goal of having a good testimony to others, both in the church and outside as well.

Chapter Nineteen

"Loving The Biblical Way"

Scripture: I Corinthians 13:1-13

Introduction

We now will continue the study of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians by moving into Chapter 13. Truthfully, most scholars of the Bible believe that the last portion of Chapter 12, verse 31, should be in Chapter 13. However, I don't see that this should be a major issue at all. We know that this came about probably because of the fact that in the original writings, there were no chapter divisions or verse indications. Thus, we just simply need to see that in Chapter 13, Paul is going to share with the divided and confused Corinthian believers over the gifts of the spirit that the main thing we must strive for is to love others according to God's plan.

You see folks, we can have the greatest spiritual gifts in man's opinion, but still be mean and rude in the use of this great gift. So, right in the middle of the confusion in Chapter 12 about the spiritual gifts, and an even greater confusion in Chapter 14 about the use of counterfeit gifts, Paul just simply nails down the truth about the importance of love.

It doesn't matter how gifted we are, or how many accomplishments we have had by using our gifts, if we have not demonstrated genuine "agape" love in using our gifts in the body of Christ, then, our work has been useless. Therefore, in this short upcoming Chapter 13, we are going to see the depth of loving people with the unconditional "agape" love of God. I don't know what might shock you in this chapter, but I can tell you that personally I was really taken back by some of the things God has taught me from this text. So now, let's move forward with this study and learn all we can about "Loving The Biblical Way." Or, we might even entitle this chapter study as "Paul's Compassion For The Corinthian Charismatics." I used this title while teaching on this subject matter in a large Bishops' and Wives' seminar in Uganda several years ago for the Church of Uganda, which is an Anglican Church. The reason I was teaching this seminar for these church leaders was because they couldn't understand why they were losing so many young Anglican Church members to the "wild Pentecostalism" which has swept through Africa. I do sincerely believe that with the help of Jesus, I was able to help and encourage these church leaders! Now, let's dig into the text!

I. LOVING THE BIBILICAL WAY CAUTIONS AGAINST MECHANICAL LABORING. vs. 1-3.

In the next few verses, we are going to see a little frustration demonstrated by Paul with the Corinthians. I say this because of how these verses begin. Paul begins in verse 1 by telling the people that it doesn't matter how many languages a person can speak, even if it were the language of angels, nothing will ever be accomplished in presenting the Gospel which the speaking in unknown languages was designed for, if the Gospel presentation is not bathed in genuine Christ-given

love. What Paul is saying in this first verse is that if there is no love, then ever thing we do is just mechanical and has no genuine compassion in it. You might say that the Corinthian believers were just simply parading their gifts before the congregation with one person trying to out do the others. Seriously, I would say that these people were simply playing a spiritual game for their own attention. Thus, I am inclined to believe that many of them weren't even saved. They were just professing and masquerading that they were believers.

A. Talking without love is wasted. v. 1

Another great truth brought out in verse 1 is that when we operate our lives and use our spiritual gifts without true agape love, we are just simply wasting our efforts. I say this because love is so preeminent over any words that we might say. Also, when we study the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, it was always done with love and compassion. Of course, I know that Jesus got mad with righteous anger toward the Pharisees and Sadducees on a few occasions, but He did not sin. Thus, we too have the right to get angry with sin, but we must love the sinner. And too, most of these people who commit horrible sins are operating out of ignorance because of the sin nature they have as result of the Fall of Adam and Eve.

Therefore, may I ask all of you readers if you show love when you talk about the Gospel to others? Or, is it merely out of habit or cold ritualistic programmed presentations? Why, I have known many good Christians who go out witnessing to share the Gospel regularly, but some of them do it from a preconceived plan or formula which they have repeated so much that they can do it by heart, but they don't show genuine love to the prospects. When this happens, this is love wasted!

B. Telling without love is wasted. v. 2a

In the first part of verse 2, Paul reiterates just what I told you in the above paragraph. We may even have the gift of prophecy and be able to confront sin, preach the truth, and declare the Gospel message, but if there is no genuine love, the effort is wasted.

C. Talent without love is wasted. 2b

In the second part of this verse, Paul shares three very important things. He tells the Corinthian believers that even if they have the gift of understanding mysteries and also the gift of knowledge, these things are unimportant if we don't share the love of Christ when we share with others what God has given us. You see folks, it doesn't matter how much knowledge and wisdom God might give you, if when you share this information with other people, it must be bathed in genuine love.

Let me give you some additional thoughts about the first two verses from Dr. John Philips, who is now with Jesus in heaven. "Paul begins here with the need for love (I Cor. 13:1-3). He raises two problems. First, there is the possibility one might possess great gifts—without love (13:1-2). For instance, one might possess great

gifts of communication (13:1). He might possess the ability to speak with different tongues (languages): **'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal' (v. 1).** The case is only supposed. The word 'though' (if) is followed by the subjunctive mood, and it expresses a hypothetical but possible condition. The future will prove whether or not such was the case. The languages are known languages (Acts 2:7-8), human languages. We have no way of knowing whether or not angels speak a heavenly language, of their own. There is no reason why they should not do so. Paul is simply saying that although he was able to speak such a language, that in itself would prove nothing. The acid test of genuine Christianity is not language, but love. It is no accident, of course, that he put 'tongues' first here. Paul put it first to show its utter worthlessness if not exercised in love. All 'tongues' does, if not accompanied by love, is produce noise. He likens such tongues-speaking to a booming gong or a clanging cymbal, both of which instruments simply make a noise. The Corinthians of course, were all too familiar with pagan rituals and ceremonials which employed these instruments to produce much noise, but apart from any sense. 'Tongues,' without love, become a mere discordant, obtrusive, and an annoying noise, almost entirely without significance."⁵⁶

D. Treasure without love is wasted. v. 3a

As a born-again Christian, where do you spend your money? Do you spend it on yourself and family, or do you make sure that you invest in eternity by giving a tithe to your local church, and then, investing additional funds in winning people to Christ and helping those who are suffering? If you are faithfully helping those who are poor, but you do not have love for those you are helping, you are wasting your treasure. You see, God's only gives money to individuals and families for three purposes. First, He gives us money to give tithes and offerings to our local churches. Secondly, He gives us money to take care of our families with housing, clothing, food, medical assistance, and also, to educate our children and grand children. Thirdly, God gives us money to invest abundantly in His Kingdom's work. This demands that our priorities be concerned with eternal things, rather than selfish earthly things. It means that we spend everything we possibly can on evangelism efforts, world missions, and in helping the poor as a means of sharing Christ with them. But, we can do all of this and not have genuine agape love, and this effort is worthless. Truly, God does provide treasure for us according to how we use what He gives us. And, if we don't use what He has given us with an attitude of love and compassion, our works are in vain and wasted.

E. Trials without love is wasted. v. 3b

Many people who have given their lives to Christ down through the past 2,000 plus years have been tortured and killed for the cause of Christ. People like Polycarp, who was the great pastor at the church of Smyrna during the second

⁵⁶ Exploring First Corinthians, By: John Philips, Kregel Publishers, page 287.

century was a tremendous man of God. But, because of his dynamic faith, he was burned to death after being stabbed with a sword. Polycarp would not deny his faith in Jesus, but was willing to be martyred because he loved Jesus so much. We know this is not true, but if Polycarp or any other martyr died without agape love in their hearts for even their murderers, their trial and death were wasted. In other words, trials and martyrdom will not profit the person who is beaten and killed, unless there was genuine love for Christ and love for others. And, we never should believe that it will take these kind of barbaric actions in order to prove that we love Jesus and others. Our every day lives should manifest this unconditional love for everyone whom God created; even the wicked violent people that are causing so much trouble in our American nation right now. May I ask, "Are you wasting your suffering, or are you loving Jesus and others more because of what you have gone through?" God allows trials to come our way so that we can feel the hurt that others feel, and show love to the suffering. He also allows trials to help strengthen us in our daily lives, but if we respond negatively to these trials and show no love, the pain and agony we go through will be for no good reason. Let's not waste the trials that God allows to come our way.

II. LOVING THE BIBLICAL WAY IS CHARACTERIZED BY MATURE LOVING. vs. 4-8

Now, let's move forward to our second point about this wonderful agape love of God. In verses 4-8, we are going to be discovering that Paul was telling the Corinthian believers that true agape love (unconditional love) would manifest itself in many evident ways. And, it is very obvious that if a child of God reaches the point to where love dominates his or her life, then, this same believer will demonstrate maturity in their Christian lives.

So, our conclusion is this. Regardless of the spiritual gifts and talents which God gives to us, unless we use these spiritual gifts and talents in a loving way, all we do will be in vain. Therefore, we need to just take a look at these next verses and see how mature love in Christ surely reveals itself to others as we minister and serve Christ faithfully.

A. Mature loving is patient. (suffereth long) v. 4a

As we look at the first statement in this verse, I must tell you that I have always had a type A personality, which means that I am passionate and sometimes even aggressive in the service of my Lord. Thus, I confess that I get very impatient with others at times because they don't seem to be passionate about the service of our Lord. But yet, I know that I am not going to pray for patience because in **Romans 5:3-4**, the Bible says these words, "**And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience hope.**" So, I am not going to ask for patience, because God may just send me additional tribulation. However, I do know that if we are filled with the love of Christ because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, then, we will be patient with others; and truthfully this is a true sign of maturity in the Lord.

B. Mature loving is propitious. (is kind) v. 4b

In the next two words of verse 4, we find the words "is kind." The tense of this short statement seems to be a present tense verb, which implies that when we have true agape love, we will constantly be kind and continue to be kind to those around us. And, when we use our gifts or talents, we will do so with a spirit of love. Without this spirit of love, regardless of what gifts or talents we have, there will be no lasting value to what we do with these gifts and talents.

Now, I believe this would be a good time for me to insert some wonderful information about the different kinds of love in the Greek language, and to show the words that are used for love in the Bible. Please notice what Dr. Paige Patterson wrote in his commentary on First Corinthians.

"The word translated 'charity' in the King James Version is agape. The Greeks used four different words to describe love. Eros is the word which has been borrowed by the English language as 'erotic,' signifying sexual love, often of a licentious variety. Although the word eros in Greek certainly encompassed sexual love, it was in no sense limited to that form of love. Rather, as Andes Nygren points out in his book, eros is simply appetitive love—love to satisfy a craving or appetite. Its moral tone is neutral, as such, but due to human selfishness and greed often becomes a negative word. Storge was most often used by the Greeks for the love of the family. Philos was principally the love of friendship. It can be demonstrated that there are times when particularly philos and agape are used virtually interchangeably. Nevertheless, agape, in its essence, was the very opposite of eros. While eros appetitive, focusing on satisfying personal desires, agape was concerned only with focusing on the object of its affection. As John Colet wrote in 1496 or 1497, 'Charity is the flower of faith.'⁵⁷

Let me give you one of the greatest examples of caring propitious love that has ever been known. Dr. Ray Stedman told the following story. "My friend, Dr. Stephen Olford, was born in Zambia, the son of English missionaries, Frederick and Bessie Olford. His father died when Stephen was a young boy, and his mother took him from Africa to England aboard a tramp steamer. Just a few days into the two-week voyage, one of the seamen was injured. His wound festered and smelled so terribly that the other seamen refused to go near him. There were no medicines to treat the man, so he was placed out on the deck to die. In his agony, the man cursed and screamed, but his shipmates refused to help other than to pass food to him at the end of a pole.

Bessie Olford, Stephen's mother, took pity on this man and went upon the deck. Braving the stench, she took a basin of warm water and washed the puss and dead flesh from the man's wound. As she ministered to him, the man cursed her, just as he had cursed everyone else on the ship. But Bessie cared for him throughout the voyage.

⁵⁷ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 231.

Finally, they docked in London, and the man hobbled off the ship. In response to Bessie Olford's patient, persistent agape love for him, the man gave his life to Christ—and he became Mrs. Olford's servant for the rest of his life."⁵⁸

I would say, folks, that this is one of the greatest demonstrations of God's agape love and kindness ever shown to another human being, except of course, the love that Jesus manifested when He died on the cross for all of us.

C. Mature loving is pleasant. (envieth not) v. 4c

When people are happy and content with what God has given to them, they don't spend their time envying what other people have. They don't envy wealth, success, achievement, power, or position. And truthfully, they don't covet better gifts or talents trying to become better than others. You see, when people have the love of Christ dwelling in them in His fullness, they are pleasant and satisfied with what they are and have. Therefore, Paul is telling the Corinthian believers here in verse four that when people have a genuine mature love, they become satisfied and happy people.

D. Mature loving is poor. (vaunteth not itself) v. 4d

When I use the word poor here, I am not talking about poor as far as money is concerned. But I am talking about humility and a meek spirit before our brothers and sisters in Christ, and yes, even in our dealing with those who are lost. In other words, if we are filled with the love of Jesus, then we will demonstrate that love with a meek and kind behavior toward all others. Now of course, this doesn't mean that we never will stand up for truth, but it does mean that to the best of our ability, when we are required to come forth and stand for truth, we will do our best to stand with love; even in an unpleasant situation.

E. Mature loving is pure. (unseemly) v. 5a

The word unseemly in the Greek means to behave in an uncomely way. The dictionary defines this word as indecent, rude, or vulgar. Therefore, Paul is trying to get the Corinthians to stop behaving in such away that they stop acting like genuine Christians, and begin to practice offensive and ungodly behavior in their dealings with others. The opposite of unseemly is acting in a non-rude way and showing courtesy to other people. And these mature Christians will behave like they should be living a life focused on purity and demonstrating a life that is beyond reproach.

My friends, I want to say that this is a difficult demand on our lives sometimes when we have really been hurt. But, let me tell you that even in these hurtful times, we must live our lives following the example of Jesus when He said from the cross, **"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."**

(Luke 23:34) Yes, it is truly hard to love and forgive those who have hurt you, but we must learn to do this if we are going to exemplify Jesus.

⁵⁸ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedmon, DHP, page 190.

F. Mature loving is passionate. (seeketh not her own) v. 5b

"Then, too, love is never exacting: 'Love.....seeketh not her own.' Love is not selfish. Love does not pursue its own interests. It does not insist on having its own way. When Abraham's and Lot's cattle began to multiply so that there was acrimonious squabbling among their herdsmen for the available pasturage, Abraham was quick to put a stop to it. He recognized the fact that the unsaved were looking on and taking note. He magnanimously suggested that he and Lot divide the land between them and go their separate ways. He generously told Lot he could have first choice. The land was all his. God had deeded it to him, not to Lot. But 'love seeketh not her own.' Abraham was not long in learning that God rewards such unselfishness. He at once reaffirmed that all the land was Abraham's, including the eastern vales that Lot had so eagerly chosen for himself (Gen. 13:14-18). Love does not insist on having its own way. It does not seek its own advancement. As Drummond says, 'There is no happiness in having, or in getting, but only in giving. Half the world is on the wrong scent in the pursuit of happiness. They think it consists in having and getting and in being served by others.'"⁵⁹

So, therefore my friends, do you have passion about the success of others? Now, this is a big question that we must answer! Are we truly passionate about showing our love and demonstrating our gifts and talents on the behalf of others? If we aren't, we are not showing agape love like Jesus truly shared to us. It is one thing to be passionate. It is another thing to be passionate about helping others, especially by presenting to them the Gospel.

G. Mature loving is powerful. (is not easily provoked) v. 5c

Mature love within the heart of a dedicated child of God will cause that person to stand strong and be able to withstand many mighty attacks of Satan. The reason this is possible is that within every one of us who is saved, we have the power of the mighty Holy Spirit to help us be strong when others are being weak. Also, this mighty love within is able to help us look over the evil that others try to do to us, and go on with our lives and ministries. I write this because this has had to happen for my dear wife and me down through our many years of ministry. Many have been the attacks orchestrated by the devil and his colleagues, but, even if we get discouraged and want to give up, God will provide His true love within us in order for us to love and not hate. And, with this love, we will not be as prone to retaliate; although I will admit that sometimes I really would like to. In other words, the struggle is His and not ours!

H. Mature loving is proper. (thinketh no evil) v. 5d-6

⁵⁹ Exploring I Corinthians, By: John Philips, Kregel, page 292.

This thought of loving those who do us evil without wanting and planning revenge toward them is just the right and proper thing for a child of God to do if he or she wants to act like Jesus. And folks, verse 6 reminds us that we should not even rejoice when those who have hurt us are hurt by others. Now, this is extremely difficult. Why? Because it gets down into the depths of who we really are. Are we truly mature and loving toward all people, or do we want to celebrate when God finally gives those mean people their justice due. I realize this is truly a hard attitude and conduct to demonstrate, but the only way that this is truly proper is that we be so filled with the power of the Holy Spirit that we will do the right or proper thing, even when it is not easy to do so. Remember the following verse: "**There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love (I John 4:18).**" This is a tremendous verse which so expands the thought of the entire chapter 13, which we are studying. When we are filled with the love of Christ for others, even those who might hate us and criticize us, we can overlook their faults and evil and treat them the kind and proper way. Yes, it is very hard, but it is possible!

Maybe this would be a good time for us to make a new commitment to even love those who spitefully use us. We can't do in the flesh, but we can do it in the power of the Holy Spirit Who lives within us.

I. Mature loving is positive. (beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things). v. 7

This verse is filled with an enormous amount of truth. It lists four positive things that a person who is mature and loving will demonstrate.

1. First, this loving mature person will put up with unbelievable stress and problems just because he or she is filled with God's love.

2. Secondly, this loving mature person will believe that good is coming, even when others don't have any hope. In other words, this kind of mature loving Christian will be able to look beyond the present and know that the best is truly yet to come. And, when others think that there is nothing good that can happen, this person will believe in spite of the terrible circumstances he or she is in.

3. Thirdly, this loving mature person will have hope when no one else does. This person will believe in God's ability to yet bring good to happen on his or her part, even when present time circumstances are bleak.

Just as an illustration, many years ago shortly after the terrible genocide in Rwanda in 1993, God gave me the desire to write a Gospel tract entitled, "When All Hope Is Gone," and I did write this tract, and we have translated it into many African languages. And, more important at the time, we distributed thousands and thousands of this booklet in Rwanda following the blood bath of the genocide, and multitudes of people have been saved and given new hope as the result of this tract. May I tell you that not one of us will ever enjoy life unless we have a love within us which causes us to look beyond the present despair unto the good that God is going

to bring to us in the future. We need to be filled with this dynamic love and we need to believe indeed that the best is yet to come.

4. Fourthly, this loving mature person with the help of our Savior will be resolute and determined to endure all of the difficulties and hurts that come our way. Just remember that in the Corinthian Church, there were those who hurt others by parading their gifts and abilities. Sometimes, they would even shame or embarrass those whom these high and mighty super-spiritual people looked down on with a condescending attitude. Brothers and sisters, if we have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit attesting the fact that we are truly saved, then we have access to the might loving power of God to help us put up with, endure, suffer, and withstand all the ugly and hurtful things that might come our way.

J. Mature loving is perpetual. (continuous, undying, immortal, imperishable, never-ending) v. 8

Most things in life will always cease to be. But, this is not true with genuine love. This genuine mature love will last on and on, and it will bear fruit not only when it is demonstrated, but also, for years to come. This mature love will outlast the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the giftedness of individuals, and even the gifts and the talents of those who can use these gifts and talents extremely well. Therefore, it should inspire and encourage us to want to make a difference, even after we are gone. May I say to you that this is one of the reasons I am writing this commentary. I am praying that long after I am gone, my books and writings might be in existence in order to inspire others to be passionate about the study of God's Word, the proclamation of the Gospel, and carrying on the legacy which I hope to leave behind. All languages shall cease. All gifts will never last forever. All talents will one day die. But, there is a great truth implied in this verse which Paul was trying to get across to the believers in Corinth. That implication was that one day there would be a completed volume called the sacred Scriptures, and there would be no more need for many of the signs which were used to verify the Gospel message which Jesus and all of His disciples proclaimed.

Now, I know that multitudes of scholars and interpreters have tried to deny that Paul in this passage was telling the Christians that a completed written book would one day be finished, and these temporary gifts would no longer be needed. There would not need to be signs and wonders and the gift of miracles to give credibility of God's Word. All that would be needed to understand the Gospel message was the conviction of our sins, confession of the fact that we are sinners by nature, a repentance and turning away from our sinful life, and then, there needed to be heart-felt belief in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died, was buried, and arose from the grave. Let me quickly give you some wonderful verses that verify what I am saying in this paragraph. **"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is**

made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:8-13). Folks, these verses are truly the great plan of salvation, and, no one can ever be saved without the truth of this Gospel message. All men of every race and rank must come to Jesus Christ the same way. And Paul knew, obviously through divine revelation, that one day God would present His completed word, and when any person would believe by faith the truth of that coming book, and repent, that individual would be saved for eternity.

So, let's get the picture. Paul had been dealing with the tremendously problematic church in Corinth. They seemed to have fought over everything. But the one thing that Paul had been focusing on in Chapter 12, and also, in this Chapter 13, was the misuse of the gifts of the Spirit whereby people professing to be genuine Christians were being braggadocios and arrogant about who had the best spiritual gifts. Paul candidly confronted the people in Corinth by telling them that there were no super-gifts, and therefore, no gift or person bearing a gift, was any more important than another. He just wanted them to see that love and graciousness were the main things that all the people should be demonstrating if they truly were saved, and had the spiritual gifts. In other words, love was to take priority over all the spiritual gifts. But I also believe very strongly that Paul also was trying to get the people to see that there would come a day out in the future when there would be no need for miraculous gifts to provide credibility to the message of the Gospel, but that the complete revelation of God would be incorporated into the finished Word of God. We will look at this subject a little deeper in the next verse.

I would like for us to take another look at this verse 8, before we move on to the latter verses in this chapter. I didn't mention it in the paragraphs which I have already given you, but it is very important that I remind you that Paul told the Corinthians that some of the gifts of the spirit would one day cease. As I have already mentioned, I believe most of all of the gifts would come to a stop when the Word of God was completed. Therefore, let me give you some tremendous information to help you understand why so many of the first century spiritual gifts are not longer necessary 2,000 years later. Please notice the following eight verse.

"Whether there be tongues (languages), they shall cease; whether there be knowledge (special revelatory knowledge of unrevealed truth), it shall vanish away (I Corinthians 13:8).

Tongues, therefore, shall cease. The word 'cease' in the original is pauo and means literally 'to come to a complete stop.' Also, one commentator has explained that these languages would come to a complete stop in and of themselves. They would not need to be used later in the history of the church when the complete canonization of Scripture had been completed. So, we must conclude that the gifts of speaking in unknowledgeable languages and receiving revelatory messages outside of the written Word of God would no longer be needed after the Bible was completed.

"When that which is perfect is come, the completed Scriptures, then that which is in part or incomplete shall be done away. When the Scripture is completed

with the writing of the last book of the Bible, then that, which was in part shall cease to have its place in the life of the believer. It is the end of special signs, given during the infancy of the Church.

These gifts, then, were for the young infant Church before revelation was complete. Tongues belong to spiritual childhood."⁶⁰

III. LOVING THE BIBLICAL WAY CAUSES MATURE LIVING. vs. 9-12

In these next four verses, we are moving from showing mature loving to the point of living as mature believers. Now, you might ask the question, "Why is Paul talking about the importance of maturity in the Christian life?" Well, the truth is that the Corinthian believers in that first century church were acting like little children arguing about whose gifts were the nicest or the best. So, right here in verses 9-12, Paul just reveals that it is time to put away childishness or immaturity and start behaving and living like mature people in Christ.

A. Paul first reveals that mature living exposes immaturity. vs. 9-10

This great Apostle tells these childish professing believers that it is time to stop acting so childishly, and put these things away. In order for the Corinthians or any believers to put away immaturity, there first has to be an admission that we have not arrived in our Christian lives, and there is much room for growing up. In other words, we must be willing to admit that we are not perfect in any way, whether it be physically, intellectually, spiritually, or in any other area. There will always be room for growing, and if we are serious about our growth, then we must confess that we have much to learn.

In verse 9, Paul tells the believers in Corinth that it was time to put away the incomplete gifts of knowledge and prophecy. Now, I have already told you earlier in this book that I believe there was indeed a spiritual gift in those days whereby God gave some people special revelation to some of His servants. Truthfully, I believe this is how Paul got so much from our Lord, and I know that John on the Isle of Patmos received great visions, whereby Jesus showed him things that must come to pass. But, once the Word of God, Old and New Testaments, were completed, there was no longer any need for this spiritual gift. Thus, I don't believe it is in operation today, but I do believe that God endows some of His Bible students and servants with a special gift to understand the truth of the Word of God. But now, it is the wonderful Holy Spirit that opens up the Word to those who have the desire to learn it.

Also, we are told in this verse that even with the gift of prophecy, the Word was incomplete. In other words, the Bible had not been completed, therefore, but when it became completed, then there would be no need for the strong revelatory preaching that was given by God to His choice servants. Instead, the men of God would study diligently the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit would illuminate the

⁶⁰ Studies In First Corinthians, By: M.R. DeHaan, Zondervan, page 164.

truth of God's Word, not only about the sin in the present, but also, about the things that would come to pass later.

May I say to you once more, that God has given me the gift of prophecy, but it is not receiving supernatural revelations from God about the future, but it is given so that I and others who might have the same gift, will have the boldness and courage to cry out against sin in this generation when most preachers are reluctant or afraid to do so. So, the gift of prophecy in the first century is no longer in operation as it was then.

