

*The Epistles of
1-11 Corinthians*

A More Excellent Way

"1 & 2 Corinthians: A More Excellent Way"

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Introduction

In *1 Corinthians 15:8*, Paul declared himself to be “an apostle born (before the due) time.” This statement is especially true concerning many of Paul’s writings. For example: Paul’s teaching on the man of sin, the Second Coming of Christ and the first resurrection were not relevant for the first century. However, because of the Apostle’s present tense manner of delivery, many of the saints applied those teachings to their day. Some even went to the extreme... retiring from their employment, withdrawing from everyday life to wait for the Lord’s return. Such was the case in the Thessalonian church.

In many ways, this New Testament theologian writes more to the church of our time than to any other generation. The Corinthian epistles are a good example of this. By the end of the first century AD, the supernatural phenomenon of Pentecost was waning. The church was becoming more and more legislative and ritualistic. Eventually, the problems associated with Pentecost no longer existed. Frankly, the church was dead!

The church had dried up and was lapsing into an era that was later called by the historians “The Dark Ages.” In spite of this, there were always a few groups over the centuries that experienced the renewing from heaven. They spoke in tongues and had visions, etc. However, it was still quite rare until the twentieth century. In the year 1901, the first wave of renewal hit Charles Parham’s Bible School in Topeka, Kansas. This visitation undoubtedly helped to ignite the Pentecostal revival in Wales In the year 1904, which helped to spark others such as the “Azusa Street” revival, in Los Angeles (1906). Azusa Street experienced an outpouring of the

Holy Spirit similar to Acts chapter two. That event sent spiritual shock waves around the world. Suddenly seekers from all directions were coming, crying out for the baptism from heaven.

God has since moved in many places and in many denominations. The Charismatic movement which began about 1966, touched many churches, churches that did not even believe in the supernatural realm of the Spirit. Today, there are many Spirit-filled congregations throughout the land, and suddenly Paul's Corinthian epistles, written 1950 years ago, have become very relevant.

Twenty-first century Corinthians

Why is it that the Church world usually associates carnality and spiritual problems with the "Pentecostal people"? The reason is because it is true; and I would like to use a rather crude illustration to explain why it is true. When I was a teenager, I worked on a farm that raised hogs. They used the latest Cornell University techniques for draining the waste into a lagoon. The manure is odorless, as it lies there undisturbed in its dormant state. But when the lagoon was full, the backhoe would come in and dig it up, and you could smell manure for miles. Many problems in man are like this; while they are dormant and undisturbed they are not a problem, nor are they offensive. But when they are uncovered and meddled with... that is another story.

John the Baptist, likened the baptism of the Holy Ghost to a thresher with a fan, (or fork) tossing and separating the wheat from the chaff, then burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Mt. 3:11-12).

People are basically the same everywhere; they all have the same problems that are common to mankind. If those problems are never addressed or brought to the light, the people

may appear to be pretty stable. Some congregations seem to have it all together. There is an apparent peace, order, and harmony. But if that same congregation experienced the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, it would be an entirely different story. The Divine Spirit would enter that temple with a scourge, overturning the tables of pride, lust, greed, traditions, and humanistic concepts. Suddenly, un-churched people would be coming, drawn by the supernatural phenomenon. There would be revelations, visions, prophecy and spiritual gifts being manifested, as well as the excesses of these things. With this realization of what can happen, the Corinthian epistles begin to take on new significance.

Understanding the Corinthian complexities

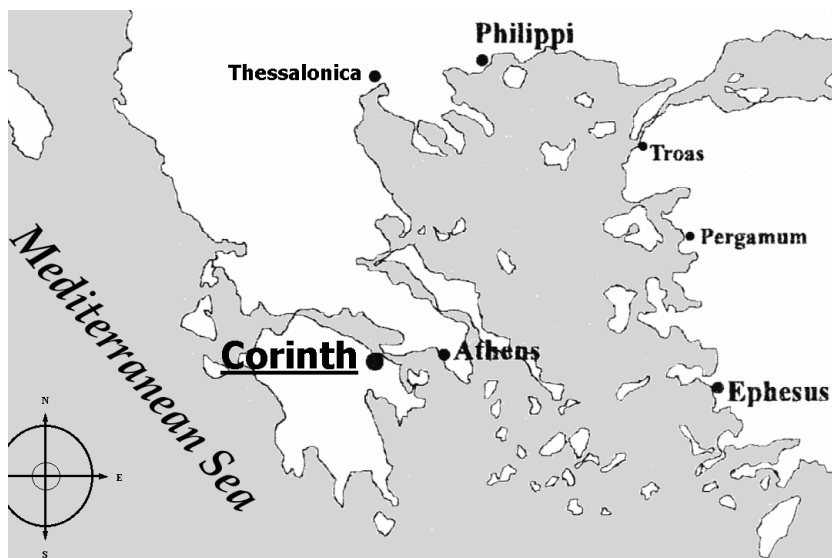
Merely understanding the Corinthian epistles from a theoretical approach does not cut it! Studying Greek does not cut it! In fact, many of today's expositors on the subject have never been baptized in the Holy Spirit or spoken in tongues. These letters of Paul can only be understood through the personal experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and by "being there" (in like conditions), and by the spirit of revelation!