So, what do we conclude about these mentioned gifts? We must conclude that these gifts were temporary, especially those relating to special knowledge and prophecy, but they are not needed today because the Bible has been completed, and we have the illumination of the Holy Spirit available to us to show us the truth of the Scriptures. Therefore, we must conclude that it is truly childish behavior to see and hear some of these people claiming to have received great visions and dreams outside the truth of the Word of God. I would say that these men, and yes, some women like Joyce Meyer and Beth Moore, are deceptive charlatans who are merchandising the Gospel and stealing, without shame, the money from God's people.

Now, let's look at verse 10. This is one of the most argued over verses in the entire Bible. Most of the preachers I have ever heard preach about this verse, believe that **"that which is to come, then that which is in part shall be done away with,"** is talking about the return of our Lord. Even some of my former pastors believed and preached this. But, I don't believe this at all, because of the fact that Paul was not making a comparison about what we might know now compared to what we will know when we get our perfect bodies and live in heaven. I just don't believe this at all! I believe that the interpretation of this verse should refer to the spiritual knowledge and understanding which Paul and the early church had which was very immature and imperfect. Thus, there had to be a better understanding of God and His will that would come at a later day. Well, this is exactly what happened when the written Word of God was completed. But, much to my dismay, we now have ignorant people telling us that we can't use the written Word of God to win people to Christ, because some people can't read and there are others that are too immature to understand it. I sincerely believe that this move away from God's written Word, which is called the Oratorical Movement, is straight out of the pits of hell, and is being used by Satan to get people away from the written Word of God. And yet, our own Lord Jesus Christ used the written word from the Book of Deuteronomy to fight Satan down in the Judean wilderness as we discover in Matthew, Chapter four. So, if Jesus needed the written Word of God to combat Satan, we better stick with the written Word of God.

Let me give you the comments of the great Evangelist, Oliver B. Greene, about this verse. **"That which is perfect,"** refers to the Word of God in it's completion. When the faith 'once delivered unto the saints' (Jude 3) had come, fully and

completely, when the Scriptures were completed (all sixty-six books of the Word of God) then nothing could be added. God's Word is Perfect."⁶¹

And, I would add just one more thought about this verse. The word "that" used here in this verse is an adjective, which has no gender. Therefore, because it is neuter in gender, this word that could not possibly refer to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So my friends, it is time that we open our eyes and understand what Paul was trying to get the Corinthians to understand. That is, if we are going to be mature believers, then we better start acting like it. The childish and immature things must be put away, and we must help expose these childish things by our own maturity in Christ. Thus, some of those spiritual gifts, which were given in the first century, are to be done away with today. Let's grow up and really begin to act like enlightened mature believers in the service of our Lord.

B. Paul next reveals that mature living erases immaturity. vs. 11-12

Well folks, as we come to these two verses, we see sarcasm dripping from the pen of Paul the Apostle. He tells the Corinthian misfits that when he was a child he spoke as a child, he understood as a child, and he thought as a child. But when he grew up, he put away these childish things. Paul just simply let the Corinthians have it. He was telling them, and he is telling us today, to stop acting like children and begin to behave as mature Christians. What he was trying to get across to the Corinthians was that they were acting like kids and he wanted them to move on and grow up in the Lord.

Verse 12 tells us that Paul told the Corinthians that at the present time that he was writing to them during that first century that he didn't and couldn't understand fully and completely all that God had for him. But, he knew that one day when the written Word of God was completed, he would be able to see himself in the mirror of God's Word and see what he really looked like. Please notice the following words from Dr. M.R. DeHaan once more.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child." We must remember that Paul is still speaking about the gifts of the Spirit and particularly about the gifts of tongues. But now since the complete revelation of God is ours, we have put away these childish things, and find in the Word of God all and everything that we need for salvation, sanctification, joy and service, and we ask for no more from the Lord.

Till revelation was complete, believers saw through a glass darkly, but now we have the full face-to-face revelation of the Lord Jesus in the Word. We now not only have part of the Bible, and therefore know in part, but we now have all of the Bible so that we may know, as we are known. Our Lord wants us to be mature saints of God, not little children."⁶²

Before we move to our last verse in this chapter, I do want to mention that although I believe strongly that that which was to come was indeed the written

⁶¹ The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle To The Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 431.

⁶² Studies in First Corinthians, By. M.R. DeHaan, Zondervan, page 165.

Word of God, I might give a little bit and say that verse 12 might even infer that Paul was looking toward heaven when he would be perfect in understanding, and also that the other saints up there would know everything about him. I won't change my belief about "But that which is perfect is come," referred to the complete written Word of God, but what a marvelous day that is going to be when we get to heaven and know and understand whatever we need to know.

IV. LOVING THE BIBLICAL WAY CALCULATES MAJOR LEARNING. v. 13

What is the greatest calculation that we can have about our learning experience here on earth as believers. Paul just simply tells the Corinthians that faith, hope, and charity (agape love) will abide, the greatest of these is the love. So, when we grow up in the Lord and become spiritually mature, then we won't be comparing our spiritual gifts one with another, but we will calculate and conclude that the greatest thing we could ever learn is to love without partiality and segregation. We are to love the lovely, the unlovely, those who support us, and yes, even those who oppose us. The truth is that we can only do this if we consciously remember that the greatest of all of these attributes is love; the unconditional love of Christ working within us and through us!

Conclusion

Well, we did it! We got through chapters 12-13, and hopefully we have now come to the conclusion that there is very little room for pride, but there is much room for loving Jesus, and yes, loving others as well. Obviously, there were major problems in the church at Corinth, and Paul was trying so hard from a distance to help solve the problems. But as we all know, if problems are to be solved, there has to be some people who are willing to admit their wrong, and then be willing for Christ to change their hearts. But, if this is to happen, there must be brokenness and meekness, and there has to be confession of sin. And, I am sorry to say that there wasn't much brokenness and meekness in the church at Corinth. We will see this completely when we start into chapter 14. When we begin the study of the next chapter, we are going to see pseudo-piety on parade as the people try to convince Paul that they do have a new gift of tongues, and it ends up being a counterfeit of the true gift of languages which we discussed in chapters 12 and 13.

As I have studied this portion of God's Word for years and years, I have really come to appreciate the dilemma and difficulties which Paul encountered in dealing with the Corinthian Church. This church was no doubt one of the most problematic, if not the worst problematic, church which Paul planted and tried to help during his 18 months of ministry in the city of Corinth.

We just need to remember the main thing that Paul tried to get across to the Corinthian Church, and that was that if they were going to be used by God, regardless of what gifts or talents God might have given them, they had to exude agape love for everyone that they dealt with and tried to minister to. Yes, we need to remember that if there is no genuine godly love for those to whom we try to

minister, than all of our efforts will be in vain. And yes, I do admit that sometimes it is very difficult to love some of those who give us so many problems. But, we have been told by Jesus to love those who don't love us, and to allow our Godly love to be much greater than any hatred, revenge, or even bad feelings that we might have toward those who have rebuffed what we have tried to teach, and also, those who may have criticized us and been indecent with us. So, let's move on to the problematic Chapter 14, and once we complete this difficult chapter, then we can press on to study the resurrection of Christ which Paul addresses in Chapter 15.

Chapter Twenty

"The Comparison Between Tongues And Prophecy"

Scripture: I Corinthians 14:1-40

Introduction

Well today, we will begin our study of First Corinthians, Chapter 14, which I believe is one of the most difficult chapters in the entire Bible to interpret. We have just covered Chapters 12 and 13, and hopefully, we came to understand that regardless of what spiritual gift or gifts God gave each of us at the moment of salvation, we must understand that there are no super gifts to be paraded before the world. Instead, we are to allow the love of Christ to dwell richly inside of us, and then use our gifts to share the love of Christ with the lost world. And also, we have a God-given responsibility to share our gifts with the body of Christ (the church) in a loving compassionate way. Paul told the Corinthians that true agape love was greater than any other attributes, gifts, talents or abilities, because of the overwhelming difference that this love can make in the lives of others.

But now, we have another terrific problem in the church at Corinth which just complicates the entire issue of gifts which Paul had dealt with earlier on in this letter. This problem was about a counterfeit language which the Corinthians were bragging that God had given to them. They insisted that this counterfeit tongue was a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that it was a secret prayer language, and not just another known language which Paul had tried to explain in Chapter 12. These people in Corinth were just absolutely ridiculous about this "so-called" secret language. Thus, Paul had to deal with this huge problem by confronting those in the church who would not use common spiritual sense in dealing with this divisive problem in their assembly. So, Paul spent a lot of time writing these 40 verses in Chapter 14, just trying to get this mess cleared up about an "unknown tongue" that the Corinthians were supposed to have been given. We will dig deeply into this long text, and with the help of God, I hope we will come to understand how confused, mixed up, and also, how somewhat belligerent the Corinthians were about this counterfeit gift!

I think I should mention right here that there is no difference in the churches of today when it comes to tremendous confusion about speaking in an unknown tongue. Our churches here in America, and yes, even on our fields in Africa, are absolutely being destroyed by conflict over this misunderstood conflict. Then too, many churches have left their historical and traditional conservative beliefs about speaking in tongues, and have now bought into the lies of charlatan preachers and teachers. Therefore, we really need to apply ourselves in coming to understand the truth from Chapter 14 here in our study. So, let's get very serious about getting the truth that our Lord is trying to teach us through the great servant, Paul the Apostle.

I. PLEASE NOTICE THE EDIFICATION OF PROPHECY. vs. 1-12

I have already discussed the meaning of the spiritual gift of prophecy earlier in our study of Chapter 12. But, in order to not have any confusion, I want to

mention again what I discussed earlier. I sincerely believe that before the canon of Scripture was completed, there was indeed a spiritual gift of prophecy given to some of the early church believers. I have no doubt but that some of the people who were given this gift did receive divine revelations from God, and that these early prophets did declare the messages of the divine revelations to the family of God. If we don't believe that this was possible and that it surely did happen, then how can we receive the truth of the Old Testament prophets who spoke boldly the messages that God gave them? So, I am totally convinced that before the canon of Scripture was completed with the writing of the Book of Revelation, truly there were Christians that God gave this special gift of prophecy. But, I want to emphasize once more that after the Scriptures were completed, there has been no need for that special gift of receiving revelations that included predicting the future for the people of God. Therefore, what is this gift of prophesy in this dispensation of time. Let me share with you Dr. Oliver B. Greene's understanding of this gift as it relates to the present time in which we live. His explanation will truly reconfirm what I have told you.

"Verse 1: **'Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.'** We are commanded in the outset of this chapter to 'follow after charity.' The second command is that we 'desire spiritual gifts,' with prophesying and speaking in tongues are compared. The reason we are commanded to follow after charity is 'that ye may prophesy'—which, according to the Word of God, is superior to the gift of tongues. In Paul's day, the prophet was not just a minister. He was inspired of the Holy Ghost, and through him God gave revelation relating to the believer and the local assembly. This continued until the New Testament was completed."⁶³

"During the infant days of the Church, God gave His prophets revelations having to do with the new dispensation—the Dispensation of the Grace; but now, since that which is perfect is come, there is no new revelations. All that we need to know about God, eternity, and things having to do with God and ourselves, is recorded in our Bible.

Today the prophet is one who forth tells what has been foretold. God is not anointing men today to give new revelations, because that which is perfect has been revealed and there ARE no new revelations. But God does call and anoint men to forth tell—to give out the good news of the grace of God and salvation by grace, to tell of the keeping power of Jesus, and of the blessed hope of the Church and the individual believer."⁶⁴

However, I will go one step further than Dr. Greene did and say that I do believe that in this dispensation of time, God does call and anoint men of God after giving them the spiritual gift of prophecy to preach the truth of the Word of God, and yes, cry out against sin as required by the Word of God. As I mentioned this before, God has given me the gift of prophecy as one of my four spiritual gifts. Therefore, since the first time I began to preach the Word of God when I was eighteen years old, I have been calling sin as the Bible calls it, and I have courageously given the

⁶³ The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Corinthians, By: Dr. Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 439-440.

⁶⁴ Ibid, page 440.

truth that God wants all people to know. Has this somewhat bold presentation been easy? Well, certainly there have been some rebuttal down through the years, and to be totally honest, some people have gotten mad at me. However, God has blessed this style of preaching and presentation because this is what He called me to do. And, I might add that the longer I live, the fewer prophetic preachers seem to be around. We are living in a "make me feel good," world when it comes to people going to church, listening to the radio, or even watching TV. This generation of people just seems to want to be made to feel comfortable, and not be confronted about its sin. If you don't believe what I am saying, then just think of some of the modern TV preachers who have gathered thousands of hearers by this easy believeism that thrives on political correctness and it is non-offensive. The Joel Osteens, the Joyce Meyers, the Creflo Dollars, the Jessie Duplantises, the Kenneth Copelands, and many more are examples of so called great preachers who have watered down the truth in order to take money from their audiences.

So my friends, as we move on with this study, just remember what Paul was talking about back in the first century when he spoke of the gift of prophecy, and please remember my sincere belief about this gift in the dispensation we are living in. The argument in this chapter really gets strong when prophecy is compared to speaking in tongues.

A. Notice the desirability of prophecy. vs. 1-3

In verse one Paul emphatically tells the Corinthian Church that they should follow after charity (love), and desire spiritual gifts, but of these spiritual gifts, the greatest and most useful is the gift of prophecy. And let me say that I also believe that this gift of prophecy might just simply mean that sometimes God gives men and women the truth of the Gospel just so that they can present it forthrightly and clearly.

1. Prophecy should be desired because of its position. v. 1

Earlier in our study, of the last three chapters, Paul told the Corinthians that they should not covet gifts which they thought were superior, because all gifts are important. But here in verse one, Paul seems to be referring to the effectiveness and productivity (fruitfulness) of the gift of prophecy as compared to other gifts. So, this gift of prophecy is not superior to other gifts necessarily, but its effectiveness and fruitfulness is much greater. You see folks, this gift might even be given to a lay person who just loves to present his or her testimony to others by speaking with the power of the Holy Spirit in order to confront the sin in people's lives, and collectively that might be parading itself in the church assembly. So, the position of this gift of prophecy has more to do with outcome rather than importance.

2. Prophecy should be desired because of its pretense. v. 2

Well folks, we have come now to the main problem that was being displayed in the Corinthian Church. That problem was about a "so-called" spiritual gift which

was mentioned as speaking in an "unknown" tongue. However, we need to know that the word "unknown" was not in the original text, but was added by the King James translators hoping to make it easier to understand. But we need to know that in most written Bibles, the word unknown is in italics, indicating it was not in the original text. Yet, we know that God has supervised the writing of His book, and thus, we must not allow things like this to confuse us. Therefore, let me give you some information that you need to remember as you continue to study the problem about tongues in the Corinthian Church.

What we had in the Corinthian Church was a counterfeit tongue where the people were trying to imitate the Acts 2, speaking in knowledgeable languages, but they just felt like that God had given them an even more spiritual gift of having a special prayer language which they had sought after sometime after they got saved. But, the Bible never mentions an ecstatic prayer language except here where people were confused and I believe, being shown a Satanic counterfeit of the real gift of tongues (languages) which were given for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel languages which the preachers had never learned. The people there on the day of Pentecost literally heard Peter preaching, and when they did hear him, they heard his message in at least the 16 languages of the different Jewish people that were present.

And, I would like to add something based upon what is happening all over the world today causing more and more confusion about tongues. We are now being told by multitudes of wild Pentecostals that the gift of an ecstatic prayer language is the preeminent sign of having been baptized by the Holy Ghost. But folks, this is a lie! We are not baptized by the Holy Ghost sometime after salvation, but we are baptized into the body of Christ at the moment of salvation. You can find this in Romans, Chapter 6. So, the baptism takes place when the Holy Spirit places the newly repentant person in the body of Christ spiritually. Then, there might be a time when some dear servants of God might become more fully surrendered to God's will, and their life and ministry changed because of this new experience, but this is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And, the speaking in tongues mentioned in Acts 2, had nothing to do with an ecstatic prayer language, or yes, even an unknown tongue.

What we know, folks, is that in Isaiah 28:11, it was prophesied that the day would come in Israel when God would supernaturally speak His word to the people in another tongue. Please read this prophetic word which was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. **"For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people (Isaiah 28:11).** When the Holy Spirit came down and empowered Peter to stand and preach that Pentecostal sermon, God fulfilled this Old Testament prophecy by allowing Peter to speak, and people from at least 16 countries heard Peter's message in their own languages. Therefore, the people in Corinth had a counterfeit unknown tongue, but it was nothing like the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost. Thus, their speaking in tongues was a pretense. They were once more parading their so-called super gift, and in the process making fools of themselves. To be very blunt, these people were nothing more than hypocrites.

And so it is today! Everywhere you look, whether on the TV or on the Internet, we find numbers of professing God-called preachers claiming to have a private prayer language, and they publicize this phony behavior indicating that if

you don't speak in an ecstatic gibberish, then you have not been baptized by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must dig deeper into our text and try to uncover what Paul was trying to diagnose and then correct if he could.

3. Prophecy should be desired because of its productivity. v. 3

Let me mention that the word prophecy in this day would be better understood as speaking, preaching, or testifying to the truth of God's Word. Therefore, what Paul is saying in this verse is that whatever spiritual gift God may give us, we are expected to use it to edify the members of the body of Christ. The words that are mentioned here are edification, exhortation, and comfort. These are good words that each of us as believers ought to be doing on behalf of the church, or as it is also called, the body of Christ. We should have the positive attitude that we want to build up and encourage the body of believers, and we should also desire that we do nothing that would divide or alienate any of the church members from each other. Therefore, as we will see in verse 4, when a person uses a so-called spiritual gift just to try to build himself up, or to even parade the flesh, then this is not what the spiritual gifts have been given for. So, the summary of what I have said is that the greatest gifts God has ever given to any of His children is the gifts that will bear fruit in the body; and I believe, even in winning lost people to Christ. Our behavior, with the gifts God has given to us are not for selfish reasons. Thus, we should be able to tell if we are using our spiritual gifts properly by the fruitfulness of our efforts. If our efforts are bringing division and discord, then for sure, we are not using them the way God intended.

B. Notice the design of prophecy. vs. 4-6 (To edify the church)

I have already emphasized the truth that we find here in verse 4. I will repeat what I have just said; the purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the body of Christ, and not to tear it down or cause confusion. Therefore, I would say that we don't have to look very far to determine if we are using our God-given spiritual gifts properly. All we have to do is just to see if people in the family of God are being encouraged and built up in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ by our conduct using our gifts.

1. Prophecy is designed to be unselfish. v. 4

To drive home the true purpose of the spiritual gifts, especially, speaking in any tongue is simply to edify the church and to not use any gift for the purpose of trying to make our selves look more spiritual.

Also in verse four, we come face to face with a counterfeit tongue which has been used down through the years as a self-centered super spiritual profession. As we go through all of the verses in Chapter 14, we need to pay attention to the differences in the types of tongues that are being mentioned. I sincerely believe, and so do many scholars much greater than I, that when the word tongue (singular) is mentioned in Chapter 14, it refers to the ecstatic utterance which was going on in

the church in Corinth where people were trying to mimic the speaking in tongues of Peter on the Day of Pentecost. Every time in this chapter where Paul uses the term tongues (plural), he is referring to the gift of languages which was given to Peter on the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, when we read about the "unknown tongue," we must remember that the word unknown was not in the original text as I mentioned earlier, but the word "unknown" was added by the translators hoping to make it easier to understand. Now, you might say, "why did God allow this?" I simply believe that God did allow this translation in order to distinctly differentiate between the valid gift of tongues (glossa, languages), and the counterfeit gift of an ecstatic tongue. So, we must conclude that the ecstatic tongue which has caused so much trouble and strife in the modern church is nothing more than a Satanic tongue, psychological tongue, a learned tongue from some other person who practices the same supposed gift, or it is just an emotional effort to look somewhat super spiritual. I want to say again, that nowhere in the Bible is an ecstatic tongue mentioned and verified as a true spiritual gift. It was and still is, a mimicking of the real gift that Peter used on the Day of Pentecost, and without a doubt, it is being used by confused people to draw attention to themselves.

2. Prophecy is designed to be useful. v. 5

Based upon what I described in the previous verse, verse 5 is not hard to understand. Paul tells the Corinthian believers that he would have loved for all of the Corinthians to have been given the gift of tongues (languages) to be used proclaiming the Gospel message, but he had much rather that they were given the gift of prophecy which we are discussing at this very moment. Then, he goes on to say to these first century Christians that if they had been given the gift of tongues (knowledgeable languages), there needed to be someone in the assembly who had the gift of interpreting the language that had been used. In other words, if God gave someone the gift to speak Chinese, a language he or she had never learned, then there needed to be someone there who understood Chinese that could interpret the language for the others who were present in the assembly. If there was no interpreter, then there would be confusion in the church, and this would negate the purpose of the language, which was to present the truth to those who were of a different language in order that all people in the assembly could be blessed and built up in their faith. If there was no interpreter present, then this gift should not be used. Thus, I believe that the one who used the gift of tongues must have known that there was someone there who could interpret whatever he shared. So, we must conclude that the real purpose of the original gift of tongues was to declare the truth of God to the body of believers and to be useful in edifying the church.

3. Prophecy is designed to be understood. v. 6

Let me quote this verse verbatim in order for us to really get what Paul is telling the Corinthians in this verse. Please read this verse very carefully. **"Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues (plural), what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by**

prophesying, or by doctrine?" (I Corinthians 14:6) What Paul has said here is this, "If he were to come to the Corinthians and speak only in unlearned languages without an interpreter, then his efforts would be useless. But, if he came to the believers in Corinth and shared with them some truth he gleaned from divine revelation (remember the New Testament was not yet complete), then they would be able to profit from it because they would understand his language. And he said, "or if he came to them and spoke truth from his special gift of knowledge," they too would understand this because it would be in their language. Then, Paul mentions one more thing here. He stated, "or if I come to you teaching God's doctrines," then, for sure, they would be able to understand clearly and profit from his labors. But, if Paul would only come and speak some known language and have no one there to interpret his message, then it would profit no one, but instead, would just cause confusion.

Let me share with you some additional thoughts from Dr. Paige Patterson. "The case is pressed still further by resorting to the usual method of a rhetorical question. Paul suggested that, as he had previously indicated, he might soon be coming to them. He inquired concerning what possible profit there would be unless, instead of speaking in tongues, he spoke to them by way of revelation or knowledge or prophecy or doctrine.

'Doctrine (didache) generally means 'teachings.' 'Revelation' suggests Paul's apostolic authority and is a tacit acknowledgement that he did possess information given him by God which constituted, as it were, the very voice of God Himself., The activities of passing on revelation or explaining what that revelation means through the word of knowledge or proclaiming it to the people through prophecy or teaching it to them in doctrinal statues, all constitute activities of edification. These, therefore, are all superior to the use of tongues."⁶⁵

C. Notice the distinction of prophecy. vs. 7-12

1. This distinction prevents catastrophe. vs. 7-8

In verse 7, I want us to take a close look at what Paul is saying. He is still comparing the gift of tongues with the better gifts of sharing the Word of God with a clear presentation, whether it be by preaching, by teaching, or by prophecy. "Paul uses an understandable illustration here to confirm his reason given against the use of tongues in the assembly. He speaks of musical instruments. Whether brass or strings, each instrument must give a distinct tone of melody if the music is to be understood. If the instruments give out sound with no distinction, just a conglomeration of notes, then how shall the listeners appreciate what is being played on the instruments? Such music is of no value, it edifies no one, it blesses no one. It simply an unharmonious mixture of notes that make noise, not music."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, pages 248-249.

⁶⁶ The First Epistle Of Paul to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 446.

Now in verse 8, Paul mentions the blowing of the trumpet that was used to prepare armies for battle. He states if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, then there will be confusion and the army will not know whether to charge ahead, or to retreat. When the trumpet is blown, there has to be a clear and certain sound.

Therefore, speaking in languages that cannot be understood, or even participating with a counterfeit tongue, these acts do nothing but cause confusion. Thus, we need to get our act together and play the right tunes and sound the right trumpet blasts. If we don't, then all we have is a catastrophe.

2. This distinction prevents confusion. vs. 9-12

Then in verse 9, Paul further elaborates on this subject by just simply saying, "if we are going to speak in tongues (languages), or even make a noise by speaking in some counterfeit tongue, then we better offer words that can be understood. For, if we don't present the truth in clear languages, our efforts and words will just be lost in the air. So, my dear reader friends, we better take serious the situations when we stand up in a church service and cause confusion by using counterfeit tongues or even genuine tongues which cannot be interpreted or understood.

As we now move to verse 10, we listen to Paul when he told the Corinthians that there are many "voices" (languages) in the world, and everyone of them can be understood by those who know the languages. But, if these voices can't be understood, then using them only brings confusion.

"Voices here means languages. There are many languages and dialects. 'It may be' (or perhaps) points out that the exact number of languages is immaterial. There are many, many languages, not one of which is unintelligible, for every language is of no value, and is no more than gibberish to him. This holds true in the Church. Unless, there be an interpreter, he who speaks in an 'unknown' tongue (language) does not know what he is saying, nor do those who listen; and the voice of the language is useless."⁶⁷

As we come to verse 11, Paul really reveals the damage that can be done in a church by using the tongues (languages) in an improper way. Also, if a person tries to use an ecstatic tongue, much damage will also be done. Literally, when Paul uses the word barbarian, he is using a word that means brutal or inhuman. In other words, folks, we are not to allow anyone to stand up in a church service and cause the uncertain sound of intelligible tongues, or a counterfeit tongue, when all these do is to cause disruption and cause people to be alienated from the truth of the Gospel. Oh yes, some people might be trying to do this to show others just how close they are to God, but when these actions cause damage to the congregation, they are brutal and inhuman.

Then in verse 12, Paul tells the believers that if they are going to insist on having spiritual gifts, ask God for those which edify the church. Of course, I believe this verse is filled with sarcasm. We are not to seek the spiritual gifts, but God gives them to every new believer at the moment of salvation. So, Paul is being somewhat sarcastic because these people are doing so much damage to the body of believers

⁶⁷ Ibid, page 448.

with their spiritual antics and false actions. The summation is that we don't desire or ask for anything that would cause confusion or division in the local assembly.

At this point, I must share with you that years and years ago as a very young pastor, I allowed some well-meaning friends to take me to a neo-charismatic worship in a large town here in North Carolina. At that time in my young ministerial life, I was seeking more and more of my Lord Jesus. So, I let these confused people convince me to attend this meeting. May I tell you that I had only been at this meeting about five minutes when I knew that I was in the wrong place. Why? Because immediately they started teaching that if we didn't speak in an ecstatic gibberish, then we had not been baptized by the Holy Spirit. Well, when they made that statement, I decided it was time for me to go home. They kept saying, "if you really want it, then, you must seek it." But I knew this was not Biblical, and so, just as soon as I could get out of that meeting, I left and came back home. Yet, this is going on in so many places today.

Right now before we move on to the second main point of this chapter, I want to share some paragraphs from Dr. Ray Stedman, which all of us need to know about the charismatic and tongues movement since its beginning in our country. Please read these paragraphs carefully, and look through an emotional windscreen and see the truth about this modern-day movement.

"For almost nineteen centuries, the gift of tongues appeared to be a lost gift in the Christian church. The fourth-century church father, John Chrysostom, once wrote that the miracle gifts, including tongues, had ceased long before his own day and that no one could say for certain what a manifestation of those gifts looked like. The gift of tongues was not practiced in the era of Luther and Calvin and the other Reformers. It was not practiced in the evangelical awakening of the 1700s, the era when John and Charles Wesley founded the Methodist movement.

In fact, history records that the modern tongues movement did not begin until the dawning of the twentieth century. That movement was ushered in by Charles Fox Parham, a minister who was also a Freemason, a member of a fraternal order with secret mystical rites and signs. As a Methodist minister, Parham had many odd ideas about worship and was continually in conflict with the Methodist hierarchy. Finally, he broke away from the Methodists and founded an independent school, Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas"⁶⁸

"Convinced that the church in America lacked spiritual vitality, Charles Parham urged some of his students to search the book of Acts for the secret of the power of the apostles. Parham and his students noticed that three times in Acts, the Holy Spirit came upon the church accompanied by an outpouring of tongues. They concluded that speaking in tongues was the key to spiritual power.

On New Year's Eve 1900, Parham and several students prayed from morning to evening, pleading for the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit,' which they believed would be accompanied by the gift of tongues. (As previously noted, I Corinthians 12:13 teaches that we were baptized by the Holy Spirit when we received Jesus as our Lord and Savior.)

⁶⁸ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 194.

A little after midnight, a student name Agnes Ozman asked Parham to pray that she would be filled with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. So Parham and several students placed hands on her head and prayed for her—and she began speaking in an unknown language. The language she spoke was said to be Chinese, though there was no language expert who could confirm it. Soon, Parham and many of the other students also began speaking in unknown languages. Within weeks, this tongues phenomenon spread to Texas, then to Los Angeles, where it became known as the Azusa Street revival, and eventually around the world."⁶⁹

"For the first fifty years of the twentieth century, speaking in tongues took place only in certain denominations. Later, however, this practice, called glossolalia, spread into other Protestant denominations and segments of the Roman Catholic Church. Today, the subject of tongues is one of the most controversial and divisive issues in the church."⁷⁰

And my dear friends, I will tell you that because the canon of Scripture is completed, there is no use today for the actual speaking in tongues of Pentecost, and definitely, there has never been a need for the counterfeit 'unknown tongue', which came as a replica of the real gift. However, I will concede that I do believe that if some preacher in a far away land was trying to preach the Gospel to an unreached people, and he had never learned that tribe's language, I have no doubt but what God might just let these tribal people hear the Gospel in their language so that they might be saved. But, in most places of the world, the people can get a written copy of the Word of God in their language, and if they can't, there are ministries that would cherish the day they could translate God's Word, the Bible, into those languages of the tribal and ethnic people who have never heard the truth about Jesus Christ.

II. PLEASE NOTICE THE ERRORS OF TONGUES. vs. 13-25

We have already spent much time talking about the damage that has been done by the counterfeit tongue speakers in the church of Corinth. It is very obvious that there were major problems, much confusion, and probably much alienation from God and the church because of the mess over tongues. But now, I want us to take a verse-by-verse walk through these next several verses and see just how serious the error of a counterfeit tongue was in this first century church. Let's also glean the valuable information which God has given to us through Paul the Apostle. And hopefully, we will learn enough truth to help us stop some of the wild-Pentecostalism that is going on in our American churches, and yes, in many other parts of the world as well.

A. The use of a counterfeit tongue promotes selfish satisfaction. v. 13

Well now, I want us to open our eyes and see the serious sarcasm which Paul definitely shows about the situation in Corinth. Truthfully, I just believe that Paul's patience had just about worn out. Let me repeat this verse. **"Wherefore let him**

⁶⁹ Ibid, pages 194-195.

⁷⁰ Ibid, page 195.

that speaketh in an 'unknown tongue' pray that he may interpret." I believe what Paul is saying here is that if any person insisted on speaking in an ecstatic gibberish to try and replicate the true gift of languages, he better have an interpretation. But, Paul knew that there could not be a valid interpretation because there was no gift known as an unknown tongue. Therefore, because he knew there could be no interpretation, he knew that this phony pretense had to come to an end. And in addition, Paul was saying that the only person who would get any satisfaction out of this behavior was the person who has sold himself or herself on the truth of an unknown tongue.

B. The use of the counterfeit tongue promotes senseless stammering. vs. 14-15

Now in verse 14, Paul goes further by saying that if a person speaks in an unknown tongue, then he could only attest that he was the only person getting any good out of it, because this phony act would just bring some satisfaction to himself, but it would be senseless stammering to other people; and very unfruitful or productive. In reality, it may have stirred the emotions of the person indulging in this fake gift, but it was and still is worthless to other people.

Then, Paul goes on to explain even more clearly in verse 15, that if there was no true interpretation of this nonsense, then no one should participate in it. In fact, Paul was saying if there was no one to interpret this unknown tongue, which he knew there wouldn't be, then, this foolishness had to cease.

Also, Paul says that if a person is truly praying in the Spirit, there will be understanding of what he or she is praying. Plus, he states that if he sings with the anointing of the Spirit, others will know with understanding whatever he is singing. And, the words of the prayers and the words of the songs will bless and edify others. Paul was using divine wisdom in handling the terrible problems in the church at Corinth.

C. The use of the counterfeit promotes supportive silence. vs. 16-17

How many of you readers understand what it means for a man to be preaching, and then someone in the congregation shout Amen? Truly, it is an encouragement to the preacher to know that others there are agreeing with him. Well, here in verse 16, Paul told the Corinthian Christians that if a person was speaking in an unknown tongue, how would those who didn't understand be able to shout Amen in agreement with the speaker or even one praying, if they couldn't understand the gibberish being spoken? The point Paul was trying to make was, what is the use of standing up and speaking in an unknown gibberish if no one could understand, and thus, there would be no practical application to one's Christian life. So, we must come to the conclusion that this is complete foolishness, because God has designed that people's lives be changed by the true preaching, and the proper praying, where people can easily understand what is being said.

"The question was simple, 'How shall one who is in that posture say 'Amen' at the giving of thanks since he does not comprehend what is being said?' 'Amen' (amen) derives from the Hebrew and means in both Hebrew and Greek to 'affirm

something to be true.' Here we are granted a look into the activities of an assembly of the early church. Whenever something was spoken, sung, or even offered in prayer to God, it was a common practice for those in the congregation wishing to affirm the truthfulness of the statement to provide record of personal acquiescence by saying 'Amen' or, in other words, 'let it be so.' One of the most interesting uses of this word in the Bible is on the occasion of Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5). The prophet recorded, 'So the people of Nineveh believed God.....' The word 'believed' is Amen, meaning that the people of Ninevah acquiesced to what Jonah was preaching."⁷¹

So, a man in the Corinthian Church may have been speaking, praying, or even singing, and those who received the message of either of these presentations, would sit back and say Amen in agreement with the truth that was being presented. But, if someone stood up and started speaking in an ecstatic unknown tongue, there would be no way for the people in the congregation to understand what was being said. Thus, the unknown tongue in the congregation would squelch any support for the message with absolute silence. Thus, as Paul describes it once again, when this kind of foolish noise was used in the assembly, the people could not be edified.

D. The use of a counterfeit promotes a scandalous sound. vs. 18-19

In verse 18, Paul tells the Corinthians that if they wanted to brag about speaking in other languages, he could do it also because of the many languages Paul could use. It is believed that he could speak Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, and maybe even Latin. Then, I believe he could have picked up some additional languages because of the position he had when he was persecuting the Christians. So, if any one had reason to brag, Paul certainly did. But then, Paul goes on to say in verse 19, that in the church he would rather speak five understandable words so that others could learn and be blessed by what he said, than to speak 10,000 gibberish words in an unknown counterfeit tongue.

By now, Paul was getting extremely exhausted with these Corinthians because of their counterfeit foolishness. Paul just believed, and so do I, that the people with the counterfeit tongue were just being scandalous and promoting false doctrine in the early church. And, I believe the same thing is happening everywhere today in the churches of America, and also, it is predominant in Africa where my wife and I have worked so long. Even churches with a long history of historical conservative belief and behavior have now been scandalized by many of these wild Pentecostal unknown tongue speakers. And, along with this false tongue movement, there is the phony health and wealth prosperity gospel which is being presented as well. Again I want to say, "what foolishness." All of the church crazies were not just in the Corinthian or first century church.

E. The use of a counterfeit promotes a silly sanity. v. 20

⁷¹ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 254.

In this verse 20, Paul the Apostle just gets down to the nitty gritty and calls these Corinthian imitators nothing but silly children acting like immature kids who had never grown up. So, Paul rebukes them for this insanity, and then tells them that if they continue to act like children, then they will never grow up. But, he tells them if they insisted in being like children, then, let their childish behavior be in the area of showing malice or bitterness. In other words, it seems that this division in the Church at Corinth had gotten so much out of control over this false unknown tongue that the people were verbally fighting, and who knows, maybe they became just absolutely defiant because we know this was their attitude from time to time because we have studied their behavior through all of the previous chapters of First Corinthians. Then, Paul tells the people in Corinth to grow up and start acting like men in their understanding of what is true doctrine, and what is not. Yes, these people had been acting like little insane kids. How terrible!

F. The use of a counterfeit promotes a sham sign. vs. 21-22

Now, the truth really comes out in Corinth! Paul tells the believers in the Corinthian Church that the ignorant people in the church should go back and read the Old Testament law and prophets and discover that God had predicted through Isaiah the prophet (Isaiah 28:11-12) that one day in the future when the Messiah would come that God would indeed give the gift of speaking in knowledgeable languages in order for lost men and women to get saved and come to the Lord. Of course, this which was predicted, in fact, did happen on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Therefore, we see from verses 21 and 22, that the main purpose of the predicted future gift of speaking in knowledgeable languages was planned specifically for lost Jews to come to Christ. Not one place in this chapter, or anywhere else in the Bible, does the Lord predict that a gift of speaking in an ecstatic gibberish is for the purpose of making people super-spiritual. The truth was and still is, that there is no genuine God-given spiritual gift called speaking in an unknown prayer language or in a gibberish tongue. So, those who were promoting this kind of ungodly behavior were promoting a sham sign rather than having the true gift of speaking in an unlearned language for the purpose of the presenting the Gospel to the lost world. And I will say again, what we are seeing in so many modern churches today is also a sham sign which is being milked over and over by childish immature people who are trying to manipulate people to follow them in order to get their money. You see, folks, childish immature people are drawn to other childish immature people. But the very sad thing is that many lost people have been driven away from Jesus and the true Gospel by this counterfeit unknown tongue movement. And further, many have been completely turned off to the local church by these charlatan preachers and teachers.

G. The use of a counterfeit promotes a shameful supposition. v. 23

"The contrast between verses 22 and 23 is startling. In verse 22 we are told that tongues are a sign for unbelievers; yet in verse 23 we are informed that if unbelievers were present when the Corinthians spoke with tongues, their

conclusion would be to question the sanity of the Corinthians. These two verses constitute a hopeless contradiction incapable of resolution unless, in fact, there are two different subjects under consideration. This, of course, is precisely what is happening. In verse 22, the apostle was speaking of the actual sign—the gift of tongues—which was given to the apostles in Acts 2. Verse 23, on the other hand, discusses the Corinthian effort to reproduce that miracle—an effort which fell so far short of the authentic spiritual gift that its exercise appeared ludicrous to the very unbelievers who should have been convinced by the sign."⁷²

I really like what Paul said in this verse 23 about unbelievers thinking that those who spoke in an unknown gibberish were mad? And, they would not only think it, but they would say they were mad as well. In other words, the lost people and maybe even some of the saved people in the church would come to the conclusion that those who caused such confusion in the church with ecstatic gibberish were, in fact, very crazy or demented. Folks, I assure you that anything that produces this kind of confusion and turmoil is not of God.

H. The use of the counterfeit promotes a spiritual successlessness. vs. 24-25

"Again, in contrast to the result anticipated when an unbeliever was faced with the murmur of Corinthian tongues, Paul suggested that in the event all should prophesy, and if in the midst of that prophecy there should come to the assembly one who did not believe or who was unlearned, the results might be calculated to be very different. The unlearned or unbeliever would be convinced by all and judged of all. What makes this particular contrast especially poignant is the fact that verse 22 stresses that tongues are a sign for unbelievers, while prophesying is for the benefit of those who believe and not for the unbelievers per se. However, verse 23 suggests that the use of Corinthian prattle will turn away the unbeliever, even though tongues should be a sign to him. The irony of the matter is explicated in this verse. When we prophesy, which is supposed to be for the benefit of unbelievers and the unlearned in that it is used of God to convince and to judge. 'Convince' (elencho) means that the unbeliever is 'convinced of all' or 'convicted of ' his sin and his need of Christ. Furthermore, he is 'judge of all' (anakrino). This word does not mean to 'judge' in the sense of 'condemn,' but rather it is a forensic term which literally means 'cross-examination.' The listener is not only convicted and convinced by what he hears, but also he finds himself profoundly cross-examined by the Word of God and by the Holy Spirit working to bring conviction in his heart."⁷³

Therefore, my friends, when the counterfeit unknown tongue is used by one or more in a local assembly, then the obvious result is confusion and no success in winning others to Christ or in edifying the body of believers. On the other hand, when prophecy or preaching or testifying is used orderly in the congregation, people who are saved will be blessed and edified, while those who are lost will get under conviction and get saved. Praise the Lord!

⁷² Ibid, page 259.

⁷³ Ibid, page 260.

I sincerely love the last part of verse 25, where Paul tells the believers in Corinth that when prophecy, preaching, or testifying is completely understood by the unbeliever, he will not only get saved, but he will fall down on his face in humility and worship God with a sincere heart, and he will affirm that God indeed was speaking through the preacher, teacher, singer, prayer, or even through one that was giving a testimony. In other words, the false confusing unknown tongue users would produce no fruit and no success, but the genuine preacher, teacher, singer, prayer warrior, or one giving a testimony would truly bring forth genuine fruit as the result of their labors. I don't know about you readers, but when I go to church to worship, I rejoice in seeing Jesus produce genuine fruit!

III. NOTICE THE EQUATION (FORMULA) FOR WORSHIP. vs. 26-40

Confusion! Confusion! Confusion! This is what we see as we continue to study Chapter 14 of First Corinthians. As we have seen from the very first chapter of this book, Paul had to deal with almost every kind of problem you could ever think of in this church, which he had established in Corinth. He spent 18 months in Corinth trying to establish and grow this church. And, this was Paul's second longest stay in any church where he established, except for Ephesus, where he spent almost three years. Yet, the Corinthian Church had so much of the world mixed in with the church that there was constantly arguing and division. The church was in a terrible mess, and without a doubt, they were giving such a negative testimony to the people around them.

Then, as we have been studying the many verses in Chapter 14, we know that the church had an embedded counterfeit tongue movement in the church as the people were trying to mimic or imitate the spiritual gift of tongues or languages which was used on the day of Pentecost. As Paul obviously had been trying to solve this terrible problem, it is very obvious to me that Paul's patience wore thin, and he just confronted these trouble-making people with the truth about their counterfeit gift of tongues. So, let's take a look at the remaining verses in Chapter 14, and discover how Paul provided for the people at Corinth a true equation or formula for their use in worship services. Let's pay close attention to what Paul says to the Corinthians, and of course, what God is trying to say to us today.

As we continue this great study, I need to mention again that obviously Paul was getting very tired of the Corinthian believers arguments and division over the use of the spiritual gifts, and especially, the misuse of the counterfeit tongues which we have been discussing. What we now see is that Paul somewhat takes a general or generic evaluation of the situation in Corinth, and he tells the professing believers that it is time to stop all of this confusion and disorder in the church, and he provides what I call an equation or formula for having good worship services without the parading of the spiritual gifts, and the egotistical pride which created the problems in the church to begin with.

In verses 26-33, Paul tells the Corinthians that the main thing for the church to aim for in their worship services was to have the benefit of peace ruling in their worship services, and that if they maintained order, then there would be peace and each person would esteem another better than himself or herself.

Then, in verses 34-35, Paul talks about the conduct of the women in the church, especially when it came to the use of spiritual gifts; explicitly, the counterfeit tongues.

Lastly, Paul concludes this chapter by talking about the blessings of having order in the worship services in the church at Corinth.

Now, let me give you Dr. Paige Patterson's assessment of these verses to hopefully give you a better understand of how Paul was trying to solve this horrible problem.

"The concluding section of the discussion of spiritual gifts focuses on an equation (formula) for worship. Initially the discussion concerns the benefit of peace vs. 26-33, followed by the behavior of women (vs. 34-35), and concluding with the blessing of order (vs. 36-40). The focus is on certain rule that were to be established guidelines for worship at Corinth and in all the churches of the saints. The worship of the church was not, therefore, strictly programmed. Much freedom was allowed, but there were certain principles that would have to be observed. The concluding section of this chapter provides these principles growing naturally out of the discussion of spiritual gifts which occupied the apostle's attention for a considerable portion of the letter."⁷⁴

A. The equation reveals the benefit of peace. vs. 26-33.

1. Paul says that a peaceful church has edification as its goal. v. 26

In verse 26, Paul asks the question, "How could these professing Corinthian Christians come together with the determination that each person would stand up and put their gift on display?" Obviously, they were trying to use even some of the original sign gifts such as a tongue (knowledgeable language), the gift of revelation, and even the gift of interpretation. Then, there were those who had a psalm to sing or a doctrine to be taught; each person believing that his or her gift was the greatest. But, the measuring stick for all of these gifts was, "would the church be edified by these gifts, or would the church be divided?" Certainly, it seems that the way they were using these gifts was truly splitting the church.

2. Paul says that a peaceful church has order as its guideline. vs. 27-31

Now, we come to the next verse, verse 27, and it seems that Paul just uses a lot of stealth wisdom to deal with this major problem. In this verse, I believe Paul moves from the authentic gift of tongues or languages, and deals with the problematic gift of someone trying to speak in an ecstatic counterfeit gibberish. What Paul seems to be doing here is to tell the tongues (gibberish) person that if he or she insisted on spouting off in this unknown tongue, then there was a order which had to be followed. And, when he gave these instructions, Paul knew for certainty that there would be no one to interpret these ecstatic utterances, and thus, these counterfeit tongues should not be used at all. And, Paul even makes the

⁷⁴ Ibid, page 261.

requirement more strict by telling them if they did speak in an unknown tongue with this ecstatic gibberish, they could only do it one at a time. I truly believe that Paul was giving these strict rules because he knew that if the people had to practice these phony gifts in such a regulated way, then, the use of these gifts would cease of themselves. And so, Paul was counting on the lack of interpreters to stop the speaking in an unknown gibberish in and of itself.

We will now push on with our study by looking at verse 28. This is another verse which reveals Paul's Godly wisdom. Because he knows that there would not be an authentic interpreter in the worship services, he told them that they had to remain silent. However, if they wanted to pretend to be super-spiritual and speak in a secret language, then, they had to indeed keep it secret and just mumble to himself, and maybe even to God. I just see a tremendous amount of sarcasm dripping from the last phrase in this verse. Paul knew there would be no valid interpreter who could interpret the gift of an unknown tongue. Therefore, if the person wanted to indulge in this foolishness, let him or her go ahead and do it, because the only persons that might get a high from it would be the person themselves and of course, God. Folks, do you see Paul's tremendous sarcasm? You bet I do, and by handling this situation the way he did, Paul knew with assurance that there would soon be no speaking in an ecstatic gibberish in the church in Corinth.

So then, Paul moves forward by mentioning the gifts that could and should be used in the church in order for others to be blessed and edified. In verse 29, he says that people with the gifts of prophecy could stand up and speak, but only one at a time, and no more than two or three. Therefore, if these guidelines would be observed, then it would be possible for those in the assembly to understand what was being said and make an intelligent judgment about the truth of the prophecy.

Also, Paul then says in verse 30, that if God gives a divine revelation, which He did in the first century church, then the person with this divine revelation could share it with the people, but this gift could only be used one at a time, in order to conserve peace in the church.

Then, Paul reveals the main purpose for all of these individual gifts. That purpose is found here in verse 31, and the purpose was so that people in the church family could learn from the truth spoken and be edified to grow up in the Lord. There was to be no ecstatic gibberish or confused noise that would just frustrate or even agitate people.

3. Paul says that a peaceful church has restraint as its grace. vs. 32-33

Suddenly, Paul inserts a great statement in verse 32. He tells the people that those who have the gift of divine prophecy will always be restrained in their spirits, and not cause confusion. In other words, every person who uses a gift for the edifying of the body still has control over their own behavior. Well now, this surely shoots down this silly idea that when God baptizes a person by the power of the Holy Spirit, that person may just start blabbering in some ecstatic gibberish without the ability to control himself or herself. This is absolute foolishness, and truly, this out of control behavior is a detriment to the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it should

never be allowed in a congregation gathered for worship and the study of God's Word.

Then, in verse 33, once more Paul tells the professing Corinthian believers that God is not the author of confusion. Therefore, all of the confusion and division that the people were having had nothing to do with God-given gifts, but in fact, this phony tongue farce was orchestrated by Satan in attempt to divide and destroy the body of believers. And, Paul tells the Corinthians that God's desire for peace in their local church was the same for all churches and all of the saints.

So my friends, we need to stop and take a long look at these phony sign gifts being wrongly demonstrated in so many churches here in America, and also, especially, in our churches in Africa. There is far too much confusion in the American church just because of the administrative problems that occur, and, in Africa, the animism and witchcraft backgrounds of the people produce all kind of evil behavior. Thus, we just don't need this phony religion in any of our churches. Therefore, let's stop and stamp out this false piety and super-spiritual attitude of parading the "so-called gifts of the Spirit," in our church fellowship, and let's restore the true edifying gifts which produce peace and edification for every person in the flock of God.

B. The equation (formula) reveals the desired behavior of the women. vs. 34-35

There is no question in my mind that in the church at Corinth, the main problem there over tongues and the other gifts must have been coming from some unruly women who had usurped the authority of the men, and were trying to parade their super-spiritual attitude before the entire church. Now, I am not saying that no men were involved, but because of Paul emphasis here upon the women, I am just convinced that this was indeed what was happening in the church.

So, at the risk of being called in this confused modern church world a woman hater, or male chauvinist, or even a misogynist, I am going to give you exactly what I think Paul was trying to get across to the Corinthian Church in order to squelch the arguments and division in the church. Truthfully, it all boils down to the created and moral orders which God established for man and woman in the Garden of Eden, and for His plan for husbands and wives to live by in the home. In our attempt to please the "Me Too Movement," or the "feminist movement," we probably would just like to bypass these verses, but if we do, we are avoiding some marvelous truth for both men and women, and for peace in our homes and in our churches. Thus, I am not going to pass over these verses just in order to remain politically correct with all of these progressive left-wingers. So now, let's see what Dr. Ray Stedman said about these verses in his commentary several years ago. Basically, what Dr. Stedman says here is the same thing I believe with maybe one or two exceptions.

"This passage has caused many people to reject the apostle Paul and regard him as a chauvinist or misogynist, a man who feels threatened by gifted women. Such a view is unfair to Paul and does an injustice to Scripture. When we look at everything that is written and known about Paul, it becomes clear that Paul had a respect for women, including women in ministry. Of the roughly forty people Paul

mentions in his letters as fellows workers in ministry, sixteen are women. He singles out several, including Priscilla, Phoebe, and Junia, as leaders in the early church.

To slander Paul as a woman-hater and disregard his words in this passage is to slander Scripture. We should also note that in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul strongly defends the right of women to pray and prophesy (give testimony) in church meetings.

So why do we seem to have a problem in this passage? It's because of a misunderstanding of Paul's point. He is saying that the church must recognize God's moral order of leadership—that is, the principle of headship. Paul dealt at length with the principle of headship in 1 Corinthians 11.