Other churches in Paul's time had their unique problems: The Galatians had become very legalistic, a problem which was on the opposite extreme from Corinth. But of the two, Paul had far more hope for the carnal Corinthians than the legalistic Galatians. Let us study these epistles with a new appreciation of what the power of God can do in a newborn church. Paul had experienced the grace of God in his own life, and he was expecting the grace of God to work in the lives of many of these carnal Corinthians! (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2).

Corinth the 1st Century City

Corinth was the capital of Achaia (Southern Greece) and was one of the main seaports of its day. Geographically, the city was strategically located on a narrow strip of land that connected the north and south of Greece. All of the traffic between the two sectors had to come through Corinth. Furthermore, all of the sea traffic from Rome to Asia Minor going east and west would channel through the straits to Corinth. It was not only a straighter course, but also a safer one. The sea along the southern coast (Pelopeneus) was treacherous. Once the ships arrived at Corinth, they were unloaded and the cargo was hauled to other ships on the other side of the isthmus.

Map of Mediterranean



The prominent position that Corinth had commercially not only brought wealth and many opportunists, but also a licentious life-style that even appalled the pagan world. Many theaters in the Roman Empire featured a drunken Corinthian who would stagger on to the stage. To be called a Corinthian was practically an insult. One of the main centers of religion was a temple to the goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of fleshly love. This large temple in Corinth had 1,000 temple prostitutes. There was also much homosexuality and perversion in Corinth. That is why you see Paul hitting on certain themes such as: men and women roles, long hair on men, shaved heads on women etc.

** In First Corinthians 6:9-10, all the cardinal sins of Corinth are enumerated.*

At one time, Corinth had nearly half a million slaves. Its inhabitants came from many varied backgrounds. The city had numerous taverns and nightclubs. It was a populous city with a notable history. Yet, with all of the data collected concerning Corinth, nothing could be more exciting than the divine account recorded in the Book of Acts and the Corinthian Epistles.

I have much people in this city

In Acts 18:10, the Lord said to Paul: *"I have much people in this city."* Thus, he remained there for a year and a half. Paul always had his main stations where there was a flow of people coming through. It would have been a waste for the great theologian to be isolated in some little village for eighteen months while the traffic of the world was flowing through a major city like Corinth. Paul was one of the main instruments in founding the church at Corinth. In Acts 18:12, Gallio is mentioned as being the Roman deputy of Achaia. According to secular history, Gallio was resident in Corinth between AD 51-53.

Therefore, judging that Paul wrote this first epistle from Ephesus in the spring of AD 57 (1 Cor. 16:8), the oldest convert in this church would have been less than five years old in the Lord. The second epistle was written in the autumn of the same year from Philippi (2 Cor. 7:5-7). From this we can see that Paul was writing to a very young and immature group of Spirit-filled believers.

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Athens versus Corinth

We read Acts 18:1-17 for the account of the founding of the Corinthian church. It would also enlarge our hearts and minds to consider Paul's preceding visit to Athens in Acts 17:16-34. Athens was the intellectual center of the world, having the biggest libraries and famous philosophers, the "worldly wise men." It was the cultural enrichment center of the world. Paul went to Athens with the same message that he brought to Corinth. He presented the gospel on Mars Hill to all of the philosophers and wise men, but with little response – only a few believed. Then Paul proceeded west to the debauched city of Corinth, and the Lord said: *"I have much people in this city."*

Athens and Corinth were actually in sight of each other on a clear day. They were approximately 40 miles apart, but one could see Athens from Corinth's bluffs. One city rejected Christ (there are no recorded epistles to the Athenians), but the other city greatly responded to the gospel and had the largest of all epistles written to them.

Revival brings in all kinds

Many churchmen view Corinth as the carnal church... the Corinthian corruption, etc. Some use the Corinthian misuse of gifts and their general misconduct as an excuse to disallow and disdain the Pentecostal experience. Certainly they had their exceptional problems, but we have to see Corinth as a city that God was visiting with revival! Realistically, what would one expect from 70,000 new converts who were virtually converted overnight? Could we expect a throng of saints? (Especially considering the Corinthian culture.) Corinth was truly the most fertile of all of Paul's stops.

Paul, a father to the Church

Spiritual children need a father and that is why there was a Paul. Paul is a true father image. A spiritual father is one who is enlarged enough in heart and mind to overlook many of the personal indignities of these spiritually immature children. Don't think that Paul wasn't groomed for this slot. Very few ministers could ever have fathered the Corinthian Church. The apostle said in one place: *"The more that I love you, the less I be loved."* Sometimes the more you do for people, the less they appreciate you, and they will be the ones that hurt you most. (See 1 Cor. 4:14-15.)