Paul is not saying that women shouldn't minister or speak in a church. The problem Paul addresses is disorder and confusion—a problem that probably grew out of the very freedom that women did have to minister in the church at Corinth. Both the Jewish community and the Greek community tended to diminish the status of women. But in the Christian church, women were permitted to minister under the principle of headship."⁷⁵

"But some women in ministry apparently went too far. They ran away with their freedom. They were asking questions and entering into debates, thereby turning an orderly meeting into a disorderly discussion group. Some, as Paul indicated earlier in this letter, had abandoned the head covering, which in the Corinthian culture signified the order of headship that God had instituted. The result was dissension.

The fact that this is Paul's concern is affirmed by his choice of words. He does not say that women are forbidden to minister in the church; he does not say that women are forbidden to prophesy, pray, or teach. Women are forbidden he says, to speak in a conversational way. They are not permitted to interrupt the proceedings with conversation or questions. The Greek word Paul uses is "laeo", which is the most common word for simple conversation or even chatter. This is what Paul said must be silenced: women who would start talking and get carried away and turn a meeting into an unruly debating society. Theological debates do not edify the church; they get the church off track. This passage should not be viewed as a rule against women being engaged in legitimate ministry in the church."⁷⁶

1. This behavior of women is to be silent behavior. v. 34a

Based upon what I have already said in this discussion, I don't believe that women could not speak at all in the church assembly. I say this because of what Dr. Stedman has already given us when he told us that because the women were allowed to prophesy (give testimony of God's divine revelation,) and we know for sure that they were permitted to pray because of what Paul said back in Chapter 11, where they were told to not pray with their heads uncovered. Therefore, they definitely were able to give testimony and to pray. So, what is Paul talking about when he demands that the women remain silent? I just believe that they were to

⁷⁵ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Dr. Ray Stedman, DHP, pages 213-214.

⁷⁶ Ibid, page 214.

remain silent when the male church leaders were speaking, and when they may have been discussing some doctrine that needed to be refined. The women were just not allowed to usurp authority over their husbands and other men in the church.

"This is exactly what Paul says in I Timothy 2:9-15, when the women were told to "learn in silence" and not to teach or usurp authority over men. The reasons given are theological in nature. The first reason offered is the priority of Adam's creation. The second reason given is Eve's act of transgression in having been deceived. These verses, whatever else they may mean, seem to rule out the possibility of mere conformity to the culture of the first century."⁷⁷

Therefore, because I don't believe Paul was tightly restricting what he was saying for just the Corinthians in that day, there is truly truth for all us in our churches today. I am convinced that women can teach ladies and children in the churches, but they are not allowed to teach men. I do believe that women can also stand up and testify in a public gathering, but only to share what is on their hearts, and not to try to put on a sales pitch to change the minds of the men. This would truly be usurping authority. Also, I don't believe it is good to call on a woman to lead in prayer in a combined assembly, unless of course, the lady's husband is there to give her permission. This just seems to be God's order, in spite of what our modern culture might say.

And by the way, I want to say again that nowhere in the Bible do we have a place where women were called and ordained to preach the Gospel message, or even to be ordained as a deacon. Yes, women have been tremendously valuable in many aspects of ministry, but they have never been given a position that would put them in as heads over their husbands or other men in the church. We may not like this, but it is not our choice. It was and still is God's choice based upon His order and plan for man and woman. And, at the risk of being hated, one of the main reasons that our morality and a social order is so upside down in the world today is that we have paid no attention to God's Biblical plan, and we have put women in roles they should never have been given just to accommodate the screaming feminist movements.

2. This behavior of women is to be submissive behavior. vs. 34b-35

In the last phrase of verse 34, we find that Paul tells the Christian women that they are to be under obedience to God's law and order for women. The word obedience seems to scare a huge amount of our population today, but it just simply means that the women in the church are to voluntarily submit to their husbands, and to the other men just simply because God ordered it this way. Women can scream in rebellion if they want, but in the end when all is said and done, if God's ordered plan for men and women is rejected, there will be much trouble for everyone associated with this rebellion. Thus, we are seeing what we are seeing here in America today.

⁷⁷ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Dr. Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 265.

Now in verse 35, Paul expands the thought of women remaining silent in a public assembly. He goes on further to say that if women insist on knowing what was going on in a discussion or argument, or as in the case of the Corinthians, over spiritual gifts which included the phony unknown tongue, they should wait until they get home and ask their husbands. Of course, this is assuming that their husbands are saved and were attending the meetings at the church. If they were, then the women were not to interrupt the church conversation, but they were to go home and discuss the matter with their husbands. But, if they did not wait to go home and discuss the matter, but instead spoke up out of turn, they would shame their husbands and even dishonor God who made the order to begin with. To reverse God's order and try to change it because a woman felt like she was important and needed to have her say, would be like trying to reverse gravity and allow everything that falls off a table to rise up in the air. If this sounds totally ridiculous, then you are right! And, so is trying to reverse the orders that God has planned for men and women. We must remember that the apostles and preachers of today didn't write the Word of God, but we are just messengers declaring what God has instituted.

C. The equation (formula) reveals the blessings of order. vs. 36-40

In verse 36, Paul really confronts the arrogance of the Corinthian people. He does this by asking them if they believed that they were the origin of God's message for His people. He further asked them if they thought that God's Word was just for them, and no one else. In other words, Paul is really letting the people have it because of their egotistical and flamboyant attitude about their spiritual gifts, and their feelings of superiority. These people obviously, just felt that God had chosen them to present the truth of His Word, and that no one else could measure up to their super-spirituality.

So, the people went from their belief that their spiritual gifts were superior, to an attitude of super-spiritual intelligence. They just believed that they had received God's truth, and that they were the key people to present the truth to others. Of course, I have no doubt that this came from the use of their phony tongue trying to replicate the true gift of languages on the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, their phony piety was now on parade once more, as it is in so many wild-Pentecostal churches today. These so-called tongues-speaking believers just believe that God made them better than others by giving them the tongue's gift at the moment they were baptized by the Holy Spirit. But the sad thing was and still is, that these people misinterpreted the true and authentic gift of languages, and tried to show that they were more spiritual than other Christians because they had been given this special super-spiritual gift of an ecstatic tongue; which was and still is a phony and false doctrine being taught by thousands and thousands of people all over the world.

In the next verse, verse 37, Paul just really addresses the real problem. The real problem, like I said, was that some of these so-called professing Christians just felt that they were super-spiritual because they had been given the gift of prophesy, or even the other gifts mentioned before. The influential problem was about their rotten attitudes, and not just about false doctrines.

Paul goes on to say that the people better acknowledge what he has told them, because it had come directly from the command of God. And, there should never be an argument with the commands and requirements of the Lord. But, people still today do the same thing because they feel that their gift is greater than someone else, and they have been chosen to a much greater destiny, as we hear so many people talking about today. These men like Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes, Kenneth Copeland, Creflo Dollar, Jessie Duplantis, and many others teach so much about becoming a super-spiritual person who God has chosen to reach a greater destiny than other Christians. But yet, earlier in this Chapter 14, Paul talked about the many members of the body of Christ, and all are equal in the body.

In verse 38, Paul really confronts the true ignorance of the religious pretenders in Corinth. He basically accuses the people of being ignorant with a closed mind. And, the truth was that the people were willfully ignorant, and truthfully, they seemed to be proud of their sinful ignorance. Paul just really tells them that if they were insistent on being ignorant, then, just go ahead and remain willfully ignorant.

Folks, it has been my responsibility for over half of a century to try and deprogram some of these mixed-up professing believers in the churches down through the years who have just insisted that they are right when it comes to the gifts that are still operable today, and of course, they won't accept the fact that some of those early gifts of the church were sign gifts to authenticate the Gospel message. So, these willfully ignorant "nuts" just go on about their daily and weekly effort to confuse and mix up other people, rather than teaching the truth about the spiritual gifts that would edify the church. I suppose that I need to just say like Paul did, that maybe we should just stay away from these screwed-up nuts, and let them die in their ignorance. The only reason we can't is because of the damage that is being done by these crazy people.

Now, as we come to the very last verse in this chapter, we suddenly discover the entirety of Paul's message for the Corinthians. That message was that everything should always be done decently and in order in our churches. This message surely would eliminate a lot of this worked-up emotional entertainment which is drawing so many confused people to these services because of the worldly and fleshly appeal of this style of worship. And truthfully, Paul just wanted the truly saved people in Corinth to become well-balanced Christians with order in their personal lives, and also, in the life of their church services.

This is what we so desperately need in the churches of America, and yes, in all of our churches in Africa and in the Ukraine where we work. Yes, we must be very careful to not plan our services until they are just liturgical and formalistic, but on the other hand, we need to forbid these wild kind of services that have no order or form to them at all. God has never blessed disorder in any fashion. If you don't believe this, then why did God give us a skeleton with which to balance and order our bodies. Surely, God is not the author of disorder, but if we look at many of our churches today, we can't help but see mysticism and disorder that is being propagated as Biblical based worship. So, we now conclude this verse-by-verse exposition of this very different 14th Chapter of the Book of 1 Corinthians.

Conclusion

Well, I am sure that many of you reading this commentary have thought that we would never get finished with this exegesis of Chapter 14, of the Book of First Corinthians. But yet, we have now reached the close, and we are about to go on to the final two chapters in this book. I must tell you that as a lifelong pastor of churches, I have been tempted in this study to really get angry with the Corinthians who acted so childish and ignorant. But yet, I know that people will accept and believe what they want to, unless of course, they stay in tune with Jesus and allow Him to guide them through every verse of the Scriptures.

Obviously, Paul had many problems to deal with in the Church of Corinth, but probably none worse than the one we have talked about from Chapters 12 through 14. This problem was the replication and misuse of phony spiritual gifts in order to draw attention to themselves. Now, don't get me wrong! I do know that some people are more surrendered to God than others, and it only stands to reason that these who are totally surrendered have to have a greater manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power, but when this happens, it is not to draw attention to oneself, but it is to draw attention to Jesus and to give credibility to the inerrant Word of God which we preach.

So my friends, we must be careful that when God truly gives us a spiritual gift or gifts at the moment of our salvation, we better make sure that we use it or them for the proclamation of the Gospel and in presenting the love of Christ to a lost world. Then, it is vitally important that we realize these spiritual gifts are for the edifying of the entire body of believers, and not for the purpose of trying to make ourselves look more spiritual than others who use their gifts in the body of Christ. Truly, we are not in a game trying to out do others, but we are in the same family of believers trying to honor God with our balanced Christian service, and in participating in taking the Gospel message to the lost world in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Chapter Twenty-One

"The Reality Of The Resurrection"

Scripture: I Corinthians 1:1-58

Introduction

"Whether or not the Corinthian assembly had questioned Paul on the subject of the resurrection, we do not know. Apparently a report had reached him that there were false teachers in Corinth who were teaching error concerning the resurrection. Possibly some of the converts in the assembly were Sadducees, and the Sadducees did not believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead. It is more likely that some of the Greek members had brought their belief on the subject over into the church. (To see this, study Acts 17:18-34)

The important fact is that the resurrection of the dead was doubted and denied by some in Corinth. In some way, Paul had learned of this doctrinal error in the church, and whether they asked for it or not, he gave them a clear, understandable outline concerning true doctrine as relating to the resurrection of the dead.

The greatest bombshell ever to explode in the face of an unbelieving world was the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. To their own satisfaction His enemies explained away Calvary, they explained away His miracles—but they could not explain away the empty tomb—nor have the enemies of the Gospel explained away the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ until this present hour.

Christianity is the only religion that has a risen Savior—testified as having been seen by many, even by five hundred at one time. History records the names of many great men, some of whom founded great religions and inspired multitudes of followers; but only Christ, the head of Christianity, lived, died, rose again—AND SHOWED HIMSELF AFTER HIS RESURRECTION. He proved that He was flesh and bone by eating in the presence of His disciples and inviting them to touch Him and determine that He was not a spirit. (Study the entire twenty-fourth chapter of Luke.)⁷⁸

So, the one distinct thing that sets Christianity apart from all of the other religions in the world is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and of course, the promise that those of us who get saved will also one day be resurrected from the dead in brand new glorified bodies. This will take place at the time of the rapture of the church, and it will be only for those who have been saved. There will be a resurrection of the dead for those who are lost, but this will not take place until the Great White Throne Judgment which is mentioned in Revelation, Chapter 20. When this happens, the lost dead will just be brought up from the place of torment in hades, and will stand before Jesus Christ to receive their horrible rewards for the light they have rejected, and they will be cast into the lake of fire with Satan, the beast (the Antichrist), and the false prophet. That will truly be a horrible day!

⁷⁸ The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 481-482.

I. NOTICE THE EVIDENT PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION. vs. 1-11

Down through the past 2,000 plus years, the truth and doctrine that has caused more skeptics to doubt the credibility of the Christian faith is their quest to find or discover what they call the authenticity of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, in spite of the proof that has been given by eye witnesses, credible writers, and by numbers of artifacts verifying the resurrection, these skeptics and doubters still want to believe and embrace Satan's lies that Jesus did not rise from the dead. But yet, if a person responds to the Gospel message and put his or her faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and truly becomes saved, this person's relationship with the living Christ will constantly confirm that He is truly alive. And to repeat it once more, Christianity is the only religion in the world that preaches and teaches that a person can have a living relationship with their God. All of the other religions teach its followers to be afraid of their god, and walk before him or her in an unholy mystery and fear. But, this is not so for the believer in Christ. I can personally give testimony to the fact that Jesus is truly alive, because my wife and I talked to Him personally this very morning.

So, let us now take a look at some true evidence that Jesus is alive, and because He lives forever, so shall we! Praise the Lord!

A. The resurrection is proved by the act of salvation. vs. 1-2

I love the way Paul starts out this chapter. He does so by telling the Corinthian believers that the Gospel the people had received was the true Gospel which the Apostle had preached to them when he first came to Corinth to give them the good news of salvation. He tells them that this Gospel was the only way for salvation, and that the hope that the believers stood on at that time was the same one that he had delivered unto them. And, I think this verse is so important when we stop to consider all the problems that Paul had discussed with the people in the three previous chapters. I think there is a message for a practical application described in this very first verse. That message was and still is that when all is said and done about what we believe, the most important thing of all is to make sure that we are saved and on our way to heaven.

And, I want to commend this great man of God for always keeping the main thing the main thing when he came to what he believed and taught to the people. Oh yes, we might argue over different non-essential doctrines like what spiritual gifts God through His Holy Spirit has given us, but the main thing is to make sure that we are genuinely saved, and that our eternal destiny is settled.

Verse 2 of this text just reiterates what Paul said in verse 1, but he also adds another thought here. Paul tells the Corinthians that if they are really saved, then they got saved believing the Gospel message which he had brought to them at Corinth. And then, he tells the people that if they can't really remember the truth that He had taught them when he came to Corinth, then they had a false salvation like chasing the wind. This is what the word vanity refers to. So folks, the proof of the eternal resurrection of our Lord Jesus is fully known by all of us if we really have been saved. We need to make sure this very day that we are truly saved!

B. The resurrection is proved by the affirmation of the Scriptures. vs. 3-4

In verses 3-4, Paul rehearses the Gospel message which he had preached in Corinth, reminding the Corinthians that the message was still the same. It was the message of the death of Christ on the cross, the burial of Jesus in the borrowed tomb, and most important, it was a message of eternal hope produced by the fact that Jesus did indeed rise from the grave. Once more let me say that is truly the resurrection that gives an eternal hope and assurance to every truly saved person, and these resurrection facts raise Christianity far above all other religions in the world. I don't know about you, the reader, but the resurrection gives each child of God the wonderful hope that the best is yet to come. Hallelujah!!

C. The resurrection is proved by the attestation of the seers. vs. 5-8

Now, in verses 5-8, Paul gives further evidence which proves the resurrection by telling the Corinthian people that many people had seen Jesus in His resurrection body, and thus because of these eye witnesses, it would be very difficult to deny or doubt the authenticity of the resurrection. Paul starts out mentioning an encounter by Peter with the resurrected Lord. The Bible doesn't list this encounter, but it is obvious that there has been one because Paul the man of God said there was one, and if he said it, we can believe it based upon the truthfulness of everything else Paul told, which has been authenticated in scores of ways.

So, Paul begins in verse five with Cephas, the eye witness, and then he moves to the twelve disciples who themselves had witnessed Jesus in His resurrection body. According to **Mark 16:14**, this appearance came to the disciples while they were still in the upper room sharing in a meal when Jesus just showed up in His resurrection body. Please read the following verse and get further proof of the resurrection. **"Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."** So, because of the hardness of the disciples' hearts, Jesus met them in the upper room in order to prove to the eleven that He indeed was alive. Oh friends, would it not have been so much more wonderful if the disciples would have believed just because others had seen Him? Yes, it would have, but these hard-hearted disciples who had travelled with him for over three years had to have their own proof that He was indeed alive. So, Jesus placated the doubts and disbelief of the disciples by showing up to prove that He had indeed risen from the grave. Therefore, Jesus capitulated to the weakness of the doubting disciples by showing up in His resurrection body to authenticate the message that He had in fact risen from the dead.

Let me give you a summary of these verses written by Dr. Alan Redpath many years ago. "From the very beginning of the redemption story, we can trace all through the Old Testament the fact that **'he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities:.....All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the**

iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53; 5a-6). Here is evidence that, as Paul says here, **'He died for our sins according to the Scriptures.'**

In that tremendous moment when Jesus cried with a shout of victory, 'It is finished! The hand of God stretched forth from heaven and took hold of the veil of the Temple and ripped it from the top to the bottom. No human hand could have done that: the veil, which kept humanity back from the glory of the presence of God, was torn aside. The veil, through which only one man once a year on the Day of Atonement could pass, in order that he might make a sacrifice for his own sin and the sin of the people, was rent so that all might enter the presence of God. Now, because of what happened at the cross, there is a way through to God without any human intermediary: there is **'one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (I Timothy 2:5).** The evidence that He died for our sins is indisputable."⁷⁹

"What about the evidence for His resurrection? Without it, you just cannot explain the existence of the church at all; it would not have lasted one week if the truth of the resurrection had not revitalized that little group of disciples. Immediately after Calvary they were about to separate, their fellowship was collapsing. The birth and growth of the church is one tremendous evidence that Jesus Christ rose again.

Once again, Paul says that Christ was buried and that He rose again 'according to the Scriptures.' The unfolding of God's plan of redemption in the Old Testament is the story of travail and of triumph. It is the story of suffering and yet of glory. In the same chapter from which I have already quoted, Isaiah 53, we read, **'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.....the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied....Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great.....(vs. 10-12).**

There is also the evidence of the disciples themselves. Their incredulity at His resurrection and their unreadiness to believe the message they were going to spread abroad throughout the world reveals the fact that, as the Lord had said, 'they were slow of heart to believe.' Although they were to be responsible for proclaiming the Christian message, they began by admitting that they did not believe it."⁸⁰

"Some have suggested that these early disciples were just being fools, that they knew the story was false. But would they ever have allowed themselves to be martyred for the sake of something they knew was not the truth? If only the Jews or the Romans could have produced the body of Jesus, all the rumors would have been quickly stopped, but they could not produce it.

In the third place, Paul seizes upon personal evidence as the greatest factor of all: 'He was seen of Cephas' (15:5a). In an interview about which we know absolutely nothing, Peter met the Master face to face. 'Then of the twelve (15:5b); twice in the Gospels is the record that His disciples meet their risen Lord.

'After that,' says Paul, 'he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.' Jesus had told them to go into Galilee, where He would go before them. Hundreds of

⁷⁹ The Royal Route To Heaven, By: Alan Redpath, Revell, page 196.

⁸⁰ Ibid, pages 196-197.

believers, scattered abroad because of their fear after His death, fled to Galilee, and there they met Him as He revealed Himself to them.

'Last of all,' Paul says, 'he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time' (15:8). One never-to-be-forgotten day, when he was on his way to Damascus to continue his persecution of the young church, God met him in Jesus Christ and brought him upon his face to the ground."⁸¹

D. The resurrection is proved by the action of service. vs. 9-11

Verse 9, in our text is a confession by Paul of his unworthiness to even be in the family of God serving Christ daily. Paul says that he felt like the least of brethren, and that he was not worthy to be called an apostle. Why did he say this, "because he had been severely persecuting the church of God for a long time." And the very sad thing was that Paul actually thought he was doing God a service by persecuting and even killing members of the early church. But yet, praise the Lord, when Paul got gloriously saved on the road to Damascus, he was dramatically changed within and became a faithful servant of God, now willing to even die for Christ. If there had been no genuine resurrection of Christ from the dead, then certainly, Paul's life would not have been changed so completely, and he would not have been willing to give up even his life for the sacred cause of the Gospel. Truly, Paul's action of service after a life of persecution and death of multitudes of believers truly reveal the dramatic change and transformation which Paul experienced when he met the resurrected Lord. Truly, if God could change such a wicked murderer and make him a genuine vessel of service for our Lord, then there is hope for anyone else. Surely, those who have been genuinely transformed by the power of the Gospel live to demonstrate that Jesus Christ did come back from the dead, and He is alive forever more.

So, Paul was more than ready to show his humility when it came to bragging on Jesus the One Who saved him, and he was just as ready to show the world the definite change in his character as described here in verse 10. In this verse, Paul stated that whatever he had become since the day of his salvation, it was only by the grace of God, and truly, God's grace was not in vain. Then, Paul told the Corinthians that he had labored more than other people, but he immediately disclaimed any glory for himself because he knew that whatever he had accomplished, it was only through the grace of God that it had occurred. In other words, Paul was not about to take any credit for his accomplishments, because he gave Jesus the glory for whatever God had done in his life.

Please notice what Oliver B. Greene said about verse 10 in his commentary. "Paul gives credit where credit is due: **'I am what I am by the grace of God.'** The same might be truthfully, said of us—we are what we are by the grace of God, and apart from the grace of God we would all be miserable sinners, headed for hell. All that we are, all that we ever hope to be; all that we have or ever hope to have; all that we have accomplished or every hope to accomplish is because of God's marvelous grace.

⁸¹ Ibid, page 197.

It is absolutely foreign to the Word of God that one can be a Christian and not produce good works, for grace automatically produces works. We may bring forth a hundredfold, sixty, thirty, or tenfold—but never zero. I sincerely believe that God wants all of us to produce a hundredfold—but whether we produce a hundredfold or not, we produce if we are saved!"⁸²

"Verse 11: **'Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.'** Here Paul sums up what he has said thus far in this chapter on the resurrection. Whether Paul or others of the apostles gave the message, **"So we preach."** That is, 'We all preach the same message because we are all the apostles of Jesus Christ, and Christ is not divided. There is only one Gospel; there is only one message.' '.....And so ye believed.' In other words, 'Because you heard, received, and believed the Word, you are saved, you are standing in the Word, and you are laboring because of the grace of God.' "⁸³

II. NOTICE THE ENORMOUS PROBLEM WITH DENYING THE RESURRECTION. vs. 12-19

In verses 1-12, Paul discussed some real evident proof of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we will move on to hear Paul tell the enormous problems that there would be if there had been no resurrection of Christ from the dead. And truthfully, to be very honest, if there was no resurrection, than there would be no genuine Christianity. Why? Because the resurrection of Christ from the dead has brought eternal life to every born-again child of God who has put his or her faith in the finished work of Christ on Calvary. As I mentioned earlier in this commentary, it is the resurrection that sets Christianity far above all of the other religions of the world. All of those false religions worship dead prophets, dead gurus, dead people, and inanimate objects, which have never had life in them. These other religions are nothing but idol worship, which God has forbidden that man should worship. But when, one comes to Christ and experiences a genuine living relationship with the living resurrected Lord, this intimate fellowship with Christ truly gives testimony that Christ did rise from the dead as the Bible teaches. So therefore, we have seen several proofs of the resurrection. Now, let's look at some terrible problems we would have if there was no resurrection.

A. If there is no resurrection, our preaching is in vain. vs. 12-14a

In verse 12, Paul just simply asks the question of the Corinthians; **"Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"** Obviously, Paul was just simply flabbergasted that any of the Corinthians could doubt the credibility of the resurrection. But, it seems that there were people in the church of Corinth professing to be saved, while questioning the fact of the resurrection. Some people

⁸² The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 490.

⁸³ Ibid, page 492.

believe, and I do as well, that there may have been some vagabond Sadducees who had migrated to Corinth, and because they were vehemently against and didn't believe in any miracles, including the resurrection, they may have been the people that were leading in this false doctrine in Corinth. Therefore, Paul had to tell the people that if they didn't believe in the resurrection, then they were not really saved, because to believe the Gospel message, one had to believe in the resurrection.

So, Paul just simply states that if there was no resurrection, then all of his preaching, and the preaching of others, was totally in vain, or worthless as this term indicates.

Then, Paul says in verse 13, that if there is no resurrection period, then, Jesus is still dead, and there is no Good News Gospel. Thus, when we come to the first part of verse 14, once more Paul declares that if there was no resurrection of Christ from the dead, then, all of his preaching, even to the Corinthians, was totally worthless, and they would still be lost in their sins. You see folks, it is the resurrection that provides hope for every believer in this world, and yes, especially for the world to come. If there was no resurrection of Christ, then there is no reason to keep preaching an empty Gospel which promises no hope.