Last day ingathering

We need to see Corinth as a sample of the last day ingathering. The seventh parable of Matthew 13 likens the kingdom of the last days to a net cast into the sea into which every kind of fish was caught, the good and the bad. It takes the father spirit to sort out such a situation. God desires in these last days to raise

We need to see Corinth as a sample of the last day ingathering.

up spiritual fathers and mothers who can nurture these carnal new believers. Through the instrument of the Word, through the empowerment of the Spirit, and through much longsuffering and patience, they will present to the Lord a people perfected by His grace.

The Greek Mentality

Before we proceed into chapter one, let us consider the Greek mentality. Every nationality has certain inbred characteristics. The Greeks by nature had a certain pride and a certain intellect that resisted God. Paul said: *“the Greeks seek after wisdom”* (1 Cor. 1:22). Unfortunately, the wisdom they portrayed was not from above, but of the earth. As Jesus had said, *“Wisdom is identified in her offspring”* (by what she produces). James tells us that the wisdom of this world produces envy, strife, confusion, and every evil work. Furthermore, Solomon tells us: *“Only by pride cometh contention...”* Certainly this was the condition of the Corinthian church: divisions, factions, debates, schisms, strife, envy, emulation, striving to be up front, swellings, ego, boasting, contentions, confusion, and every evil work! (See Jam. 3:14-16, Pro. 13:10.)

People bring into the church the hang-ups and the masteries from their former life – not only their failures but also their successes. Perhaps they have had a certain command in the business world. Then after conversion they assume that they have the same authority in the area of spiritual matters also. They want to be in charge.

The Greeks were great boasters of the flesh and of man’s ability. This mentality carried over into the spiritual life. Many had the attitude that the spiritual gifts operated through their own

uniqueness or because they were something extraordinary. The Greeks boasted in their wise men, philosophers, mighty men, nobles, and highly disciplined athletes. Surely the momentum of the old life and the old way of thinking continued to dominate the minds of these young Corinthian converts. If we can appreciate something of the Greek mind set, then we can appreciate what Paul was dealing with here at Corinth. Here were a people, only two or three years old in the faith, that thought they knew more than the Apostle Paul did.

The Corinthians had a high degree of spiritual knowledge. All of the gifts of the Spirit were flowing in this church (cf. 1 Cor. 1:5-7), and yet in many ways they were as carnal as the unredeemed. They were violating all of the nine beatitudes of Christ (Mt. 5:1-12). They were not poor in spirit; they were haughty and puffed up; they were not meek; they did not turn the cheek. They took one another to court; and this was done before the unbelievers. They categorically broke all of the 33 precepts of the sermon on the mount. Yes, they had plenty of giftings and knowledge, but Paul tells them that they were yet carnal!

But love edifies

This is the reason why we can appreciate the “Love Chapter” (Chapter 13)... *the more excellent way*. Paul declared to them: “*Knowledge puffs up!*” These young believers had heads that swelled with knowledge and facts. Their notebooks were filled with spiritual truths, but the reality of those truths had not yet penetrated their hearts. Many were weak and sickly because they thought they could love God and not love their brethren. They did not discern the importance of the other members of the body, which is also a part of Christ. Paul told them that we could possess all of the gifts

and have all knowledge, but if we do not have love, we are nothing! Having gifts without some evidence of fruit only produces pride and vanity! (See Matthew 7:20-23)

Maturity does not come overnight. It requires time and many responses of obedience.

Here is the whole point of the Corinthian Epistles. Maturity and spiritual perfection does not come overnight. It requires time and many responses of obedience. There are seasons of pruning and chastening as well as pleasant experiences in the Lord. The Corinthian believers had the revelation of spiritual things and had all of the gifts of the Spirit in operation. But we see a problem here – the same problem confronting all newborn believers – the need to appropriate the message of the cross. True love can only be expressed by the denial of self, and that can only take place as we embrace the cross!

* See the Appendix for *“Why the believer needs a conversion,”* and also for *“The 33 precepts of the Sermon on the Mount.”*



Chapter One

That no flesh should glory

Chapter one sets the stage for the following chapters. In verse 2, Paul says that the Corinthian believers are *“called to be saints.”* In their present state they were not very saintly, yet Paul had high hopes for their finish as he states in verse 8: *“That ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* The overall purpose of these letters was to bring the Corinthian church into order and maturity.

Almost immediately the apostle addresses the problems of divisions, contentions, and factions. Disunity is a sign of unresolved conflicts in the heart. Paul explains to them that worldly wisdom is not the answer to their problems, but is in fact the very cause of them. The cross of Christ is heaven's paradoxical wisdom to the world. The cross was Paul's panacea (cure-all) to the carnal Corinthians. It is the power of God and the wisdom of God. The message of the cross defies all human logic. The way up is down... you gain by losing. When you are weak (in yourself) then you are strong... that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Catch the twist that Paul throws in 1:26-28: *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise;*

and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

Of course, the Corinthians did not consider themselves to be any of these (foolish, weak, base, despised, and something that "is not"). They thought they were very wise, mighty, and noble. Paul tells them in a subsequent verse, "Yes, you are wise, but we are fools. Yes, you are strong, but we are weak. Yes, you are honored, but we are despised. Yes, you are reigning, and I wish you were that we might reign with you." (They were not really reigning; they just thought they were!) Paul was telling them in a subtle way who was really chosen and how they might be chosen: "*Become fools that ye might be wise.*" The message of the cross is foolishness to the world.