B. If there is no resurrection, our practice is in vain. vs. 14b; 17

In the second part of verse 14, Paul continues the discussion about the damage that is done by not believing in the resurrection of the Lord. If what we preach is made vain by not believing in the resurrection, then also, what we practice in our daily lives is in vain also if we do not believe in the resurrection. Paul tells the Corinthians about this by saying that their exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ would be of non-effect if there was no resurrection from the dead. In other words, the validity or authenticity of our faith is established and verified by the living relationship we have with Jesus because He did arise from the dead, and He is alive for evermore.

C. If there is no resurrection, our purging is in vain. v. 17b

In the second part of verse 17, Paul takes this thought one step further by saying that if there were no resurrection of Christ from the dead, then, not only would there be no validity of our faith, but all professing believers would still be in their sins, and our profession would be worthless. In other words, Jesus' death on the cross would not have taken our sins away if He did not rise from the death to provide eternal life. The Bible teaches us in many places that sin brings forth death. So, if our sins have not be forgiven and if we have not been justified by Christ, then the only thing we have to look forward to is death.

Let me give you some expanded thought about our preaching and our practice being in vain, if there was no resurrection. "In verse 14, two additional consequences are provided. Growing naturally out of the conclusion of verse 13, that if there is no resurrection Christ is not risen, then it must be conceded that if Christ be not risen, then the preaching of the apostles and of Paul was vain. Furthermore, since **'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God'**

(Rom. 10:17), the faith of the Corinthians was also in 'vain' (kenos, meaning empty or altogether void of content.'). The result of preaching the resurrection of Christ, if there is in fact no resurrection, is that the preaching of the apostles was in vain in the sense that it was a sham and hypocrisy. There was form to the preaching and a certain kind of logic inherent in it, but in the absence of truth, it was without content and empty of significance. Correspondingly, the faith that the Corinthians had placed in the Gospel was also empty. While the apostles preached a lie, the Corinthians believed the falsehood. The latter might have been less guilty than the former, but both were together in the fruitlessness of the preaching and believing tasks."⁸⁴

Therefore my dear friends, it is extremely important that we do understand that belief in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus is the capstone of our commitment to Christ, and it is the hope that we all have for the future. If Christ did not rise from the dead, then we will not have new resurrected bodies as well.

D. If there is no resurrection, our profession is in vain. vs. 15-16

In verse 15, Paul tells the Corinthians that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then every believer's witness or testimony would be an absolute lie. Notice again what Dr. Patterson says about this verse. "Interestingly, Paul stressed that the falsehood involved here was of much greater consequence than that of one man's simply deceiving another about temporal or material matters. For one to misrepresent the things of God, regardless of his motive, is the most degrading of all possible falsehoods. The potential for harm involves the fact that the consequences of such a falsehood may not only affect this life, but also whatever existence may follow upon physical death. In addition, the nature of the falsehood relates to the most sacred of all relationships---i.e., the relationship between creature and Creator. The possibility that Paul and others would be found to be false witnesses of God is certain if there is no resurrection because they had clearly testified that God had raised Christ from the dead. The expression 'we are found' suggests the possibility of investigation. If, upon investigation, it is certain that the dead do not rise, the duplicity of the apostles would surely be discovered since, in fact, they had testified that God raised up Jesus, whom in fact He has not raised."⁸⁵

In the last part of verse 15, Paul really emphasizes the scary truth that if Jesus didn't rise from the grave, then we have no hope in being resurrected from our dead bodies and receiving brand new ones in the same form as Christ. We must never forget that Christ was the first fruit of the resurrection, and because He arose, we too shall one day rise from the dead as well.

Then in verse 16, Paul repeats it one more time. If there is no resurrection of the dead saints from the grave when the rapture takes place, then everything we have ever professed, testified to, and even believed is a total and complete lie. But folks, we have nothing to worry about, because Jesus did rise, and we can look forward to that great day when there won't be any more sickness, pain, suffering, cancer, heart trouble, diabetes, or death any more, for the former things will have

⁸⁴ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 279.

⁸⁵ Ibid, pages 279-280.

ceased, and we will be in our wonderful resurrected bodies just like Jesus! Praise the Lord!

E. If there is no resurrection, our preservation is in vain. v. 18

It is very obvious to me that there were professing believers in Corinth that had lost their loved ones, and the family members left behind were very concerned about their departed friends and family members. The people in Thessalonica also had the same concern for their departed brothers and sisters. So, here in verse 18, Paul just simply and plainly tells the Corinthians that if there wasn't a resurrection of Christ from the dead, then there can't possibly be a resurrection of the saints out in the future. Thus, those who are dead today, are lost forever and forever. But hallelujah, we don't need to get depressed here, because if we have really been saved, then we already know about the resurrection power of God that has transformed us. So, we should not fear as those who don't have any hope. The very fact that the word "sleep" is used here is just a reminder that death is really not death to the child of God, but it is merely a short time of sleep. This is just so encouraging, and to know this during this terribly discouraging age is true, then we can go on with our heads held high and our hearts filled with expectancy!

F. If there is no resurrection, our promise is in vain. v. 19

One of the greatest words in all of the vocabularies of the world is the word "hope." When things are going terrible for us, if we can hang on to the word hope, we will probably survive the difficulties. But, if the word hope is not available to us, or if there is no more hope, the consequences are horrific.

Here in verse 19 of this great chapter from God's Word, Paul reminds the Corinthians that if there was no resurrection of Christ, then there could be no coming resurrection for the saints of God. In other words, the promise of life to come would be nullified without the resurrection. So, what Paul emphasizes is that without the past resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of our physical bodies, we would have no eternity to look forward to. And yes, this life would be a miserable place if there was not an impending resurrection from the dead which will give us brand new bodies.

"In the event that the resurrection were not, in fact, true, Christians would, for the most part, still be appreciably less miserable than their pagan neighbors. The concepts bound up in Christian ethics are designed to make life fruitful and happy to a degree far greater than what is normally attained by members of society in general. So the sense of the verse is not that Christians would have a miserable physical existence if the resurrection were not real but, rather, that they are to be pitied above all other people in their gullibility and imminent disappointment. Having devoted their lives to the service of One whom they hope to see and adore in ages to come, they would, in fact, experience no resurrection at all."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ibid, page 281.

Folks, did you get the point Dr. Patterson is trying to make? He is saying that even if there were no resurrection forthcoming for the child of God, yet the benefits of living for Christ right here on earth make it worthwhile. But, the greatest thing about our coming death is the fact that we will indeed receive brand new glorified bodies made in the image of Christ and His resurrected body. Therefore, it is wonderful to know Christ and to experience His presence while we serve Him here on earth, but the greatest thing to look forward to is when Christ comes to resurrect the saved believers and takes them up to meet Him in the air. And then, for those who are alive at the time of the rapture, they will receive their glorified bodies when they too meet Jesus up in the air. What a glorious time this is going to be for every truly born-again child of God; all because of the resurrection of Christ over two thousand years ago, and because of the promise of our impending resurrection sometime in the not-to-distant future. We all should just praise the Lord for the resurrection! In spite of my huge number of physical ailments now in my aging body, I can still rejoice because soon and very soon I am going to see the King! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

III. NOTICE THE ESCHATOLOGICAL POINTINGS OF THE RESURRECTION. vs. 20-28

As we continue this wonderful chapter about the past resurrection of Christ, and the promise of our impending resurrection as believers, we now come to understand some wonderful thoughts about the end times of humanity and the entire world which shall soon be changed dramatically. There is much marvelous truth here about our future; so, let's learn everything we can as Paul was trying to teach the Corinthians about the end times (eschatology) which were to come. Just imagine if the true Corinthian believers were looking forward to the coming of Christ over 2,000 years ago, how much more should we be looking forward to the return of Christ in the rapture, and also, how the heavens and earth shall be purified for the time after the one thousand year millennial reign of Christ, when He will make everything new for ever and ever. I just can't wait to experience this glorious bliss when there will be no more sin, no more sickness, no more pain, no more suffering, and no more disappointment. We are truly assured of this because of the resurrection of our wonderful Lord from the dead in the garden tomb just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

A. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus points to a future resurrection. vs. 20-22

Verse 20 in our text is one of those verses that I didn't understand in my early years after becoming a serious child of God. I used to ask, "what does it mean that Jesus was the first-fruit of the coming resurrection?" Then, as I really began to study this, I surely learned how important this truth really is. You see folks, Jesus Christ was the first person to ever rise from the dead to never die again. And because of this, He is indeed the first-fruit of our coming resurrection. Oh yes, there are several people mentioned in the Bible that were resurrected or brought back

from the dead, but they had to die again. You probably remember Jesus resurrecting Lazarus from the dead in John, Chapter 11. But, Lazarus had to die again.

Then you probably remember when Jesus brought back the widow's son in Nain from death as found in Luke 7:11-18. Yet, this young man would have to die again. But because of the resurrection of Christ after being buried, we have the promise that one day we too will be resurrected with a brand new glorified body which shall never die again. What a glorious day that is going to be!

In verse 21, Paul goes on to describe for the Corinthian believers the foundation for the need for the resurrection of our bodies. This need was and still is based upon the fact that by one man's disobedience (Adam), sin came into the world and brought death to all humanity. Therefore, it was mandatory that one man, our Lord Jesus Christ, come into the world to die and become the first-fruit of the resurrection. Jesus willingly and voluntarily did this, and because of His death, His burial, and most important, His resurrection, we to have the promise of a resurrection with a new body yet in the future.

Also, in the next verse, Paul goes further by saying that because of Adam's sin, the entire human race was contaminated through the lineage of Adam. Thus, there had to be one man who would voluntarily die in our place in order to purchase our redemption, and then rise from the dead to provide for us a glorified body in the image of our Lord's resurrection body as I mentioned earlier in this study.

Therefore, it would behoove every one of us to realize that we are indeed sinners filled with sin, which will ultimately produce death for everyone of us, unless the rapture of the church takes place before. So, because of our sinfulness and the coming death for each one of us, we only can be made alive with the promise of a new resurrected body through the living Christ Who is alive for ever more.

B. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus points to a future return. v. 23

Verse 23 is a very short verse, but one filled with enormous truth about the future. The word order in this verse is the Greek word, "tagma", which means to be placed in a planned order or alignment. The truth Paul is describing here is that just like Jesus Christ was indeed the first-fruit of the resurrection, we shall follow in His order if we are genuinely saved and have experienced the resurrection life. Thus, when Jesus comes again, we who have been born into the family of God will without a doubt follow in the planned resurrection, which follows the pattern Jesus Christ established for each of us as His followers, when He arose from the dead.

So folks, because we too have been promised the resurrection bodies for our future when Jesus returns, then the very fact of the coming resurrection give tremendous validity to the promise that Christ is coming again. Without His coming to raise the dead and rapture the church, there would be no personal resurrection for each of us as His children.

Now, let me ask you to take notice of the following paragraph to enlighten yourself to never be led astray by some false teaching that some denominations and cults teach today. "There are some who teach that the second coming of Christ takes place at the time of the believer's death. Jesus said, **'And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there**

ye may be also' (John 14:3). This, we are told by some, is what takes place when a saint of God dies. Christ comes to receive the soul of the departed to usher that soul into paradise. Such teaching is unscriptural, for Paul, in speaking of the resurrection, tells of the physical dead who have died in the Lord. Then, he tells that they will be resurrected when Christ returns. For these saints, the second coming of Christ cannot possibly mean death, for they have been dead for centuries."⁸⁷

Now, I have included the above writing from Dr. Blair to help you be aware that there are still those in our modern days who will do everything possible to deceive you that Jesus is not going to return prominently in the air for the church, but that He returns for each believer the moment the believer dies. My friends, please don't ever be led astray by this false teaching. Yes, we don't hear this as much today as we used to years ago before dispensationalism and the teaching of the millennium, but there are still some that promote this phony belief yet today.

C. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus points to a future reign. vs. 24-25

"Next, Paul moves on to that final scene when Christ has returned and has reigned throughout the millennium of peace and righteousness on earth. At that time, He will have completed His work, subdued His enemies, cast Satan and death and Hades into the lake of fire (as we read in Revelation), then, delivered the Kingdom back to the Father. This is what Paul now describes: **'Then the end will come, when He has destroyed dominion, authority and power. For He must reign until he has put all His enemies under His feet (I Corinthians 15:24-25).**

Notice that the reign of Christ does not begin after He subdues His enemies. His enemies are still present during His reign—and He must reign until He has put all of His enemies under His feet. That is a powerful truth to remember in times of discouragement, defeat, and oppression: Jesus now reigns. He is the King even now."⁸⁸ Folks, this is a wonderful thought! Even now when it seems like the entire world has become so vile and wicked, and the hatred for the church and the people of God has gotten so much worse, we still can rejoice because we know that Christ is already in control of everything because He is our King, even right now!

D. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus points to a future release. vs. 26-28

Now, in verse 26, we come to a very promising truth. This truth is that one day out in the future, death will be destroyed, or as it is stated in the Greek, to be made non-effective. There is truly coming a day when sin and its terrible consequence, death, shall indeed be made non-operable. No longer will man have to live in a sinful body that is making its progress toward death every day that this man lives. But, death will be defeated eventually in reality, although it has already been defeated by the power of our resurrected Lord. In other words, we may be living in sinful bodies that yes, indeed, may die, but when this death takes place for the child of God, it won't really be death at all. Why is this true? Because Christ was the first-

⁸⁷ Living Wisely, By: J. Allen Blair, Loizeaux Brothers, pages 318-319.

⁸⁸ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 234.

fruit of all of the coming resurrected people who will either be resurrected from the graves at the time of the rapture, or will be given glorified bodies at the time of the rapture, when God's children will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Simply put, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has made it possible for every truly saved person to be released from the bondage of death, which he or she has lived in since the day they were born. But, it is only through a genuine salvation experience that one can ultimately claim this freedom from the bonds of death. While we are still living on this earth in sinful bodies, we are truly living with the imminency of death just before everyone of us. Only God knows the time and day of our death, and only God knows when He will send His Son back to this earth to finalize everything, including the resurrection of all of the saints.

Now, we move on to verses 27-28, which I believe are a little confusing, especially in our beloved King James Bible. Please notice these verses in the Amplified Bible. **"For He (the Father) has put all things in subjection under His (Christ's) feet. But when it says, All things are put in subjection (under Him), it is evident that He (Himself) is excepted Who does the subjecting of all things to Him. However, when everything is subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also subject Himself to (the Father) Who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all—that is, be everything to everyone, supreme, the indwelling and controlling factor of life."**

"This verse (v. 27) actually begins with an apparent allusion to Psalm 8:6, which prophesies the advent of the Messiah and the ultimate hour when all things are placed beneath His feet. This allusion is indicated by the statement, 'when He saith.' 'Place under' (hupotasso) is literally a military term. Two interesting matters are clear in this verse. First, the quotation is from a Psalm obviously written by a man clearly understood by Paul to be the very voice of God. The antecedent for the pronoun 'He' in the phrase 'He saith all things are put under Him' is clearly the God who is mentioned in the first phrase of the verse and who put all things under the feet of Jesus. Hence, God uttered Psalm 8:6, a clear indication of verbal inspiration."⁸⁹

"It is also interesting to notice that Paul affirmed one exception to all that was placed under Jesus, and that is the Father who is the one who has put all things under the Son. This affirmation does not entail a subordinationist Christology in which Jesus is viewed as something less than God. It only means that the full work of Christ with regard to the salvation of the human family is accomplished in perfect obedience to the will of the Father and, further, that of the kingdoms of this earth, even the millennial kingdom, are ultimately subject to the heavenly kingdom."⁹⁰

"Few verses have been more problematic to evangelical Christians than this verse (verse 28), which, at first glance, seems awfully difficult to square with the Trinitarian emphasis. However difficult the verse may be, especially in its English translation, one must remember that the first rule of biblical interpretation is to be cognizant of both the immediate and larger context. In light of Philippians 2 and

⁸⁹ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 288.

⁹⁰ Ibid, pages 288-289.

Colossians 1 and 2 particularly, there can be no question but that the Apostle Paul was convinced that Jesus was God in every sense that the Father is God. Whatever he meant in this verse must be understood in the light of those lucid passages."⁹¹

So now folks, I believe these last three verses, which seem so hard to interpret, may be just simply explained by the following. One day when Jesus returns in the rapture, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and those believers who are still alive in the flesh, shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and they too, will receive brand new glorified bodies. Then, after this there will be seven years of horrible happenings down here on earth where the Antichrist will rule. For the first three years, he will promise peace and safety to Israel, but at the end of the first three and one half years, this Antichrist will turn into a monster and begin to slaughter Jews by the thousands. Then, at the end of the seven years we will return to earth with Christ, and Christ shall defeat all of the enemies of God on this earth. By the way, many Christians will be martyred during the second part of the tribulation period, and they will be given new resurrected bodies as well. After the seven-year tribulation period, Christ will establish His millennial Kingdom and He will rule with a rod of iron. I personally believe that we who have been very fruitful and productive down here on earth will serve Christ in positions of authority during the millennium (Rev. 5:10). Then, at the end of the thousand-year millennium, Christ will judge the lost world at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20). Following this, the Dragon (Satan), the beast (Antichrist), and the false prophet, will have been thrown in to the Lake of Fire, and God will purge the earth with fire and establish the new atmospheric heavens and a brand new earth without sin or any evil thing.

So, we must conclude that from the beginning of the millennium until God finalizes everything, Christ will rule and reign over all of creation, with the exception that Jesus will be in subjection to God the Father. Of course, this is the way God first planned to have the heavens and earth, but when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, the Kingdom was lost, but only for a while until Jesus came, died on the cross, and then, arose from the dead as the first-fruit of the resurrection. This resurrection was the first seed of the greater harvest of resurrected saints which would come down through the ages of time. Therefore, we must conclude, that God will indeed assume complete control of His creation and Kingdom, and restore everything just like it was before Satan and sin corrupted the entire universe. But folks, I promise you that God knew what would happen even before the foundation of the world, but because He loved man enough to give him the prerogative to choose between right and wrong. Of course, Adam and Eve made the wrong choice, but God had His other plan for Jesus to come and redeem people, and then eventually retake the power and authority which God the Father had relinquished for a period of time.

Therefore, we must conclude that the best is yet to come for the born-again child of God because of our coming resurrection following the first resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, there are great days ahead for those in the Kingdom of God, but for yet a little while, we may have to endure more suffering until Christ

⁹¹ Ibid, page 289.

comes again, or until we meet Him in death. But, for the believer, there is nothing to fear because of the new resurrected bodies he or she shall receive.

IV. NOTICE THE EFFECTUAL PURPOSE OF THE RESURRECTION. vs. 29-34

A. The first purpose of the resurrection is to validate our profession. v. 29

We now come to what some feel is a very difficult passage to interpret. But yet, I don't believe it is nearly as difficult as what some people think. Also, in this verse, 29, the Mormon Church has made a terrible false doctrine which is being used foolishly by scores of Mormons trying to get salvation for their dead loved ones by being baptized for these loved ones in the Mormon Temple in Utah. I must tell you that in order to come up with this terribly false doctrine, a person has to totally disregard all interpretive principles to believe this verse teaches having people baptized there in the Mormon Temple on behalf of those who have already died.

So now, let's keep in mind what Paul has been talking about almost entirely in this 15th Chapter of this book. He has been talking about the significance of the resurrection of Christ in the past in order for us to share in a vivid bodily resurrection in the future when Jesus comes to rapture the church. It truly is the resurrection of Christ, which makes the promise that we too will one day receive our glorified bodies.

Let me reiterate once more that some people say that verse 29, is a reference to a false pagan baptism for the dead which was being practiced in pagan worship all around the city of Corinth and in other Greek cities. However, if this were indeed what Paul was referring to, then surely Paul would have forbidden this evil practice. Absolutely nowhere in the Word of God are we told that if we would be baptized for those of our families and friends who have already died, then they could receive salvation even after death. This belief is absolute heresy! And, this is one of the prominent doctrines of the false Mormon Church, as I mentioned in the previous paragraphs.

Folks, I sincerely believe that this verse is not really as hard to understand as some people say. I just believe that what Paul is saying is that if loved ones and friends who were members of the local church had died, and were buried, if there is no resurrection, then why should we be concerned with winning other people to Christ and having them baptized to confess their beliefs to take the place of those who had already died? In other words, our efforts would be totally in vain if there is not a resurrection to look forward to when we depart this world. So, may I say, why bother? Let me give you what the "Liberty Commentary Bible," says about this verse of Scripture.

"Since the context centers on the reality of the resurrection, it seems that Paul would be questioning why they are continuing to baptize new converts 'over' or 'in place of' the dead ones, if there is no resurrection, since baptism symbolizes our death and resurrection. To continue to baptize new converts, then, in place of the dead ones, would be meaningless if there were to be no real resurrection of the dead."⁹²

⁹² The Liberty Commentary Bible, Thomas Nelson, page 2328.

So therefore, what is Paul really saying? I believe he is simply saying that if there is no resurrection for every child of God to look forward to, then we are wasting our time trying to win new converts to Christ and then baptizing them. Thus, the resurrection is the event that gives validity to what we profess as believers. If there is no resurrection of believers yet in the future, then, all of our present commitments and service to Christ are truly in vain.

B. The second purpose of the resurrection is to validate our pain. vs. 30-32

My friends, do you enjoy the pain of suffering ridicule, castigation, or criticism because of your commitment to Christ? I surely don't, but just like Jesus promised us, we are going to suffer for the cause of Christ, if we are really serious about serving Him. Paul just asks the Corinthians, "Why should we stand in jeopardy or in danger every hour, if there is not a resurrection out in the future that provides hope and encouragement for us today?" Our pain is never pleasant, but if we know a better day is coming, then we will be inclined to keep working for the cause of Christ, regardless of the pain we have to bear. Pay attention to the following quote from Dr. Paige Patterson again.

"In verse 30, Paul then moved on to still another pragmatic argument. Not only had he asked about the significance of baptism, but he also asked, 'Why is it that we stand in jeopardy every hour?' Paul's own experience had taught him well the sufferings that were essential corollaries of the Christian faith—so much so that he had written **'Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' (2 Timothy 3:12)**. When Paul was a learned rabbi, he had the respect of the establishment and was able to function without fear of loss of life or punishment. However, becoming a follower of Christ placed his life in continual danger. The apostle thus asked the question, 'Why, if there is no resurrection, would a man choose to follow a path in life that would automatically expose him to the danger of death at almost every turn?'"⁹³

In verse 31, Dr. Patterson does a good job explaining this verse. There is confusion here because of the meaning of the word protest. In our English vocabulary today, this word means to resist or rebut something or someone. But here in the King James English which comes from the Greek, the word actually means to glory or boast about something. Therefore, with this in mind, let's follow once more what Dr. Patterson has said about this text.

In verse 31, "The word order in this verse is the reverse of the King James translation. Paul began by affirming 'according to the day,' or 'day after day, I am dying.' The reference acknowledges the inevitability of death and even focuses on the growing nearness of it. Paul used a strong expression to say that even though he died daily, he protested 'by your rejoicing,' a somewhat unusual expression making use of the word 'kauchesis,' which generally means 'glorying' or 'boasting.' Paul may well have had in mind his glorying or boasting about the Corinthians. Even though they were problematic to him in some ways, still he rejoiced in the Corinthian

⁹³ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 294.

Church, and the very joy that he had in the Corinthians in Christ Jesus the Lord was testimony to the certainty of the resurrection."⁹⁴

In the last phrase of verse 31, Paul tells the Corinthians that he dies daily. Of course, as is always the case seemingly, there are many arguments about what Paul is talking about when he says he dies daily. But, based upon the context of this entire chapter, I just simply believe that Paul probably was talking about two things. I believe he was telling the Corinthians that because of much suffering in his body everyday he lived, he was facing the possibility of death. Whether it was from his deteriorating body or from the daily persecution because of his preaching, Paul was having to deal with the reality of death every day. And so, Paul was simply saying that if there was no resurrection to look forward to in order to get a new glorified body, then, the suffering he was facing in the present wasn't worth anything. In other words, it was only the promise of the resurrection which gave Paul the hope of a better day with a better body which kept him going.

Also, I believe there is the possibility in the circumstances that Paul went through every day that he was having difficulty dying to himself. In the Book of Galatians, Paul told the Galatians that every day he had to crucify himself and totally depend upon the power of Christ within in order to carry on his life. Please notice this verse: **"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).** So, I believe we could say that Paul may have been telling the Corinthians that if there was no resurrection out in the future for him to receive, then, we might just as well live any way we desire simply because there is no better day coming. In other words, why should we try to live such a virtuous or godly life, if we didn't have the resurrection body to look forward to. This is surely what Paul talks about in the very next verse.

Now, in verse 32, Paul really restates the foolishness of going through so much suffering if there was not a resurrection of the body to look forward to. Please notice the following comments about this verse by Dr. Oliver B. Greene.

" **'If after the manner of men.....'** This statement simply means, 'If I did it with human motives, with the idea of personal gain, pride, and prestige.' (And if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Paul could have had no purpose other than human gain.)'

'.....I have fought with beasts at Ephesus....' Paul was a free-born Roman Jew; he did not buy his citizenship nor earn it. He was born free, and therefore he could not be compelled to fight with the beasts in the arena in Rome. He was a citizen of Rome, and he could not be thrown to the beasts because of his citizenship. So undoubtedly the beasts to which he refers here were the maniacal mobs who attacked him and so brutally beat him. Most outstanding Bible scholars believe that on one occasion they actually killed Paul and dragged him outside the city, leaving him for dead; but the saints gathered round and prayed, and Paul was literally raised from the dead. (Acts 14:19-20)"⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Ibid, page 294.

⁹⁵ The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 508.

" '.....**What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?**' Paul is asking, 'If there be no resurrection and no rewarding day, why should I go on suffering for the Gospel?' Thus he makes it crystal-clear that there IS a rewarding day coming for all suffering saints. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, when believers have been raised from the dead, they will be rewarded for their stewardship (I Cor. 3:11-15).

If the dead rise not, **'Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.'** To reject the Bible doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the consequent resurrection of the dead—saved and unsaved—opens the door to unbridled sensuality. Those who believe that man is no more than any other animal, as a rule will follow the practice of eating, drinking, and making merry—many times in the most debased way imaginable! But to accept the Bible fact that death does not end it all and that there will be a resurrection and a judgment day, provides a moral safeguard against sensuality.' ⁹⁶

In other words, folks, if there is no resurrection of the body to come, and if there is no judgment to face, then let's just live as we want to with no fear of chastisement or retribution at the judgment of God. So, I believe we can now look around us at the wicked way people are living and determine that they don't believe there is life after death, or a coming judgment before God where they will be held accountable. And may I say right here that this is the reason so many people want to believe and teach evolution, because if we are all just evolving animals, then there is no God to Whom we must answer!

C. The third purpose is to void our perversion. vs. 33-34

At this point, Paul really reveals the problem that the Corinthian believers were facing about no future resurrection. This problem was being caused by false teachers who were corrupting the teaching, which Paul had previously given them about the resurrection of Christ, and of course, about our bodily resurrection in the future. The problem was that corrupt people were trying to corrupt others by their corrupt doctrine, which always leads to immoral and perverted behavior. The word manner here refers to behavior or lifestyle. So, the problem in Corinth was, and it still is today, that corrupt and evil people communicate evil and false doctrines in order to gain freedom from guilt and judgment from God. It just seems that because of their wicked hearts, these evil people are hell-bent on destroying others with them, because they don't want to even insinuate that there might be a resurrection in the future when all of us will be resurrected from the dead, and then stand before Jesus Christ as the Lord of the universe. This wicked belief and philosophy is what we are seeing, especially here in America, when perversion and debauchery are the prominent and main things. And, while practicing these evil practices, these sin-blinded people just can't allow themselves to believe that they will ever have to give an account to any person or to God one day at the judgment. Their disbelief in the real God to Whom they will have to answer is just a license for them to commit every kind of perverted sin known to mankind. So, one of the main reasons for the resurrection yet to come, is to help us clean up our lives and void or stamp out our

⁹⁶ Ibid, page 509.

sinning. In more frank terminology, a genuine knowledge of a future resurrection where everyone stands before Jesus to give an account of his or her lives has been given to us to nullify or make void our sin down here on this earth right now.

So, there you have it in verse 34. Paul was telling the believers in Corinth to wake up and start living a righteous life and stop sinning. And then, I believe he told them, oh yes, some of you don't believe in God, but it won't change the fact that you will have to answer to the God you don't believe in. And, Paul goes further to say, if you don't really believe in the resurrection of Christ, and yes, the resurrection for us in the future, then you have willfully rejected the truth that Paul had given them; thus, shame on you! They had the truth, but they didn't want a Gospel with righteous or holy requirements. They wanted to commit their evil sins, and still feel comfortable in their sins. And, the only way they could retain this comfort was to reject the truth about a future day of resurrection and judgment. This is such a sad story in the word of God.

V. NOTICE THE EVENTUAL PROPERTY OF THE RESSURECTION BODY.

vs. 35-49

We now move on in our study of the future resurrection of our bodies after we have passed into the next world, or possibly after we have been raptured and our bodies changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. In these next fifteen verses, we are going to learn some tremendous truth concerning how our future resurrection will take place, and also, what our new resurrection bodies will be like.

First, in verse 35, we see Paul continuing to deal with the problems and questions in the church at Corinth. In the midst of all of these skeptical people, someone must have sent Paul this question, "If there is a coming resurrection, how will this take place?" This is the question that begins the discussion of what kind of bodies we will have after the resurrection. So, what Paul does in these next several verses is to explain how the resurrection will occur, Who brings it to pass, and of course, what the resurrected bodies will be like.

A. Our resurrection body will be a shining body. vs. 35-41

I have already mentioned to you in verse 35, the two questions that were being asked by those skeptical professing believers in Corinth. Now, as we look at verse 36, we suddenly see that Paul's patience has run out with these skeptics. He starts off this verse by calling the person who had asked these questions a fool. I am sure that Paul's bluntness caught the people off guard, but the truth is that they did indeed deserve this bluntness due to their silly questions.

Paul responds to these questions by using the analogy of a farmer planting a seed, the process that follows, and then, the ultimate fruit that is produced. Please look closely at verses 37 and 38. In these verses Paul continues describing the illustration of planting a seed, and the ultimate result.

"Paul continues his illustration: The grain that we sow is not the grain that will come forth from the ground. Paul is here contrasting the little grain—dry and certainly not beautiful—with that which it produces, the beautiful plant that springs

from the grain that is sown. The seed receives its body from God, for God is the author of ALL life: and in the same way, He will provide a resurrection body for every believer—a body like unto His own glorified body.

God the Father will fashion the resurrection body, '**as it hath pleased Him.**' Here we have the declaration of the omnipotence and the absolute foreknowledge of God. Redemption was completed from start to finish before ever the foundation of this world was laid. God is sovereign: He knows the end in the beginning, and everything between the beginning and the ending. Each believer's resurrection body is already foreordained 'as it hath pleased Him'—that is, as God willed, according to His predetermined counsel."⁹⁷

Now, before moving on, I would like to insert something here to hopefully avoid any misunderstanding about God's sovereignty and His foreordination. I am not a Calvinist, and I never will be. There is just so much confusion in the religious world and in our churches today because of this damnable doctrine called Calvinism. I have addressed this subject many times in a number of other books which I have written. Therefore, I will not get into another discussion about this, except to say that just because we believe in the sovereignty of God does not mean that we believe that God before the foundation of the world predetermined who would be saved and who would not. I sincerely believe that the word predestination as it is described in many places in the Bible has nothing to do with lost people. It has to do with God's predetermined will that all saved people will live a sanctified life through which he or she may discover the perfect will of God for his or her life.

And, I will never believe in irresistible grace or a limited atonement. If I did, I would close my Bible and never preach again. But, what I do believe is that before God ever created the heavens and the earth, He knew who would receive His plan of salvation through the shed blood of His Son on the cross, His literal burial, and His glorified resurrection. And, it is because of this glorious resurrection of our Lord that we too can look forward to our own resurrection out in the future.

As we now look at verse 39, I would like to say that this is one of the most important verses in the Bible. In Paul's attempt to clear up the confusion in the church in Corinth about the coming resurrection, he provides absolute proof that the theory of evolution, which is now being taught in millions of schools, is totally false doctrine, and it had its origin in hell. In this verse 39, Paul responds to the question about what kind of bodies our resurrection bodies will be like, by declaring that all flesh is not the same. Instead there is the flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, and another of fishes, and another of birds. Paul is just simply saying that man is different from all of the other creatures God has made; and so will our resurrection bodies be different from all other bodies.

This truth is so expounded in the next verses 40-41, in a remarkable way. Paul says that the celestial bodies are completely different from the terrestrial, and because of this, each one manifests its own glory in a special way. In other words, man is not like an animal because God has predetermined that man would live on after death, whereas in the Bible there is no evidence that an animal has a soul and will live throughout eternity. Of course, the book of Revelation describes some

⁹⁷ Ibid, pages 512-513.

horses that were seen by John in heaven, but this still doesn't prove that when animals die here on earth, they will go to an animal heaven.

Then in verse 41, Paul explains even more clearly by telling that each body will be different as he describes the glory of the sun, the glory of the moon, and the glory of the stars. In other words, when we pass from this world in death, or when Jesus comes to rapture the church, the saints of God will be given brand new glorified bodies like the resurrected body of our Lord. And, each body will be different, which I believe that this might be talking about us having a distinguishable appearance just like our bodies did here on earth. If this is true, as I believe it is, then, I am certain that we will be able to recognize all of our saved loved ones who went before us, and yes, even the husbands, wives, children, parents, friends, colleagues, and all others, just like we did here on earth, but in a more magnificent way. We will have the appearance similar to who we were here on earth, but our bodies will be majestic just like Jesus after the resurrection. And folks, don't forget that in Matthew 17, when Jesus took Peter, James and John to the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah, whom they had never met in person. Surely, we will have distinctive glorified bodies, just like we had distinctive differences down here on earth. But, just remember that these bodies will be free of sin, suffering, distortion, and any other thing that may have caused them to look bad down here on earth. Why, even the former soldier boy who may have been burned by fire on the battle field, will no longer have scars from the burn, but he will be perfect and complete in every way. Yes, we may assuredly say, that our new resurrected bodies will be shining bodies.

B. Our resurrection body will be a secure body. v. 42

When we think of something being corrupt, we immediately think of being rotten, brittle, unstable, or possibly, very insecure. All of these words could at any time describe the deteriorating bodies down here on earth. But folks, when we get our new glorified bodies in heaven, there will be no corruption, no decay, no insecurity, and nothing temporal. Instead, these new resurrected bodies will be perfect and everlasting forever and forever. I almost could shout right here, because there will be no more heart disease, no more diabetes, no more blood pressure problems, no more pain, no more aging, no more doctors' visits, no need for ambulances or hospitals, but forever we will live without ever being sick again. My friends, we may have a difficult time down here getting excited about our upcoming new bodies, but once we get them, what a glorious time of celebration we will have. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

C. Our resurrection body will be a splendid body. v. 43a

In the first phrase of verse 43, Paul states that when our bodies are placed in the ground in order to return to the dust from which they came, these bodies will be sown in the earth in dishonor. But then, when the resurrection takes place out in the future, our bodies will be raised in glory. This means that there is just no way that we can even comprehend now what they will be like. They will have the radiant

splendor that the body of Jesus had after His resurrection. In that body, Jesus could walk through closed doors, leave the room without an exit, show up in Galilee in short order, or return to the Mount Olives without having to make the 80 mile trip which He had to travel while He was in His earthen vessel. Our new bodies will be filled with splendor and majesty. Let me share with you once more the comments of Dr. Paige Patterson on this verse.

"The antithesis proposed is that the body is sown in 'dishonor (atimia), a word frequently used to describe loss of citizenship and, hence, humiliation. The physical body may be placed in the grave with much care and tenderness amid the accolades of admirers, but there is the necessity of disposing of the body. It is no longer fit for society and, hence, is in dishonor. The miracle is that the resurrection in such glory that association with it is sought and cherished by all in heaven."⁹⁸

D. Our resurrection body will be a strong body. v. 43b

"The next affirmation is that the body is buried in 'weakness' (astheneia), normally associated with injury or illness. Here that illness or injury has taken its full toll and the lifeless body must be buried since it has no ability to continue to function. But the inability of the body to function at death is transformed in the resurrection into a dynamic body which knows no weakness and few limitations. 'Power' (dunamis) refers to the energy or dynamic associated with a perpetually living body."⁹⁹

Having been a pastor of thousands of people for almost 54 years, there is just no way that I could describe the scores of sick people I have seen become extremely weak and then lifeless just before they die. Many of these dear suffering people have suffered unimaginably for years and years only getting worse and worse and weaker and weaker as the days went by. My own mother, Irene Bowman Frye, was one of these terribly weak people who passed into eternity at the young age of 53 with a ravaging case of cancer. Her final days here on earth were filled with excruciating pain and weakness beyond description. But praise God, the next time I see Mama Irene, she will have a powerfully strong body with not one sign of weakness. What made this possible for us to look forward to? It was the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ Who became the first-fruit of the resurrection. We too shall receive a new body created in His image with the strength and power that only our living omnipotent Savior can provide.

E. Our resurrection body will be a spiritual body. vs. 44-49

We now move on to verse 44 in our text. "The body of the believer is sown in dishonor—a body of corruption and weakness that will return to the dust; but that body which is sown in dishonor, corruption, and weakness will be raised in incorruption, glory, and power. The resurrection body will not be just a body of

⁹⁸ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, pages 300-301.

⁹⁹ Ibid, page 301.

flesh; it will be a spiritual body, not limited by earthly conditions as our present bodies are. It will be a body of flesh and bone as was the body of Jesus when He invited His disciples to handle Him and see that He was not a spirit. Our resurrection bodies will be able to take food, although we will not NEED food. Jesus ate broiled fish and honeycomb to prove to His frightened disciples that He was not a spirit.

'There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.' This is a clear, concise statement. Just as surely as the believer has a physical body suited and fitted for this earthly life, he will just that surely have a spiritual body fitted for the Pearly White City and life eternal with Jesus.

God fashioned these bodies of flesh, and when we consider the human body we must admit that it is a miracle—but we must remember that we were created by the God of miracles; and the God Who constituted our earthly bodies for earth, with its responsibilities and trials, will fashion our spiritual bodies to meet the conditions of the glory in which we will live.

The Christian who lives by faith and walks by faith spends no time worrying about what kind of body he will have on the resurrection morning. It will be a spiritual body—but it will not be simply a spirit. As Christ's body was in His resurrection, so shall our bodies be. Please study Luke 24:36-44."¹⁰⁰

Now, let's go further and take a closer look at the comparison between the natural body and the coming spiritual body. Dr. Ray Stedman has some great words on verses 44-49.

"Here Paul contrasts two men, two Adams. There is the first Adam and the last Adam. The first Adam was the head of the human race in the Garden of Eden. The last Adam, Jesus, is the only other human being to serve as head of the entire human race.

The first Adam, Paul says, was made a living soul. He had a body made from the dust, and God breathed a spirit into that body. The joining together of the spirit and body produced another phenomenon called the soul, the personality. It is the presence of the spirit in a body that creates the soul and allows a person to function as a human being with mind, emotion, and will. That is what the first Adam was.

When Adam sinned and humanity fell, the Holy Spirit, who dwelled in the human spirit of Adam, was withdrawn, and the human spirit became dead. Man, therefore, was governed by his soul, the highest part of his being. The soul can feel and touch and taste and reason, but it has no contact with anything beyond and above."¹⁰¹

"As Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:1, we were all born dead in sin. Why? Because every human being is a son or daughter of the first Adam by nature.

But then came the last Adam, Jesus. Paul calls Him 'a life-giving Spirit.' The first Adam came from the dust, but the last Adam, Jesus, came from heaven. In our mortal bodies, we bear the likeness of the first Adam; but in our resurrection bodies, we will bear the likeness of Jesus, the man from heaven.

¹⁰⁰ The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 515-516.

¹⁰¹ Letters to A Trouble Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHL, pages 245-246.

There are cults that teach that human beings were spirit beings first who came to earth and became human being, who will one day return to a purely spiritual existence. That is a lie, according to Paul. He says that we came into existence on a physical level, according to God's design. In the resurrection, we will have spiritual bodies; they will be real bodies, not immaterial—but they will be glorified and transcendent. Death is the gateway from the physical to the spiritual, from the earthly to the heavenly. I love the way the Apostle John expresses this truth:

'Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (I John:3:2).

What a reassuring hope! What a difference this truth makes to every aspect of our lives! It transforms the way we think and speak and act. It transforms our dreams, our aspirations, and how we use our time. Your entire life hinges on whether you see yourself as a person made of dust or a person made for heaven."¹⁰²

Friends, could I ask you, "what type of value system do you presently have?" I ask this because if we only see ourselves as creatures made from the dust, then probably our value system will be centered on this world and its system. But, if we see ourselves as transformed spiritual creatures from the moment of our eternal salvation, then our value system will center on God's Kingdom in this world, and heaven, which is yet to come for us. Of course, what we have learned here about our coming resurrected bodies should give us a hope and an excitement about getting out of these earthly bodies and into our glorified resurrected bodies.

And, before we move on to the final verses in this chapter, I would like to say that I am totally convinced that the greatest single evidence of true salvation is that we will have the right value system which centers on the will of God for our lives, and for the advancement of God's Kingdom until His Son comes again.

VI. NOTICE THE EXALTING PRAISE FOR THE RESURRECTION. vs. 50-58

By now, even before we study these last nine verses, we should be praising God for the promise of the future resurrection for the saints of the Lord. I say this even in these days of skepticism and doubt within our modern churches, and also, during these days of the false cults and erroneous doctrines that are being taught everywhere. Yes my beloved friends, we can and should be praising God for the certain promise that one day very soon, Jesus shall come again and resurrect the dead, rapture the church, and then, give all of His children these brand new glorified bodies just like His after His resurrection.

A. There should be praise for the truth of the resurrection. vs. 50-52

I believe that every truly born again child of God knows with certainty that Jesus Christ did arise from the dead after being in the heart of the earth for three complete days and nights. Therefore, I also believe that every child of God should

¹⁰² Ibid, page 246.

know for sure that there is coming a great day of resurrection for every child of God who has died before the rapture. We shall receive these new glorified bodies at the first resurrection just preceding the rapture of the church, and then, those who have been caught up in the air shall receive their new bodies simultaneously with the rapture when it takes place. Verse 50, reaffirms the truth of the coming resurrection when it tells us that **'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.'** Let me give you some great words again from Oliver B. Greene.

"The truth set forth in this verse confirms what has preceded it, but it also prepares the way for the answer to the question concerning what will happen to believers who are alive when Jesus comes in the Rapture. Flesh and blood constitute a nature that is perishable, and we know nothing perishable shall enter the kingdom of God. Flesh and blood will eventually produce corruption, and incorruption characterizes all that has to do with the kingdom of God.

The resurrection body will be a body of flesh and bone. There will be no blood in the resurrection body, because 'the life of the flesh is in the blood' and Jesus gave His life (His blood) for the remission of sin (Personally, I believe He presented His blood to the heavenly Father when He returned to the Father immediately after His resurrection (John 20:17).

'....Flesh and blood'—that is, man as he is here upon earth—positively CANNOT inherit the kingdom of God. Man at his very best is altogether vanity. Apart from the resurrection, man cannot enter into the kingdom of God. True, the resurrection was brought about by another Man—the Man Christ Jesus was not only man—He was also God. Apart from the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, man could never have lived where God reigns. What a glorious truth, that born again believers will be raised incorruptible and will reign with Christ."¹⁰³

So, when will this truth, of the coming resurrection be realized by believers? According to verses 51 and 52, **"Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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 change."**

"The mystery here mentioned refers to the fact that in the Rapture (the first stage of the second coming of Christ), living believers will inherit the kingdom of God despite their being flesh and blood—but we are also to learn of the miracle which will make this possible.

'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.....' Not all believers will die physically before the Lord's return. The use of the pronoun 'we' does not necessarily suggest that Paul expected to be alive when the Rapture occurred. He used similar expressions on several occasions. Greek authorities tell us that this passage should be translated, 'We, the living,' meaning born again believers. Both I Thessalonians 4:15 and our present verse tell us that when Jesus comes in the Rapture, believers will be divided into two classes—the living and the dead."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 519-520.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pages 520-521.

B. There should be praise for the transformation at the resurrection. v. 53

Please notice verse 53 closely. **"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."** As I ponder this verse, I just want to shout, "hallelujah." Why? Because right now as I sit here at my computer for hours trying to exegete this wonderful passage, my old body has many aches and pains. But, because of the truth of verse 53, there will soon come a day when I will be gloriously transformed by the power of almighty God into a vessel that is immortal; one that will no longer have any pain, and there will never be sickness in my new body, as I have had so often in my mortal body. Yes truly, there is much to shout about! Glory!

"It is a divine necessity that this body be changed to prepare it for the kingdom of God. The Greek verb rendered 'put on' signifies putting on a garment. It points out the nature of the change that will occur at the resurrection, as well as confirming the truth taught in the previous verses. It also confirm the definite and positive connection between the body we now possess and the body that is raised or changed.

This mortal body, sown in corruption, must 'put on' immortality. This definitely points out the connection between the former body and the raised (or changed) body."¹⁰⁵

C. There should be praise for the triumph in the resurrection. vs. 54-57

It goes without saying that I hate the very thought of death. I don't say this because I am afraid to die. But, the truth is that God doesn't give us grace to die by until the time for our death comes. And, having lived in a diseased body for at least the last ten years of my life, I just don't want any more pain or suffering that often precedes death. Then too, I enjoy my life and ministry which God has given to me. I love my wife and family, and I don't look forward to leaving them. Truthfully, my prayer is that the rapture might soon take place, and we can all go together. But, the reality is that we live in dying bodies, and unless the rapture does occur, all of us as believers will have to face death. But praise God, there is a promised triumph over death, as we discover in verses 54-57. Let's read these verses together again. **"So when this corruptible has 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. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Please notice the following words about the sting of death. "The sting of death is sin—the certainty of judgment, the realization that we owe a debt to God for the sins of a lifetime. Hebrews 2:15 tells us that Jesus came to 'free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.' When He freed us from the curse of sin, He freed us from the sting of death.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pages 522-523.

The fear of death keeps us in bondage. It turns us into driven workaholics. It makes us feel that we must seize every opportunity, because life is so short. We dare not stop or rest but must be driven, driven, driven by the fear of death! This fear makes us anxious and obsessed with our health, with threats and dangers, with the aging process. It robs us of our joy and our sleep.

The fear of death haunts and oppresses us. Even during times of laughter and joy, the thought will sometimes pop up: 'Someday, this will all be over. The laughter will end. I'll be stretched out in a casket. My whole life, which was once ahead of me, will be behind me.' We fear death because it is an unknown. We can't control it, evade it, or avoid it. We put it off as long as we can, but it will surely overtake us in the end.

But there is good news! The resurrection of Jesus has broken the power of sin and death. We do not have to be driven by death, obsessed with death, or haunted by death. Sin's power has been broken and death has been swallowed up in victory."¹⁰⁶ Praise the Lord for the ultimate triumph that we find in the promised resurrection of our mortal bodies an absolute victory, because then, we will have those brand new glorified bodies with never a fear of death again.

D. There should be praise by our toil until the resurrection. v. 58

It is rather amazing how Paul concludes this great chapter. For all of the previous 57 verses, He has been talking to the Corinthian believers about the great resurrection, which is to come out in the future, because of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ Who was the first-fruit of the future resurrections. This entire chapter has been talking about the return of our Lord Jesus Christ at the time of the rapture of the church, and because of the bodily resurrections associated with the rapture, there is much reason to rejoice. But now, in verse 58, in addition to giving reason to praise the Lord with our mouths for the promised victory over death and all of the trials of this life, Paul tells the believers that the greatest way to show our praise to God is to use the coming resurrection as a motive for our faithful service until we die, or until Christ comes again. Oh yes, there are many possible motives that we could have to keep us going until we die or until He comes again, but there is none greater than to know that one day out in the future, there will be a day of personal resurrection for every child of God who truly knows Christ experientially.

Please look at these words. **"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."** So my friends, we can most assuredly know that our work has not been in vain or worthless one day in the future when we receive that glorious new body. All of our efforts from the right motives, will be attested by Christ Himself as He rewards us with victory over death, hell, and the grave, by giving us those victorious new bodies on the day of resurrection. Let me direct your attention once more to the words of Oliver B. Greene.

¹⁰⁶ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHL, page 249.

"Therefore' points back to the tremendous truths set forth previous, and the glorious promises and victories that have been declared.

'...Be ye steadfast, unmoveable.....' According to the first part of this epistle, many of the Corinthian brethren were neither steadfast NOR unmoveable They were led about by teachers of error. They were babes in Christ (if they were even saved), when they should have been spiritually full grown. But Paul loved them, and his affection remained unchanged in spite of their faults and failures.

The Greek here reads, 'become ye' –that is, 'Prove yourselves by being steadfast, firmly rooted and grounded in the pure doctrine of the grace of God. Do not allow any of the forces of the enemies of Christ to draw you away from Him in the least degree.'

'.....Always abounding in the work of the Lord....' Work in the work of the Lord with all of your might, do whatever He gives you to do, and do it with all of your might, do whatever He gives you to do, and do it with diligence. **'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephes. 2:10).**

We should be good stewards, doing whatsoever we do to the glory of God, remembering that there is coming a day when we will be rewarded for our stewardship. At that time, we will either receive a reward for our service, or we will see our works burned. Therefore, Paul pleads with the brethren to be –not just ordinary workmen, but ABOUNDING in the work of the Lord."¹⁰⁷

Folks, there is no greater way that any of us can show our appreciation and gratitude to God for His marvelous saving grace and redemption, than to be steadfast and faithful to His call and plan for our lives until the very day we get those new glorified immortal bodies. There is truly so much to look forward to, but there is also so much to do until that day when we bid this earthly world goodbye, and make our way into the eternal presence of Christ in brand new Christ-made glorified bodies just like the one Jesus had after His resurrection. Our faithful works should constantly praise the Lord for the precious gift of eternal salvation and for our forthcoming brand new resurrected bodies, which we will soon have.