Paul establishes his authority

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

The apostolic ministry is not something that you study for or seek for. It is a heavenly appointment! The Sosthenes mentioned here is probably the same man mentioned in Acts 18:17. He must have converted to Paul's gospel in Corinth, but was apparently with Paul at the time of this writing.

Called to be saints

1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

The “sanctification” mentioned here means “to be set apart for God.” Anything that is given to God or is dedicated to God is declared to be holy even if (in effect) it is not. (See Lev. 27:28) The Corinthians were set apart for God's purposes, but many of them were not holy. *“Called to be saints...”* They were not yet saints, and that tells us that there is an out-working of the redemptive process.

Two Kinds of Righteousness

They were not yet saints, and that tells us that there is an out-working of the redemptive process.

There are two forms of righteousness mentioned in scripture: imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. One involves our standing with God only (dikaisune, or imputed righteousness), but the other is “worked out” righteousness. Imputed righteousness is the righteousness we receive at new birth. It involves only our standing with God. We are counted righteous because we believe in Christ (cf. Rom. 4:1-8). We are reckoned to be righteous because God looks at us through His Son, who paid our debt.

The other Greek word for righteousness, (dikaionia) is a higher form of righteousness and it is mentioned in Revelation 19:7-8. It literally means “the righteous acts of the saints.” The men and women of Revelation 19:7-8 have been made righteous. There has to be an outworking of the righteousness of God in order to be in Revelation 19:7-8. Thus, we are saints elect. We are called to be saints.

“Both theirs and ours” is in reference to their “mutual” Lord (c.f. 2 Cor. 10:7).

Grace and peace

1:3 *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

“*Grace and peace*” are Paul’s usual opening format. These two substances in themselves could merit an entire study. They actually will determine where we will go in this Christian walk. Grace is not only God’s favor, but it is also divine enablement to do what we cannot do in our own strength. It supplies the power we need to live the life of faith.

Grace has often been misconstrued to mean God’s tolerance with our inability to live the life. That is false grace! Paul attributed all of his attainments to God’s grace: “*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me*” (1 Cor 15:10 NRSV). A person who deems himself to be weak, often has a greater opportunity to receive God’s grace than one who is strong in himself. The name Paul means “small,” but in his esteemed smallness, he was made great by God’s grace (2 Cor. 12:9)!

Grace has often been misconstrued to mean God’s tolerance with our inability to live the life. That is false grace!

Peace is a costly commodity. It is symbolized by olive oil, which is derived by tremendous pressure. Gethsemane means “oil press” (Mark 14:32). Peace is one of the most destructive forces we have against Satan. When a person has *the peace of God*, he cannot be routed or moved, but rather he can walk upon the enemy (cf. Rom. 16: 20).

Paul always uses this particular word (eirene – peace) in his salutations. It corresponds to the Hebrew word *Shalom*. *Shalom* not only has the sense of tranquility, but also speaks of oneness, health and prosperity.

Endowed with many gifts

1:46 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; v.5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; v.6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.

It is evident that the young Corinthian believers had a high degree of knowledge and were flowing in all the gifts of the Spirit. We must be careful to note that these blessings were bestowed upon them by God's favor (grace).

The spirit of prophecy

The testimony of Christ was confirmed in them. According to Revelation 19:10, the testimony of Jesus is *the spirit of prophecy*. The spirit of prophecy was so fluent and so revelatory in this church that outsiders would come in and have the secrets of their heart revealed. They would literally fall down and say: "*God is in you of a truth,*" meaning "you could not have known these things without divine assistance." There was a tremendous gift of prophecy in this church, as described in chapter 14:24-25.

Many years ago my wife was skeptical about Pentecostalism and the gifts of the Spirit. (I was introduced to Pentecost long before she was.) Then God began to speak to her that she was

to attend the church that I was attending. So she came with me because she wanted to be obedient to the Lord. On one particular night, there was an out-of-town minister from Arizona who arrived late for the service, as he thought that the service started at 7:30 rather than 7:00. He did not have a chance to meet anyone or talk to anyone before the service.

On the way to church my wife and I were having a unique conversation and we were both commenting on particular things. That night, the evangelist came to us and literally exposed our whole conversation. It was so real that my wife said after the service, "I never believed in Pentecost until tonight." The prophetic word spoken by the evangelist was so accurate and right to the letter that she had to confess that God was in this place. These were the types of giftings that Corinth had.

** Note: A few of these illustrations may be used again to enforce a particular truth.*

1:7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

What marvelous grace God had bestowed upon this church. They were given every opportunity, every evidence, and every witness of the Spirit to prepare themselves for His coming. Every generation has the prospect of being a part of the Second Coming. Of course the reason is that the dead in Christ shall rise first!