A Special Tribute To Pastor Wayne Birkhead

Because of verse 58, which we have just tried to explain, I want to pay a great tribute to a man who is now with Jesus in heaven. This man's name was Pastor Wayne Birkhead, and he served on my staff as the Outreach and Missions Pastor at the great Tri-City Baptist Church, in Conover, North Carolina. My wife, JoAnne and I had the privilege of starting this church with 42 people back in the fall of 1988, and God so blessed this work that we grew to over 2,000 members in just eight years. Sometime after getting the church up and going, God led us to call Brother Wayne to serve on our staff. Wayne's favorite verse of Scripture was I Corinthians 15:58, which we have just tried to interpret properly. Brother Wayne was always quoting this verse everywhere he went, and especially when he was challenging others to be

¹⁰⁷ The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 526-527.

faithful. Wayne and his dear wife, Frances, dearly cherished this 58th verse, and they too were very faithful in living it out every day of their lives. Living this verse out was never more demonstrated than on December 4th, 1993, when Pastor Wayne and I were thrown out of an overturning vehicle in the African country of Uganda while we were on a mission trip to preach the Gospel in the prisons and schools of Uganda. During this tragic accident, Brother Wayne died in my hands as I tried to pump his chest at a Grade B Hospital where there were no doctors present to treat him. Truly, Wayne was steadfast and unmoveable in the work of the Lord until that very Saturday in Uganda back in 1993. Pastor Wayne and Frances always showed faithfulness to Christ in everything they did, and I know that he will be one of the first people I see one day in the future when we get our brand new glorified bodies when Christ comes to rapture His people. Right now in our Training Center in Kampala, Uganda, there is a beautiful plaque on the wall with this verse of Scripture on it in tribute to Pastor Wayne Birkhead. This just inspires me so much to remain faithful until I die, or until He comes to rapture His saints!

Conclusion

Let me say as we wrap up this study of Chapter 15, of First Corinthians, that I have probably enjoyed writing on this chapter as much as I ever have on any passage of God's Word. I suppose this is true because of what I mentioned earlier in this study, about having so many health problems presently. But of course, it may just be that I join the Apostle Paul in rejoicing over the fact that a future day for the resurrection of our bodies is coming. And, there will be no more suffering as I mentioned before. But more than this, I just believe Paul had tried to deal with so many problems in this Corinthian troubled church that it was a pleasure for him to look beyond this veil of pain and suffering, and beyond these problems and troubles. There are going to be so many down here on earth, until that day when we are forever with Jesus in brand new glorified bodies. However, I do want to say that standing before Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where every child of God will stand, will not be an enjoyable place if we have not been faithful until the very end.

So, let me just give a short summary of this chapter before we move on to Chapter 16 of the text. During these many pages of study in Chapter 15, we have talked and written consistently about the reality of the resurrection of Christ after His burial in the borrowed tomb in Jerusalem, and how that resurrection was the forerunner of the resurrection which every child of God will have when Christ comes again to raise His dead saints and rapture those that are still living.

We have discussed the evident proof of the coming resurrection, the enormous problem with denying the reality of the resurrection, the Eschatological points of the resurrection, the effectual purpose of the resurrection, the eventual property or make of the resurrection body, and last of all, we have talked about how we ought to offer exalting praise for the resurrection. Yes, there is a better day coming for the children of God, and that will be the day we receive our new glorified bodies just like the body of Jesus which He had following His divine resurrection. It is my prayer that the study of Chapter 15, might have prepared us for the great future that is ahead of us, but also, to open our eyes to the open doors that are

before us that we need to walk through to share the Gospel message in order to win others to Christ and get them prepared for the coming resurrection. You see folks, this Christianity is not a game. But, it is reality that we must face because there is a life after death both for the saved and the unsaved. The saved will go to heaven with brand new celestial bodies, while the lost without Christ will be sent to the Lake of Fire with never an opportunity to exit this horrible place. And thus, until God is through with us here on this earth, we need to be telling the world about Christ in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Please, let's be found faithful to this task that God has given to every believer. We must remember that if we have genuine salvation, then we will feel obligated to take it to the world to show our appreciation to Christ for Him giving it to us. May I ask you, are you busy telling the old old story? If not why not just make a brand new commitment to do so this very day!

Chapter Twenty-two

"The Open Door"

Scripture: I Corinthians 16:1-24

Introduction

We now come to the very last chapter of the Book of First Corinthians. This has been a very long and in depth study, but hopefully, I have been able to really help you, our readers, come to understand many of the difficult problems that were going on in the church of Corinth which Paul was trying to help these divided people solve. Throughout this study, we have seen Paul's instructions about many problematic areas that were in the church during that first century, and I am sad to say, many of them still exist in the modern churches today. Let me just mention some of these main problems that we have studied together from these writings of Paul the Apostle.

We started out watching Paul deal with the problem of preacher religion that had divided the church. Next, we followed Paul as he reemphasized the preaching of the cross and its significance. Then, we have spent a lot of time on Paul's instruction concerning the difference between a carnal Christian and a creative Christian. Beyond this, he talked about the coming Judgment Seat Of Christ which every believer is going to be judged for his or her faithfulness in their works. Also, Paul described for the Corinthians what an ideal servant of God looks like which is totally opposite to what some of these Corinthians believed.

Going further, Paul dealt with the immoral man that was committing incest with his stepmother in the church, and the Corinthians didn't want to deal with it. Instead, they used their Christian love as an excuse for not dealing with it. Next, Paul had to deal with Christian who wanted to take their brothers and sisters in Christ to court trying to solve their disagreements, instead of asking the church family to deal with the situations.

Then, in Chapters six and seven, Paul really dealt with sexual immorality and the sacredness of marriage. There were truly many problems in this area. While talking about the sacredness of marriage, Paul provided some tremendous principles and regulations that would produce happy and harmonious marriages. Another thing that Paul had to address was the situation where people were arguing over whether to eat meat that had been left over from sacrifices unto idols.

Also, in Chapter nine, Paul really began to defend his apostleship, probably because people were doubting his credibility as a true man of God. Going further, Paul spent a lot of time in Chapter ten about how to deal with the temptations of the flesh; which obviously were causing much difficulty in the church.

Further, Paul moved from many of the individual sins committed by individuals in the body of believers, and he began to expose some of the problems they were having in the public worship services over the gifts of the Spirit and the observance of the Lord's Supper. After this, Paul had to spend a lot of time trying to solve the problems over the grace gift of speaking in knowledgeable languages which were being imitated by false teaching about speaking in phony ecstatic

babbling and secret prayer languages. Paul cut no slack with these confused people in order to straighten this mess out. In fact, Paul was very blunt, and yes, even somewhat sarcastic with them over this misconstrued phony grace gift.

Then finally, in our last chapter, Chapter 15, we spent a lot of time following Paul's in-depth teaching on the resurrection of Christ which was the first-fruit of our promised resurrection which is yet to come. Truthfully, this chapter on the coming resurrection of the saints provides so much encouragement for those who have been tempted to give up and quit. I must say that I too was really inspired to keep on keeping on, even when sometimes I get tired, depressed, and ready to quit.

So, this brings us to Chapter sixteen, which we are about to study together. It is rather ironic that this chapter was left to the last because in reality, it is a very down-to-earth presentation of how we are to implement practical behavior about the personal responsibilities for all believers once they get the confusion and division out of their lives and churches. This chapter gets the children of God out of the church facilities, and out into the world with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in an effort to walk through open doors and take the message of the Gospel to the ends of the earth in fulfillment of the Great Commission. It is my prayer that this chapter might initiate a strong passion to leave the church buildings and go to the unsaved and lost world with the message of the Gospel of hope. I do pray that you will truly be inspired much from this last chapter in this wonderful study.

I. THIS OPEN DOOR IS AN OPEN DOOR FOR COLLECTION. vs. 1-4

"These opening verses might appear an anticlimax to what has gone before. We have been given a glimpse of the glory that awaits us, and an assurance of the victory even over death that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. The sound of the trumpet with its call to resurrection has seemed wonderfully real. Surely, anything beyond that must be somewhat reactionary.

'Now concerning the collection.' What a coming down to earth! Well, of course—because a Christian is a man whose heart is in heaven, but whose feet are on the ground. Every glimpse of future glory is given to the child of God in order to encourage him to present-day-growth in consecration and responsibility. Certainly we do come down to earth here, but I trust we have been refreshed and greatly challenged by all that God has been saying to us in the course of our journey along the royal route to heaven."¹⁰⁸

"As a matter of fact, this chapter is the crown of all the teaching of this Corinthian letter. The epistle begins with the reminder that **'God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord' (1:9)**. Because of that, they have also been called into a partnership with one another, for through the whole church there pulsates one common life, the life of the indwelling Holy Spirit, flowing through the whole body of the church, whether at Corinth, Jerusalem, Galatia, Macedonia—anywhere.

In both of these relationships, toward God and toward their brethren, the Corinthian church had tragically failed. The whole direction of Paul's teaching in this

¹⁰⁸ The Royal Route To Heaven, By: Alan Redpath, Revell, page 221.

letter has been to restore their broken fellowship with God, and their broken communion with one another. Once the Christian is right with God, then his relationship with his fellow believer is settled."¹⁰⁹

A. Please notice the purpose for this collection. v. 1

Throughout this entire Book of First Corinthians, Paul tried so hard to show to the believers in Corinth that in spite of their disagreements and arguments, they were still a part of the same body of Christ if they were indeed truly saved. So, after trying so hard to get the church right with God and right with each other in the body theologically, doctrinally, and even in worship style and behavior, Paul proceeds to tell them in this Chapter 16, that they now needed to get away from thinking and talking about themselves, and begin to focus on Christ and others.

So, here in verse one, Paul continues to share with the Corinthians the same message that he had already given to the churches in Galatia. This message was that the church should weekly receive a collection of money for the suffering and poor Christians back in Jerusalem.

The difficult question to answer is, "why were the believers in Jerusalem in such poverty at this time in their lives?" I believe there are probably three answers to this question. First, there is no indication that many, if any, of the other church members in Jerusalem were in fact wealthy, or well to do. The overall body of believers seemed to have been from poorer classes of people, and thus, they were in dire straits because of their poverty. Secondly, I do know that when many of the people got saved in Jerusalem and in the surrounding areas, they were prone to lose their jobs because most of the jobs available would have been with the upper class of people. So, when the people got saved, they may have lost their jobs because most of the employers were strong Jewish people who would have had a disdain and dislike for the new believers in Christ the Messiah. Therefore, these employers probably would have taken the jobs away from these Jewish Christians.

Now, the third answer why so many of the early Christians in Jerusalem may have been living in poverty was because when the church was established on the Day of Pentecost, it seems that the church really didn't begin to move forward with the Great Commission in obedience to the command of Christ until persecution came and began to scatter the people. If this is true, which I believe it is, then when these new believers were pressured to leave their homes and flee for their lives, then obviously, they would have had to leave almost everything they had behind and rapidly get out of the city of Jerusalem. We know from the persecution that Saul of Tarsus and other Pharisees gave to these early Christians, many of them had to flee. So, all around the large city of Jerusalem there were suffering people who were in desperate need of food and many other things. Therefore, we must conclude that the diaspora contributed to the poverty which many of the people were experiencing; and therefore, Paul admonished the early churches to receive an offering weekly for those suffering back in the city of Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, page 221-222.

B. Please notice the plan for this collection. v. 2

In verse 2, Paul goes on to explain the plan for receiving the weekly offerings in the church at Corinth, and in the other churches as well. Paul told the believers that every week on the first day of the week, which was Sunday, the people were to bring a special offering based upon their ability to give, and place this offering in a treasury where the funds could be kept safely. Now, I don't know this for sure, but I am assuming that the churches probably elected church treasurers who could be trusted with keeping the funds safely until the offering could be taken to the intended people in Jerusalem. Now, you might ask, "where do you get this assumption?" Well, we need to remember that Jesus helped elect Judas Iscariot to be the treasurer for the disciples, and therefore, I would assume that each body of believers would have a chosen person or people to take care of the funds that were given. This should still be our methodology in the church today, but with all of the stories about stolen funds, we probably need to have more than one taking care of the funds.

If you don't think we should really be careful with this, let me just mention a few examples from the history of my many years of ministry. I am very much aware of a man in the State of South Carolina who was caught stealing over \$180,000 from the weekly offerings because he was a teller who was responsible for putting the weekly offering into the church safe.

Also, I know of another situation in the State of Tennessee, where a supposedly faithful secretary for a mission organization stole over \$300,000 from the mission over a period of years. Then, I know of another situation where a professing Christian lady stole over \$150,000 from a Christian radio station in Tennessee. And if these incidents don't convince you, according to "About Missions.org/statistics," every year there are more than eight billion dollars that are embezzled by church custodians in our world churches. This is almost as much as all Christian organizations give to world missions each year for all mission efforts."¹¹⁰

Therefore folks, we need to make sure that the people we choose to take care of God's money are trustworthy and efficient stewards of all that God provides through His people.

Is New Testament Tithing Biblical?

While we are discussing the plan for giving which Paul gave to the Corinthians, I think we need to try to clear up some confusion about New Testament tithing which we hear so much about today. Why, even some of the great scholar, which I have quoted in this commentary don't believe that tithing is required in this New Testament dispensation. But my friends, I want to say that these dear people are truly wrong.

The first time tithing is mentioned in the Bible is found in Genesis 14:17-20, when Abram gave tithes (10%) to Melchizedek, king of Salem, or King of Jerusalem.

¹¹⁰ About Missions.org/statistics.html, 8/2/18, page 3.

Abram who later became Abraham gave this tithe to Melchizedek, because he was the priest of the most-high God who had blessed Abram by giving him bread and wine to eat and drink. Abram tithed in order to show his respect and appreciation for God's priest or servant. Please notice that this act is in the Book of Genesis before the law of Moses was ever given. Therefore, it is wrong to say that tithing was under the law, and is not relevant for this New Testament period.

In the Book of Genesis you will find at least four Divine Principles, which were given by God to His humanity. And don't ever forget this, "Divine Principles can never be changed, whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament." For instance, the family unit is a Divine Principle. This generation has tried to destroy the home or family unit, and in trying to do so, has brought havoc to our society; especially with the false concept that two men or two women can legally marry one another. This concept is straight out of hell as we remember what took place in Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed these cities.

So, the family unit is a Divine Principle. Also, government is a Divine Principle. You can find this principle in Genesis also, and God gave this principle for our well-being and protection. Therefore when we try to do away with this principle of government, then we only have anarchy and total destruction of society. In addition, believe it or not, capital punishment is a Divine Principle, a principle which God planned, and one which cannot be done away with without catastrophic consequences in society. Then, I will mention again that tithing is a Biblical Divine Principle, which God instituted through Abram, and just like the other Divine Principles, this one cannot be done away with, without terrible consequences. So, to say that tithing is under the law and not relevant for today is just complete ignorance. Yes, tithing was incorporated into the Law of Moses, like these other Divine Principles were, but if we promote tithing like it was incorporated in the law, we would end up giving 33% of our income as a tithe, not 10%.

So, what Paul is telling the Corinthian believers in this Chapter 16, is not only that they should be faithful in giving a tithe on the first day of the week, but their giving should be even more as they invest in helping those who were suffering in poverty in and around Jerusalem. No one will ever convince me that Paul did not teach tithing for the first day of the week. But truthfully, I am convinced that he practiced this Divine Principle, which was never to be changed, and he urged the people to give special offerings above the tithe as well.

Seven Principles For Wise Giving

I have already mentioned many comments and writings of Dr. Ray Stedman in this commentary. Now, I want to share some extremely wise principles which he provides in his commentary on First Corinthians which I believe will be extremely helpful to you and your family. I would tell you that Dr. Stedman didn't believe in New Testament tithing like I do, but he does give us some really good advice from this First Corinthians, Chapter 16 text. Please glean all you can from these principles.

"1. First, all Christians are expected to give. Paul writes, '**Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.**' Paul was not

imposing some special obligation on the Corinthians. Everywhere he went, wherever he had planted a church he taught Christians to give. Sharing is not an option; it's essential. Jesus said, **'Freely you have received, freely give' (Matthew 10:8b)**. If you have not received anything from the Lord, then not give anything. But if you have been blessed by Him, then give accordingly.'

What should you give? Pocket change? Ten percent? Fifty percent? Ninety percent? That's a question only you can answer. (Don't forget what I said about tithing.) But here is something to think about: God judges our generosity not by what we give, but by what we hold back. Mother Teresa once said, 'If you give what you do not need, it isn't giving.' And C.S. Lewis put it this way: 'I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare.' The apostles taught the early Christians to give even when they had hardly anything, because giving is the essence of Christianity."¹¹¹

"2. Second, giving is to take place on a weekly basis. Paul writes, **'On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money.'** This is one of the first indications in the New Testament epistles that Christians gathered regularly for worship and fellowship on Sunday, the first day of the week. The Jewish day of worship is the Sabbath, which starts Friday evening and continues into Saturday. But the Christians worshiped on Sunday, the first day of the week—the day of the resurrection. Paul says that giving should be a regular part of their weekly worship of the risen Lord.

3. Third, giving is a personal act. Paul writes, **'Each one of you.'** He doesn't leave anyone out. Even children should learn to give of their pennies and dimes. The amount is not important; the habit of giving is what matters. You have freely received, so freely give.

4. Fourth, money for giving should be set aside regularly. Paul writes, **'Each one of you should set aside a sum of money.'** In the first-century culture, people got paid for a day's work at the end of each day. So Paul said that they were to go home, put a portion of the day's wages in a cookie jar, then bring it to church on Sunday. By setting the money aside as soon as it was earned, the money was surely to be available for the collection on Sunday.

5. Fifth, giving should be proportionate. Paul writes that a Christian should give 'in keeping with his income.' This means that you should give according to the way God has given to you. Has He poured out abundant blessing? Then give abundantly. Are you just barely eking out an existence? Then your gift may be reduced proportionately. (But not your tithe.)

6. Sixth, giving should be motivated by the giver's own faithfulness—not manipulation or emotional blackmail. Paul writes, **'so that when I come no collections will have to be made.'** Why would Paul say that? I believe it's because

¹¹¹ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHL, page 254.

Paul knew that he had a forceful personality, and when he spoke, he had a tremendous impact on people. He wanted the Corinthian believers to give freely and generously, not because of emotional appeals or manipulation.

I think it's tragic and shameful that there is so much manipulation in Christendom today. Churches employ professional fundraisers; religious broadcasters use slick psychological gimmicks to induce people to open their checkbooks. But Paul didn't want people to be psyched up to give. He wanted giving to flow freely from a heart that was moved by the grace of God. The purpose of giving, after all, is not to raise money for buildings and programs; the purpose is to focus the believer's heart on God's priorities. And God's first priority is that His people be filled with love, compassion, and gratitude for the blessings they have received from Him.

7. Seventh, the receiving of gifts, should be done responsibly, by people who are trustworthy, accountable and dependable. Paul writes, **'Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve, and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.'** Paul wants the people in Corinth to know that the gifts they collect will be in good hands. He will not handle the money. He is making sure not one can accuse him of enriching himself with these contributions. But he is willing to accompany those whom the funds are entrusted, serving as a guarantor that these funds will be handled responsibly."¹¹²

C. Please notice the protectors for this collection. vs. 3-4

Dr. Ray Stedman has already explained these two verses a lot in the previous principles for giving, but let me just add a few things. I know from having studied Paul's life for many years, that he was extremely concerned and careful that when it came to money, he could not be accused of mishandling God's money. This is why he worked as a tent-maker instead of receiving the funds that were rightfully his as he described in Chapter 9, verses 1-18. Paul was extremely conscious of not nullifying his testimony because of the wrong use of money, and so should we be as well.

So, in these two verses, Paul tells the Corinthians to choose some men who would be responsible for taking the love offering to Jerusalem once he arrived there. And, if there were any questions about those who would be chosen to carry the funds to Jerusalem, Paul told the church that he would accompany them to Jerusalem to give more credibility to those taking the money. At this point, the thought comes to me, "Since Paul wrote earlier in this book trying to defend his apostleship, he must have come to the conclusion that by now, they should know that he was a man of integrity."

And, may I write again here about the lack of integrity which I am witnessing almost every week of my life from so many pastors and church leaders. It just seems that we are caught up in a lack of integrity plague which has taken over our society and our churches. Just in the past few weeks, I have been lied to by five pastors!

¹¹² Ibid, pages 254-256.

II. THIS OPEN DOOR IS AN OPEN DOOR FOR COMMITMENT. vs. 5-12

We now move on to the next point which Paul tries to make with the Corinthian believers. He not only has told them to receive an offering in the church there at Corinth, but now he tells them that he wants to come and see them once again when he shall pass through Macedonia. In other words, He is making a commitment to them that he will come to see them, if God will permit him to do so.

We just need to remember that Paul was spending his final days of his three years in Ephesus when he wrote this Epistle to the Corinthians. "It appears from II Corinthians 1:15-16, that Paul's original plan was to go directly from Ephesus to Corinth, and from thence into Macedonia, and then back again to Corinth, and thence to Jerusalem. He now informs them that he would go to Macedonia before going to Corinth. So eager were the false teachers in Corinth to find grounds of complaint against him, that they made this change of plans a grievous offence, and a proof that he was not to be depended upon either as to his purposes or his doctrine. This is apparent from the vindication of himself in the second Epistle."¹¹³

This sounds so much like modern day church people who believe that if the pastors or church leaders don't give them their primary interests, then they are not really genuine servants of God. In other words, it is the "Me Island Mentality." Paul was making a commitment to the people of Corinth, but he had to leave some room for God to change his plans if need be.

A. It is a commitment with obligation. vs. 5-6

Because of Paul's love for the Corinthian believers which has been very evident in this study, he obligated himself to come and see them again, if God would just work things out for him to do so.

In this verse, "Paul's desire to pass through Macedonia is expressed with some determination. He was determined to come to the province of Achaia only when he finally had opportunity to pass through Macedonia. Robertson and Plummer suggest that (*dierchomai*,) meaning 'to journey through,' has become almost a technical term for a missionary tour or evangelistic journey."¹¹⁴

"In verse 6, Paul suggested that he might remain at Corinth for a greater length of time than he would linger elsewhere in Macedonia. 'Abide' (*parameno*) literally means to 'remain beside.' Paul might have intended to linger for a more lengthy period in Corinth for several reasons. The very problems, which had arisen in the church, reflected the need for his special attention in this church. However, that rather negative purpose may have been augmented by the fact that the church of Corinth for all its problems was the most successful of the early Christian efforts in Macedonia. The very fact that it was strong with the potential for being the hub of missionary expansion for all of Greece may also have influenced Paul's desire to

¹¹³ Commentary on the First Epistle To The Corinthians, By: Charles Hodge, Eerdmans, page 365.

¹¹⁴ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, page 313.

linger in Corinth. Then, too, the verse expresses a meteorological reason of an extended stay in Corinth. The winter months made traveling, especially maritime travel, precarious. Robertson and Plummer indicate that after September 14, navigation was considered dangerous, and after November 11, it ceased altogether until around March 5th."¹¹⁵

"These factors account for Paul's determination to spend a period of time in Corinth, after which he anticipated that the Corinthians would take him along in his journey. 'Bring along' (propempe) literally means to 'send before' or 'to accompany.' There were two possible ways to accompany someone. One's physical presence would be one of these, but in the inability to be physical present, one might also send provisions and, therefore, and become a participant in the journey. It is this second sense in which Paul spoke of the Corinthians as 'bringing' him along on his journey wherever he would go. This is a particularly interesting phrase, since Paul had made so much in the book of having labored in Corinth without reliance in any way upon monetary support from the Corinthian Christians themselves. It seems, however, that at this point he was not only willing to accept the offering for the saints in Jerusalem but also willing to be assisted in his missionary journeys by the relatively prosperous saints in Corinth. This is, however, in keeping with what Paul had already argued in II Corinthians 9:7-15."¹¹⁶

So, my dear reader friend, Paul made a commitment to obligate himself to go to Corinth and spend time with these troubled people, and not only would he help take a large offering from them to the suffering saints in Jerusalem, but he had also come to the point that he was willing to take any personal assistance they might provide for him. And, I will say that by now because of all the problems he had tried to help the Corinthians solve, he should have been given some financial assistance for his missionary journeys. My conclusion is that you can't just go on and on petting these baby-acting believers forever!

B. It is a commitment with opportunity. v. 7-9a

In verse 7, Paul again tells the Corinthian believers why he can't come at the present time, possibly because of it being too late in the travel season, but he longs to come and spend some time with them just as soon as God would work it out. This reveals to us that Paul did still love the Corinthians, and he looked at visiting them again as a great opportunity for an even greater service to them. Yet, as we see in verse 8, Paul had decided to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, which would be the next springtime of the year. Now, I don't believe Paul wanted to celebrate this Jewish festival again, unless of course, he just wanted to possibly try to reach some more of the vagabond Jews in Ephesus. But, I do know that Paul loved the Ephesian Church because he was completing three years of ministry there when he wrote First Corinthians. So probably, because travel weather would not be good again until the next spring, he just wanted to take advantage of the remaining months to help grow the Ephesians more in the grace of God. Truly, Paul always was open to taking

¹¹⁵ Ibid, page 313.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pages 313-314.

advantage of every opportunity God gave him to preach and teach the Word of God to those who would listen. Paul just looked at the still open door in the city of Ephesus, and he wanted to continue to walk through that door while it was still open and effective. Obviously, Paul's work in Ephesus was extremely effective, or he would not have spent those three years there trying to grow the church and to continue to reach more and more people with the Gospel message.

I would like to interject something here about my personal life and ministry right now as each day I progressively get weaker and my health seems to be deteriorating. For years, my wife and I have tried so hard to walk through the open doors that God provides for us to walk through in order to share the Gospel with the lost world; most of which for the past 35 years has been in Africa. We have been so blessed to see God open a tremendous amount of doors. However, the main problem I battle right now is that I just don't know which open doors we should walk through because sometimes when I feel that God has truly opened another door for us, by the time we are to walk through those open doors, my health won't seem to allow it. So, the biggest difficulty that I am having right now is to know just which open doors we should plan to walk through, in view of the fact that from one month to the next, I am not sure how my health is going to be. This is why in the past few years, I have had to cancel some of our planned trips due to my health getting worse before we can leave. I truly know that Paul the Apostle loved open doors, but as he states in verse nine, there are always adversaries. We will talk more about this in our next point. Folks, just pray that God will give my sweet wife and me the wisdom to know what open doors to plan for! If you will pray for us, we surely would appreciate it so very much!