He is able to keep you

1:8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God is giving some wonderful hope to some very carnal Christians. We must try to see things the way God sees them. *Who shall also confirm you unto the end...* Confirm means to strengthen or establish. We are kept by the power of God, and we are strengthened by the power of God. The only way that we can fail is to refuse His grace! (Heb. 12:15) *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”*

Every generation has the prospect of being a part of the Second Coming.

If we continue to walk in the light and appropriate God’s grace, we have the hopes of appearing before Him blameless! (See Jude 1:24.)

1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

“God is faithful” follows the thought of the previous verse. He is faithful to keep you from falling and present you faultless before the throne! God created us for fellowship, and the only way that we can have true fellowship is by identifying with the life of Christ. As we walk in the Spirit, we are led into life experiences whereby we can know Him!

Paul immediately addresses the issues

1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Immediately Paul begins to address one of the major problems in Corinth, the problem of disunity. If there is one thing that stifles the Spirit of God it is strife. One of the four unities in Scripture is unity of heart (Psa. 86:11). In order to have unity with others, we must first have unity within ourselves. This is why David often uses the phrase: *“with my whole heart.”* We can have a divided heart like the Reubenites in Judges 5:15-16, or like the Ephraimites in Psalm 78:8-9. If half of our affections are in the world and half are in the Church, we will never stand up in the tests. There has to be wholeheartedness.

If ten people were all in agreement with the purposes of God (in their own heart), I think it would be safe to say that they would be in agreement with each other as well. When we are wholehearted, we will focus upon the things that are important to God. When we are unclear in our own mind as to where we’re standing or where we are going; we certainly can’t flow with others! Even in the negative sense, when people are in unity nothing can stop them! (See Gen. 11:6.)

*We will later see that the apostle Paul wants this church to come together on a particular matter of judgment.

The cause of contention

The root cause of contention is pride. In fact, that was the cardinal sin of Satan.

1:11 *For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.*

Proverbs 13:10 declares: *“Only by pride cometh contentions.”* The root cause of contention is pride. In fact, that was the cardinal sin of Satan. Pride is deceptive and full of self. The

pride of Satan deceived him into thinking he was greater than his Creator! His pride not only brought dissension in heaven, but it brought a division of one third of heaven! Self needs to be recognized; self needs the undivided attention of others; self is easily offended; and self does not care for others! That is why there has to be a crucifixion to self (Gal. 2:20).

God does not give the Holy Spirit to us because we are holy or humble. He gives us the Holy Spirit to make us holy and humble. The Pentecostal experience can bring a lot of ugly things to the surface. When the Holy Ghost comes into His temple, He begins to overturn some of the tables in our heart; He begins to get to the root of many of our problems. If we submit to the dealings of the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves being brought more and more to the cross. When we are on the cross (spiritually), our lives will emanate peace!

Sectarianism

1:12-16 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. v.13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? v.14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; v.15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. v.16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

Have you ever heard somebody make a statement something like this? "I am a Lutheran, my parents were Lutherans, I will die a Lutheran." Can you see how a person can become so exclusive that they shut themselves off from much greater benefits? This is

why China remained hundreds of years behind the times... they wanted to stay behind the wall, in their own little cast.

A true leader does not speak of himself, nor does he try to draw people to himself. In fact, he will encourage his followers to develop a relationship with the Lord that they might know the truth, choosing the good and refusing the evil. There are people who become so exclusive that they can only receive from certain personages. That was one of the problems here. The church members were forming into little cliques. (It was a pride thing.) We follow Apollos, he's charismatic, he's educated, and he's eloquent...

They all had their reasons for following some particular minister, but as Paul later tells them in 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."* In other words; get your eyes off personalities and focus on the one by whom everything happens!

We follow Christ

May I add a little balance to this? There is nothing wrong with being loyal to your appointed leader. In fact, we should be loyal to our pastor, we should obey those who are put over us. I say this because there was also a little schismatic group mentioned in 1:12, that said: *"We are of Christ!"* That sounds so noble and yet this is the worst group of all! "We need no man to teach us, we just move in the Spirit." "We don't follow men... we don't need any pastor to correct us or tell us what to do!" These are the independent spirits who only attend church

or tithe or do anything when they feel led. Did the Lord make a mistake when He placed pastors and teachers in the body?

The Church today has many freelancers who are accountable to no one. Generally, they get into error because they do not want anyone to speak into their life or to check their actions. They claim they are only following Christ, not man. But think of what they are missing when they cannot hear Christ speaking through Apollos, Paul, or Peter. It is also a violation of Hebrews 10:25. I have learned over the years that if we can only receive spiritual nourishment from one ministry, we are depriving ourselves of much.

Worldly wisdom nullifies the true message

1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Some people have used this verse as a reason not to be baptized! Paul simply let others do the baptizing to avoid proselytizing or having the appearance of drawing disciples unto himself. *"Not with wisdom of words..."* The intellectual gospel explains away the personal need for the cross, as did Mr. Worldly Wiseman in Pilgrim's Progress. He explains how going to the City of Morality and leading a life of good works will undo his burden of sin.