C. It is a commitment with opposition. v. 9b

Well, the truth is that every time God opened doors for Paul, there were always many adversaries who were providing opposition to this great man of God. The open doors and great adversaries, which Paul had before him were probably there in the church at Ephesus. As I have stated before, Paul was finishing up his three years in Ephesus when he wrote this Epistle to the Corinthians, but there is one thing we know, there was great opposition to his ministry there in Ephesus. We can see this verified in Acts 20, when Paul arrived on the Island of Melitus, and then sent for the elders of the Ephesian Church to come over from the mainland to the Island to say a final goodbye to him. The elders came, and in their short time together Paul warned the elders in verse 29, that after his departing, grievous wolves would come into the church flock and attack the sheep. This truly verifies how much opposition there was in the church at Ephesus where the young man, Timothy, would become the new pastor.

May I say that throughout my many years of constant full-time ministry for Jesus, the more serious we have become about walking through open doors by faith to win more people to Christ, the greater the opposition my wife and I have received has been enormous. And, it is usually when we walk through the doors that will lead to more souls getting saved that we get bombarded by Satan and his colleagues. I don't have time to discuss this entire matter right now, but just recently, my wife

and I have gone through a literal hell on earth because my doctors insisted that I cut way back on my work load, and when we decided to do so, after three months of prayer, the people that were affected by our decision, our church members, literally became tools in the hands of Satan to hurt and castigate us. And, all this happened in the church where my wife and I had given the people four years of ministry without requesting any salary for our ministry there. I can tell you like Paul said, "when God opens the doors for ministry, there will indeed be many adversaries; not those in the lost world, but usually those who profess to know Christ, but have ulterior motives just like wolves in the church at Ephesus.

D. It is a commitment with others. vs. 10-12

"Timothy had been sent to Macedonia and in all probability would come to Corinth. However, Paul was concerned that his coming be without fear (aphobos, a word which might also be rendered 'without intimidation'). The reference is an indication of the fact that Timothy's constitution may not have been as strong as Paul's and that in the past he had perhaps experienced some intimidation. Furthermore, Paul knew that since Timothy was his own emissary, he might face some of the wrath that would normally be directed toward the apostle himself. Consequently, the Corinthians were charged to understand that Timothy was involved in the work of the Lord Jesus as was Paul."¹¹⁷

In verse 11, we find some more wonderful information. "Furthermore, no man was to 'despise' (which literally means to subject him to contempt or scorn) Timothy. To the contrary, he was to be conducted forth in peace, an expression that signals a warm reception and an eager participation in this ministry. The invocation of peace pressed upon the Corinthians with regard to Timothy was a further reminder that they were to receive him and conduct him on his way without rancor or dissension. 'Peace' (eirene) gives us our word 'irenic' and always indicates a settled circumstance in which there is absence of open strife."¹¹⁸

Please remember that at the time he wrote First Corinthians, he was still in Ephesus, and he wanted young Timothy to come to Ephesus probably in order to take over the church there. Timothy was traveling through Macedonia and would probably stop in Corinth on his way south, but Paul hoped and prayed that Timothy would not be ill-treated by the Corinthians and get discouraged because Paul had great plans for this young man. So, Paul tells the Corinthians that they should treat Timothy just like they had treated him. If they had received Paul with hospitality, which they had, then they needed to treat Timothy the same way. Of course, please bear in mind that Paul knew how rough and blunt some of the Corinthians could be. Thus, he didn't want Timothy to be hurt or intimidated by these people, because Paul needed him to come to Ephesus and take over the work there. Stated another way, Paul's commitment to Christ included a commitment to others in trying to get them totally sold out to Jesus. Obviously, Paul was successful because later Timothy did become the new pastor in Ephesus.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, page 315.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, page 315.

In verse 12, Paul mentions to the Corinthians that he had wanted Apolos to accompany some of the other brethren and come to Corinth. But, for whatever reason or excuse, this great orator did not have the desire to go to Corinth at that time. We don't know for sure what Apolos' reason or excuse was, but maybe he was somewhat intimidated by the Corinthians because he had heard of their reputation. Whatever the reason was, Apolos did not want to go to Corinth at the time, but Paul felt like he would change his mind sometime in the future and go and visit the Corinthian Church. Paul always saw the good in other servants, and he was committed to them being used by God, just like he was for himself. So, Paul really felt that one day very soon, Apolos would indeed go and be an encouragement to the troubled church in Corinth.

III. THIS OPEN DOOR IS AN OPEN DOOR FOR CONSENSUS. vs 13-18

As Paul gets closer and closer to the end of this great letter, there seems to be one primary thing on Paul's heart; that was that the people in Corinth should agree with him to receive and help take care of the other servants God would send their way. God desired the people to agree that every servant of God, if he or she were genuine, should be welcomed, shown hospitality, and encouraged in the work of the Lord by the church that was in Corinth. Paul desired that the people there would treat the other servants of God with the love that they had shown to him. And, this was quite a desire, when you consider how ornery some of the Corinthians were. Some of those people were just simply hard to deal with; especially those who had tried to divide the church over preacher religion.

A. There should be a consensus of conviction. v. 13

In verse 13, Paul tells the Corinthians to be vigilant and stand up for the truth. The word quit here is a little deceiving when we try to interpret it from the English. But, what it really means in the Greek is to step forward, come forth, and rise to the occasion, to be strong on your convictions and beliefs, and agree to stand together as God's family. In other words, stand firmly together, less someone divide you or pull you a part.

B. There should be a consensus of charity. v. 14

Verse 14 is a very brief verse, but one with a tremendous amount of admonition. Paul just simply tells the Corinthians that whatever they do as a body of believers should be done together with charity or love as we know the word today. I think this encouragement is quite ironic, in view of the fact that Paul wrote an entire chapter about love in Chapter 13. So, here once more the people are encouraged to do everything they did with the love of Christ. In other words, in a church where there was so much confusion about doctrine and where false teachers were preeminent, the one primary thing they needed to agree on was having a consensus to love other people with the love of Christ. Why, even the Corinthians didn't know how to show love at the "love feast" called the Lord's Supper.

C. There should be a consensus of consideration. vs. 15-18

I use the word consideration in this point because it means to give others the attention that they deserve or need. In verses 15-18, this is what Paul tells the Corinthian believers that they should do. He tells them that they should pick up the slack when it comes to taking care of God's saints who had given themselves to the work of Christ. He mentions Stephanas, one of the first converts of Achaia (Greece). Let me give you some wonderful information from Dr. Ray Stedman once again.

"Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus were the ones who brought a letter to Paul in Ephesus—the letter that Paul replies to throughout much of 1 Corinthians. These three men reported to Paul on conditions of the church in Corinth and, Paul adds, they encouraged him and refreshed him and his spirit.

Paul remembers the faith of Stephanas and implies that we should always hold up such people as inspiring examples. Stephanas and his family, Paul says, were the first converts in Greece. That means he was probably a citizen of Athens, for that is where Paul first began to preach in Greece. Stephanas may have been converted by that remarkable message, preached in the courtyard of the Areopagus (Mars Hill), as recorded in Acts 17. Because he was the first Greek convert, he held a special place in Paul's heart."¹¹⁹

"Paul reminds the Corinthians that Stephanas and his household have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. The original Greek word translated 'devoted' conveys the idea of addiction. Paul was saying that Stephanas was a servanthood addict. Stephanas couldn't help himself—he was addicted to serving other people. Hooked on hospitality—what a wonderful addiction to have!

Notice that Paul tells the Corinthians to 'submit' to Stephanas and other servanthood addicts like him. Does he mean that the Corinthians should obey Stephanas and be subservient to him? No. He is saying, 'Listen to Stephanas. This humble servant has insights and wisdom you need to hear.'

Paul goes on to say the he was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they 'refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.' People like that make your day. When you are down, they pick you up. When you are weary, they energize your spirit. Praise God for people like these three servants of the Lord! Paul says, in effect, 'Recognize them and thank them for their ministry among you! Affirm them! Let them know how God has used them in your life.' "¹²⁰

I suppose this would be a good time for me to get on my soapbox once more about this matter of showing appreciation and recognizing those who have truly impacted your life for Christ. I have written many articles and parts of other books about this, but since Paul closes out this Epistle by dealing with the subject, I believe I should mention this again.

Folks, there is just so little respect and recognition of those saints who have impacted the lives of others in this so-called modern church generation. Everyone just seems to be wrapped up in their "little island of me," and they forget so quickly

¹¹⁹ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHL, pages 263-264.

¹²⁰ Ibid, page 264.

how God used others in their lives to bring them to Christ, and beyond this, to really help these saved people really grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Also, those who have given of their time and effort to help other believers discover the perfect will of God for their lives should never be forgotten. Yet, it is happening everywhere I look these days.

When I talk about remembering those who have impacted your lives, I am not talking about giving them glory for what God has done in your lives, but, I am just referring to offering sincere appreciation to those whom God has used to bless you by telling you how to be saved, or by helping you to grow up in the Lord and discover His perfect will or calling for your life. These people are truly special people, and they should be respected until the day they die. But as I said, this is not happening very often today.

Let me give you an illustration of this by sharing a true heart-rending story with you. Many years ago when JoAnne and I were trying to lead a growing church, we were out knocking on doors one day when we were invited into the home of a young couple. We had a connection with this couple through the young man's mother. When we were allowed to come into the house, there on the sofa lay the young lady under a blanket with her head covered up. The young man sat in a chair and talked with us, but the young woman refused to get out from under her blanket where she was pretending to be sick. The young couple were not married, but they were living together unmarried. We found out that day during that conversation that both of the young people professed to be saved, but truthfully, the only one that may have truly been saved, was the woman, but she surely was not living in the will of God; especially shackled up with her boy friend.

Well, we left that house that day somewhat disappointed, but we did get some promises that they would attend our growing church. They did honor the promise to come visit with us, and truthfully, they began to attend our church fairly regularly. A short time after they began to attend our fellowship, they came to me and asked me if I would marry them. But, because they would not separate long enough to convince everyone that they had genuinely gotten right with the Lord, I refused to perform the marriage ceremony. So, they got another former pastor to marry them at the church where the husband's family used to attend, and, my wife and I attended the wedding, which shocked the couple and their family to death.

After they got married, they attended our church, but we noticed that they were not very spiritual people, but they were nice and friendly. Sometime went by and we held an old fashion tent crusade out behind our new church building. During that tent crusade, this young man got genuinely saved, and the young woman rededicated her life to the Lord. After this, the couple really got sold out for Jesus, and really began to grow in the Lord. Some more time went by, and God called this young man to preach the Gospel. Truly, he was on fire for the Lord, and still is after many years.

Following his surrender to the ministry, this young man built two huge Sunday School classes by winning scores of people to Christ, and eventually after my wife and I left the church, God called him to pastor a small country church in another city not too far from the town where our church was. After he and his wife got to that church, the church just took off growing, and now, after several years, the

church has grown to almost a thousand people in attendance. God is really using this young man and his family. But, I am sorry to tell you that after supporting our African ministry for several years financially through his church's mission program, out of the blue one day, we just received the word that they would not be supporting our GIMI African ministry any longer. They decided to redirect the \$2,400 per year to another mission project.

Now, I will tell you that I was somewhat shocked to begin with about the sudden loss of our mission support. But, the more I thought about this situation, I began to realize just how this man had almost stopped all contact with us for quite sometime, and also, how he had stopped calling us, or even coming by to see us when he was back in our area to see his family. JoAnne and I have been so hurt by the neglect of this young man, and yes, by his great big church, that we just can't even describe the depth of the pain. We worked diligently for a long time trying to get this young couple into church, and after they finally got right with God, we were so proud of what God was doing through them; and we still are. But now, they act as if we don't even exist, and more than anything, with a large church which had the ability to really help us win thousands of souls to Christ in Africa, they just cut us off as if we didn't even exist any more. I am 72 years old and still trying to win souls to Christ by the thousands, and we lose our support for this great ministry. And, because of my deteriorating health condition, I am not able to travel from church to church here in America like we used to trying to get more support from the churches. I can tell you that in all of my years of ministry, I have never thrown one of my faithful missionaries out the door just because I had another short-term mission team that needed the money once or twice each year.

My friends, this is what Paul was trying to tell the Corinthian believers to not ever do when it came to those who had given their lives to them. Don't ever forget the impact that others have made on your lives in the work of the Lord! Folks, it has been my resolute decision to always remember those who told me about Christ, those who helped me to discover God's will for my life, those who have given of themselves to impact our growth and progress in the ministry, and those who gave of themselves to help me get to where God wanted me to go. Therefore, I do pray that we all can learn a tremendous lesson from Paul and our text about showing appreciation and respect for those whom God has used in our lives down through the years.

IV. THIS OPEN DOOR IS A DOOR FOR COMMUNICATION. vs. 19-24

Well now, we have come to the last point of our outlined study of First Corinthians. Paul finalizes this special book by sending greetings from the churches of Asia, from Aquila and Priscilla, from the church meeting in Aquila and Priscilla's house, and all of the brethren in the Lord. This last point truly shares Paul's true passionate feelings for the Corinthian Church, but even more so, for the Lord Paul readily served. These last few verses tell us that Paul sincerely wanted to communicate with the people in the church at Corinth, but more so, to keep communicating with the Lord Jesus Whom Paul expected to come very soon. Paul, like myself, wanted to maintain communication with the people where he had

planted churches. But, the truth is that very few of the people you have given your life to, still want to maintain regular and warm communications with you, even if you gave them the best years of your life. If you think I sound a little bit negative, you are right! As an old pastor who has pastored eleven churches in my life, I just don't understand why people are so prone to easily forget as my father used to say, "the one that brought them to the dance." Now, don't you Baptists get offended about the word dance. I used this word before, but I just felt like I needed to use it again.

A. It is a communication with personal greetings. vs. 19-20

Let's look at verse 19. "The letter had been written from Ephesus, which was across the Aegean Sea from Corinth and was geographically in Asia. By the time of the writing of this letter, there evidently were a number of Asian congregations in the vicinity of Ephesus. Such would be, among others, Smyrna and Pergamos, to name the ones nearest at hand. Perhaps these are included in the salutation. 'To greet' (aspazomai) meant more than just a verbal greeting in the ancient world. Some expressions of genuine affection are included in the word. This is indicated further by the holy kiss of verse 20. Of course, it was impossible for the churches in Asia actually to dramatize their affection for the Corinthians, but the very word employed carried that precise connotation and is far stronger than a mere verbal greeting.

Aquila and Priscilla (actually short for Priska) which is used here, saluted the Corinthians, among whom they had labored diligently, as recorded by Luke in Acts 18. The husband-wife team, especially prominent as teachers in the early church, had a significant influence upon the ministry of Apollos. Aquila and Priscilla who were joined in their greeting by the church that was in their house. Two important insights may be observed in this simple phrase. First, most of the churches were still meeting in the homes of the people at the time of the writing of the Corinthian letters. Aquila and Priscilla had continued to be at least moderately successful in their commercial endeavors. Hence, they were able to dwell in a home sufficient in size to encompass a church family also. One notes again the use of 'the church' to describe the local assembly that met in their home."¹²¹

"The second observation is that this verse may hint that more than one congregation functioned in some of the cities. It seems unlikely, if a great door of opportunity had been open to Paul in Ephesus, that the home of Aquila and Priscilla would be adequate in size to house such a burgeoning congregation. Possibly in each city there was only one church, which met in several different locations on a regular basis and came together as a whole only occasionally. However, the language found here and elsewhere tends to indicate the greater likelihood that rather early in the larger cities, more than one congregation of believers came to exist."¹²²

¹²¹ The Troubled Triumphant Church, By: Paige Patterson, Thomas Nelson, pages 319-320.

¹²² Ibid, page 320.

"In verse 20, the fact that all of the brethren brought greetings to the Corinthians seems to distinguish these brethren from those who were meeting in the home of Aquila and Priscilla. This might provide further evidence of the presence of more than one church in Corinth. Not only were greetings extended from the believers in Ephesus, but also, the Corinthians were to greet one another in an affectionate way. This way is described as a kiss of holiness. The custom, apparently was observed by men kissing the cheeks of the men, and women kissing the cheeks of women. In most cultures the kiss has been a unique expression of affection and brotherhood. As such, it indicates a special form of familiarity and empathy. The Corinthians were asked, therefore, to be demonstrative in their expression of love for one another."¹²³

B. It is a communication with a personal gesture. v. 21

In this verse, Paul reveals something that I was not sure of until I reached this verse. This verse tells us that Paul had been having an amanuensis or secretary who was writing this First Epistle to the Corinthians on Paul's behalf. I don't know why Paul was not writing it himself, but we might suppose that Paul's thorn in the flesh may have been his poor eyesight, which would have made it difficult for him to write, especially a letter of this length. But whatever the reason, Paul was using a secretary or stenographer to write the words to this great letter.

So, in this verse, Paul verifies that he did in fact dictate these words to his secretary. Therefore, when he wrote the final salutation, as was the custom in that day, he signed the letter with his own hand. And, if he signed with large letters as many believe he always did, then it may have very well been because of his poor eyesight. Whatever the reason, this gesture gave firm verification that Paul the Apostle did in fact dictate and send this letter to the Corinthian Church.

C. It is a communication with personal guidance. v. 22

"In verse 22, a period should definitely occur between the Greek expression 'Anathema' and the Aramaic expression 'Maranatha.' 'Anathema' corresponds to the Hebrew term cherem and refers to that which is set aside for destruction. 'Maranatha' is a combination of three Aramaic words; Mar, meaning 'Lord,' 'an,' indicating 'our,' and 'atha,' which may be translated either 'has come' or, perhaps, 'will come.' The expression may even be understood as a benedictory prayer translated 'Our Lord is coming.' Early Christian vocabulary developed certain ways of identifying other believers readily and also expressing the fundamentals of the faith in a succinct way. The early Christian confession of faith, Iesous Kurios, meaning 'Jesus is Lord,' was a common greeting which may often have been answered antiphonally with the phrase maran atha, meaning 'Yes, and our Lord shall come.'

The verse calls for a division of humanity based upon love for the Lord Jesus Christ. If men do not love the Lord, they are ultimately to be set aside for

¹²³ Ibid, page 320.

destruction. This is to be noted especially in light of the fact that the Lord is coming."¹²⁴

Before closing this exegetical study, I would like very much to mention something here pertaining to some people's interpretation of verse 22. Some people, in an attempt to not offend anyone, say that when Paul differentiates between those that love the Lord and those who do not, he is not saying that those who don't love the Lord will die and go to hell. But, I strongly disagree with this interpretation. Truthfully, this is exactly what Paul is telling the professing Corinthian believers. He is telling them that true love for Christ through a personal relationship with Him is the only thing that can prepare a person for the return of Christ. But, if a person doesn't love Christ with all of his or her heart, this is an indication that he or she is not really saved. And thus, these phony professing lost people will in fact be damned and cast into hell forever and forever after Christ comes to rapture His church, and they are brought before the Great White Throne out in the future after the millennial reign of Christ.. There is just no way that we can honestly remove the imminent curse that is placed upon the person who rejects a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. All of the learned theology, chosen philosophy, benevolent good works, and all other things cannot save a person and take them to heaven. A person only gets genuinely saved when he or she puts his or her faith in the finished product of Calvary, repents of his or her sin, and then, confesses Christ as Savior and Lord based upon his or her personal faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Let's really pray that no one will be cursed when Christ comes again. And, we can only prevent this if we remain faithful in trying to win as many people to Christ as we can until Jesus returns!

D. It is a personal communication with personal grace. vs. 23-24

"In verse 23, the customary conclusion expressing an ardent prayer that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with the Corinthians was offered. Bound up in it was the recognition that whatever good was accomplished in Corinth would be done as a result of the grace of God."¹²⁵

Then finally and completely, Paul stops writing with the promise that his personal love was with the Corinthians in and through the name of the Lord Jesus. Then, he closes with the word Amen, which means, "Let it be so." Paul did, in fact, love the true believers in Christ, or he would not have spent so much time writing trying to deal with the problems that were in the church. Surely, every church is going to have problems, some more than others. And for sure, Corinth was one of those problematic congregations that was high maintenance. Yes, they needed to be loved, but they also needed to get right with God, develop a love for one another, and stop all of the arguing between themselves. Very graciously, Paul was really being kind to them in his closing statement, when you consider what he dealt with trying to help them solve their problems. And by the way, when he closed this letter, the door was open for another letter which he did indeed write about one year later!

¹²⁴ Ibid, page 321.

¹²⁵ Ibid, page 321.

Conclusion

Well beloved friends, we have finally come to a conclusion with this commentary on the great book of First Corinthians. Personally, I have been writing on this project for months and months. Of course, this is always what is required when I try to write a commentary on the book of the Bible. Yet, it is my prayer that my long effort in this endeavor might bear fruit in the lives of all of you readers who have stuck with me in reading, and hopefully studying along with this discussion. I would pray that God might have used it in each of our lives so that we might provide some divine wisdom for the churches where we attend, and especially for those that might be going through some of the same struggles that the Corinthian people were battling.

Now, let me just give you the summary of what we have discussed and written about in this commentary. I gave most of this information in the Introduction to the last chapter, but let me just give it to you once more. Plus, I will add a little more to it at the end for its completion.

We started out watching Paul deal with the problem of preacher religion that had divided the church. Next, we followed Paul as he reemphasized the preaching of the cross and its significance. Then, we have spent a lot of time on Paul's instruction concerning the difference between a carnal Christian and a creative Christian. Beyond this, he talked about the coming Judgment Seat Of Christ which every believer is going to be judged for his or her faithfulness in their works. Also, Paul described for the Corinthians what an ideal servant of God looks like which is totally opposite to what some of these Corinthians believed.

Going further, Paul dealt with the immoral man that was committing incest with his stepmother in the church, and the Corinthians didn't want to deal with it. Instead, they used their Christian love as an excuse for not dealing with it. Next, Paul had to deal with the Christians who wanted to take their brothers and sisters in Christ to court trying to solve their disagreements, instead of asking the church family to deal with the situations.

Then, in Chapters six and seven, Paul really dealt with sexual immorality and the sacredness of marriage. There were truly many problems in this area. While talking about the sacredness of marriage, Paul provided some tremendous principles and regulations that would produce happy and harmonious marriages. Another thing that Paul had to address was the situation where people were arguing over whether to eat meat that had been left over from sacrifices unto idols.

Also, in Chapter nine, Paul really began to defend his apostleship, probably because people were doubting his credibility as a true man of God. Going further, Paul spent a lot of time in Chapter ten about how to deal with the temptations of the flesh; which obviously were causing much difficulty in the church.

Further, Paul moved from many of the individual sins committed by individuals in the body of believers, and he began to expose some of the problems they were having in the public worship services over the gifts of the Spirit and the observance of the Lord's Supper. After this, Paul had to spend a lot of time trying to solve the problems over the grace gift of speaking in knowledgeable languages which were being imitated by false teaching about speaking in phony ecstatic

babblings and secret prayer languages. Paul cut no slack with these confused people in order to straighten this mess out. In fact, Paul was very blunt, and yes, even somewhat sarcastic with them over this misconstrued phony grace gift.

Then, in our last chapter, Chapter 16, we spent a lot of time following Paul's in-depth teaching on the resurrection of Christ, which was the first-fruit of our promised resurrection, which is yet to come. Truthfully, this chapter on the coming resurrection of the saints provides so much encouragement for those who have been tempted to give up and quit. I must say that I too was really inspired to keep on keeping on, even when sometimes I get tired, depressed, and ready to quit.

And finally, during our study of Chapter 16 of First Corinthians, we spent a lot of time on the study of the open doors that God had given to Paul the Apostle, and also, to his desire to try and walk through those open doors, whatever the cost might be. Paul truly brought this letter to the Corinthian Church to a close with some words of encouragement, and with a warning about the return of our Lord. I can't help believe that the reason Paul did this was because he was totally convinced that there were a lot of people in the Corinthian Church that had never really be saved. And, maybe I should just wrap up this study by saying that after working in full-time ministerial work for over 53 years, I too believe that a huge percentage of church members are not genuinely saved in the churches of today. Again, I say this because 75% of the church members do absolutely nothing, while 25% of the people do all of the work and give all of the money. This large number (75%) of the people have so many of the characteristics of a lot of the people in Corinth. So, Paul believed that many of the people in Corinth were hypocrites, and I too, believe that this is true of almost 75% of the people in our modern day churches. Oh yes, I know that saved people can backslide and get cold toward God, but if they do, the Holy Spirit conviction will eventually move them back to the front with faithfulness and dedication.

Now, let me thank you again for studying the Book of First Corinthians. Maybe God will give me the nudge to continue on with a commentary on Second Corinthians, which is truly one of my favorite books of the Bible. I say this because many years ago while walking through the valley of despair (clinical depression), God used the Book of II Corinthians to bring me through to the other side of this great big valley. So, please help me pray that God might give me the inspiration to continue on with the Corinthian Church problems and solutions. I will definitely write this next volume if God will let me live long enough to do so, and if He will provide the grace and strength that I will need to complete another book. Again, thank you for studying with me in this long study. May God richly bless you is my prayer for each of you!

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