The preaching of the cross

1:18-20 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. v.19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and

*will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. v.20
Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of
this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this
world?*

The preaching of the cross does not make sense to the natural man. The true message of the cross defies all human logic and intellect. It is absolutely converse to man's rationale! How does one win by losing? How does one become first by becoming last? How does one live by dying, gain by giving? Only those who appropriate the true message of the cross can really know the power that Paul speaks of. (See 2 Cor. 12:9-10.)

Later on in this chapter, the apostle Paul will tell us how that God works through our weakness and deficiency. God shows Himself strong through what man disdains as insignificant or nonexistent! God uses a lad to slay a giant! God uses the jaw-bone of an ass to slay a thousand men! That He might make foolish the wisdom of this world.

The intellectual gospel

Unfortunately, the preaching of the cross is not only foolishness to unregenerate man, but it is considered to be non-applicable to those within Christendom – not the fact that Jesus died on the cross, but the fact that we must take up our cross, that we must be crucified with Christ.

Today, there is an intellectual gospel that has replaced the emphasis on the power of God. It is like leaven that has insidiously infiltrated the Church. When we turn on Christian radio, much of what we are listening to is a presentation of psychology, principles and politics. These all detract from the supernatural moving of God. These all bind God's people to the lower levels

of faith. They deny the healing power, deliverance and the transformation that can only be realized through the work of the cross.

Apologetics (Arguments) so-called – defending the faith. Contending with the atheist, evolutionist, humanist and sociologist. This is fighting spirit with human intellect and reason and it does not work! The Greek society had a group of debaters called “the Sophists.” Their main objective was to win the argument and thus prove their superior intellect! (They could argue both sides, the issue wasn’t important.)

Psychology – There is no such thing as “Christian” psychology. Psychology appeals to man’s intellect and emotion. Psychology can give you a rational, even a Bible based answer; but it will never address the real issue. At best, it can only patch up the old sinful nature and maybe give temporary relief, but it can never rid man of the bondage! The old nature requires a deathblow... a spiritual circumcision, a cutting away of what we are born with. Only the Holy Spirit can accomplish this. Unless we are changed in our spirit by the power of God, nothing ever changes. With all of the emphasis on inner healing, therapy, support groups, and endless counseling sessions, nothing ever changes until an individual has had a supernatural meeting with God. The Pilgrim carried his burden for a considerable time, even after he was in the kingdom. It wasn’t until his revelation of the cross that the burden rolled away! (Pilgrim’s Progress)

Principles – Seminar principles are also a growing attraction to the church world. Seminar principles tend to categorize people, situations and problems. Every conceivable situation is worked out theoretically beforehand. Each problem is carefully analyzed and resolved with answers that are fully supported by scripture. Please do not misunderstand what I am saying. The principles in themselves may be absolutely correct, but unless

we hear from God upon the particular situation wherein we find ourselves, we will make a pat application that will resolve nothing! There is no magic formula or master key in the kingdom that opens every door. It requires a relationship with the One who has a specific answer for our specific need. Man must live by every word that proceedeth [present tense] from the mouth of God (Deut. 8:3; Lk. 4:4).

Politics – Political activism is also another gospel that detracts people from the real purposes of the kingdom. If you have ever witnessed a political demonstration, e.g. an anti-porn, anti-abortion, or anti-gay protest, immediately, you will recognize that you are in the combat zone. There is strife, name-calling and even physical confrontations – hardly what you would call “the gospel of peace!” We must realize that we are not fighting with flesh and blood. A spiritual battle can only be won in the Spirit! A pastor was once tempted to resort to protest when a porn shop opened across the street from the church. The Lord said: “this is not my way, call your people to prayer!” The shop closed a week later!

We could write a book on the intellectual gospel, but in short, the intellectual gospel will keep the believer from walking in the Spirit. It will keep them from knowing the supernatural working of faith. It will keep them from developing a personal relationship with Christ. They will be living out of the rulebook instead of hearing from God. Their time will be absorbed in matters that will yield no eternal fruit. Their counsel will be like that of Job’s comforters. What they said was true but it did not apply to Job. They were trying to apply principles, such as “You are reaping what you’ve sown...” Not true! At all costs we should avoid the trap of intellectualism.

The intellectual gospel will keep the believer from walking in the Spirit.

The Jews were given over to principles because they did not want to listen to the voice of the Lord and they were a people devoid of faith! Therefore, God gave them over to principles and rules to live by. They knew the law by heart but could not recognize the One who gave it (Jn. 5:39-40). After crucifying their Messiah, they were concerned that His body not be left on the tree over the Sabbath because they did not want to violate their law. The "I Am" who gave this precept to Moses was the one hanging on the cross! (See Isa. 28:13)

The world by wisdom knew not God

1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

- ◆ The world by wisdom would not have looked for the Co-creator, the Prince of Glory, to be birthed in a stable!
- ◆ The world by wisdom would not have looked for the Co-creator, the Prince of Glory, working in a carpenter shop with sweat running down His face!
- ◆ The world by wisdom would not have looked for the Co-creator, the Prince of Glory, suffering the maladies and weaknesses of mortal man!
- ◆ The world by wisdom would not have looked for the Co-creator, the Prince of Glory, washing the dust from the feet of men!
- ◆ The world by wisdom would not have looked for the Co-creator, the Prince of Glory, being whipped mercilessly when all power was at His disposal!
- ◆ The world by wisdom would not have looked for the Co-creator, the Prince of Glory, to be crucified as a criminal on a cross!

God purposely conceals His wisdom in such a way that only the meek and lowly will recognize it.

Wisdom concealed from the wise

Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Isaiah 45:15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

1 Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

Proverbs 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

It was the kings (the wise men) who discovered the hidden Christ. It was the common folk, the poor in spirit, and the humble that recognized Him!

1:21b The foolishness of preaching

Many a preacher has been mocked in his commission. There is no greater example of this than that of Noah. Yet, it pleases God through this means to save the lost! What we must understand about this implement called *preaching*, is that it involves one of the Seven Spirits of God: "The anointing to preach." Preaching brings conviction; it stimulates faith. It causes lost man to recognize his lost condition! (See Rom. 10:14-15.)

The Jews seek a sign

1:22 *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.*

The Jews have always been “sign conscious.” In fact, Jesus said this in Matthew 12:39-40. If signs were to really convince the Jews, they should have been convinced! They walked through the Red Sea and still denied the marvelous working of God! It says in John 12:37, *“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.”* Even the promise of speaking in tongues (as a sign to the Jews) would be disbelieved. (cf. Isa. 28:11-12, 1 Cor. 14:21-22)

1:22b The wisdom that the Greeks sought after, was the kind of wisdom that the philosophers used to refute Paul in Athens. (See Acts 17:18-32)

1 Cor 1:23 *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*

The Jews could never accept a crucified Messiah. Even though all of the prophets foretold the sufferings of Christ, the Jews still looked for the Messiah that would deliver them from Rome and sit upon the throne of David. To the Jews, to be hung on a tree was the most heinous and reproachful death. Indeed, it was the mark of a cursed one! *“His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”* (Deut. 21:23).

1:23b The crucified Christ was nonsense to the Greek mentality. The Greeks boasted of the flesh. They boasted of their wise men. They glorified their mighty men, their warriors, and their athletes and Olympians. In fact, the Greeks deified man; they worshipped their bodies (their physiques). This helps us

to understand how the message of the cross was so contrary to them: The idea of death to the flesh was diametrically opposed to their thinking!

Christ the power of God

1:24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

God will have a people out of every tribe and tongue who recognize and assimilate Christ. All power was given to Christ, and in Him dwells all knowledge and wisdom. That is why Christ is the answer. He not only has the answer but He is the answer! Moreover, He has all power to bring to pass His Word. (See Col. 2:9, 2:3; Matt. 28:18.)

1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

With all of the great learning of 21st century man, he still cannot create the smallest atom, nor can he explain how a blade of grass grows. The Creator is revealed through His creation (Rom. 1:20). Man has guessed the universe to be 12,360,000,000 light years across. How do you compare “a guess” with the knowledge of the One who made it all?

Supposing God decided to be foolish (just for variety sake) and create some strange looking little creature that lives two miles down in the sea. All the wisdom of man on earth couldn't even hope to duplicate that weird little creature!

1:25b On what point can we illustrate the weakness of God? God becomes one of us – that should make Him weak. The scripture says: “He was crucified in weakness.” Certainly, that must have been a picture of weakness. Here is the Co-Creator of

the universe, weakly hanging upon a cross. He is weakened from the beating. He is weakened from the loss of blood. He is weakened from thirst. He is weakened from the emotional trauma and the jeering crowd. Yet, consider His strength: He could have called legions of angels, walked off that cross, and annihilated the whole crowd! That act of submission, and that act of weakness forces every angel and every knee in heaven and earth to bow to Him. He spoiled principalities and powers on the cross!

Paul's subtle message to the Corinthians

1:26 *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*

We are going to see in the subsequent verses that “the way up, is down!” We don’t find any biblical accounts of God choosing people who were at the top to do His mighty acts! There are a few whom God chose who had position and rank, such as Moses. Moses was a prince, and yet it wasn’t until he experienced 40 years of stripping on the backside of the desert that God used him!

1:27-29 *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 1:28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

Remember that the Greeks celebrated their wise men such as Plato, Socrates and Aristotle.

This concept of God's choosing the weak and despised and the "nothings" must have jolted them a bit!

They celebrated their mighty men, their athletes, their “Hercules and Alexanders.” This concept of God’s choosing the weak and despised and the “nothings” must have jolted them a bit! Please continue to bear in mind that new converts bring in the mentality of their former life. Throughout these epistles you will see what the Spirit of God is dealing with. Their worldly pride had seeped into their spiritual lives; thus they were glorying in personalities, and glorying in their giftings, as though they had not received them from God!

Although we can take comfort in this type of verses (God’s using ordinary people), there is another aspect of truth here that is quite unique to the Corinthians:

1 Cor 4:10	We are fools	but ye are wise.
1 Cor 4:10	We are weak	but ye are strong.
1 Cor 4:10	We are despised	ye are honourable.
2 Cor 10:1	Who in presence am base among you...	
2 Cor 12:11	Though I am nothing...	
1 Cor 4:13	<i>“Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.”</i>	

What was Paul saying to them? Paul was all of the things that God chooses! Paul was chosen; they were not. Paul later says: *“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise”*(1 Cor. 3:18).

*That no flesh should glory...*The reason God elects ordinary people is to prohibit man from boasting in man. It is interesting to see the ways and means that God used to win mighty victories in Scripture. Samson used the jawbone of an ass to bring deliverance. Shamgar used an ox goad. Joshua and Israel marched around Jericho thirteen times and then gave a shout. God used ways and means to bring victory to Israel so that man could not boast and say: "We have done this by our own strength and our own intelligence." (See Deut. 8:17-18; Judg. 7:2)

1:30-31 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 1:31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

We cannot glory (boast) in any of the above: We can't take credit for His wisdom or His righteousness. We can't boast in the fact that God chose us, separated us and is continually redeeming us! As Jeremiah said: *"Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD"* (Jer. 9:23-24).



Chapter Two

The natural man versus the spiritual man

Paul's desire was to see the evidence of Christ crucified in his Corinthian converts (2:2). The cross is the place that separates the natural man from the spiritual man. Paul's message is directed to Christians, not to unbelievers. There is much natural mindedness even among the Spirit-filled believers. The apostle explains that our natural man cannot accept the things of God, because they are to be spiritually discerned. The Lord testifies in Isaiah 55:8-9: *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

On the other hand, the spiritual man allows his intellect to be nailed to the cross. This man is able to judge all things, yet others cannot judge him. The carnal mind cannot see as God sees, but Paul said: *"We have the mind of Christ."* Paul had the mind of Christ; the Corinthians did not. He was spiritual and they were carnal. The interesting thing is that the Corinthians were trying to judge Paul, but in actuality, he was judging them.

Two Wisdoms - The Earthly and Heavenly

James 3:13-16 says: *"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his*

works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

In this chapter we see a contrast between the two wisdoms—the wisdom of the world and the wisdom that comes from above. James tells us that the wisdom of the world produces envy, strife, confusion and every evil work. Corinth was the epitome of confusion. Thus, we can see which wisdom was governing their lives. James 3:17 states: *"the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."*

Paul's message - in power

2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

As Paul will tell them again (2:4), his speech was not with enticing words of man's wisdom. Paul was not a showman, he was not the charismatic person that some would have desired to see. Nevertheless, Paul was a true witness; Paul had the evidence of the things he spoke about! (c.f. Pro. 25:14)

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

What Paul wanted to see in the church was the evidence of Christ crucified among them (in them). In other words, Paul was not interested in seeing a lot of their carnal behavior or a

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lot of flesh. He only wanted to see Christ in their midst! When a church embraces the true message of the cross then we will see Christ. Self has to be put on the cross (or out of the way) in order to reveal Christ!

2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

Lest we get the wrong impression of Paul, Paul was not trembling because he was afraid of them, he was trembling for them.

Corinth was a real jackpot. They had tremendous potential, and yet Paul, knowing the fragility of this work, had great concerns. To be weak in ourselves is not bad – that is when God can work!

2:45 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: v.5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:19, *“But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.”* The kingdom message is not in word only but in power. There are many that can talk a good fight, but they can't fight the good fight. Paul might not have looked the part and perhaps the articulation of his speech was not winsome; but very few have ever had the revelation and the word of faith that Paul had! The word “power” (in Greek-*dunamis*) means “miraculous, supernatural power.” Our faith does not reside in some human philosophy or creed but in the power of the gospel.

The Wisdom of God

2:6-8 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 1:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 1:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Here is the wisdom that Paul conveyed: *"But we speak the wisdom of God..."* The word *perfect* in 2:6 could better translate: "mature." The wisdom of God is hidden from the natural man. Ignorance played an important part in the crucifixion – *had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory* and then God's purposes would not have been fulfilled. The Son of God was veiled in flesh and looked like an ordinary man. Human wisdom would tell us that the Son of God should have been born in a palace, not a stable. Jesus Himself spoke in parables and in such a fashion that only those who loved the truth could perceive it.

Revelation - by the Spirit

2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

The natural eye, the natural ear, the natural perception can not even begin to fathom the greatness of what God has in store for those who love him. This is a quote from Isaiah 64:4. The only difference between the two passages is that Isaiah phrases it like this: *"...what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for*

him. "Waiting for God is synonymous with loving God. It is like a young woman waiting for her soldier to return. Though he has been gone for several years, her love has not deviated.

2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

But God hath revealed them... We can't perceive them by natural means, but the Spirit of God wants to reveal the riches of His glory to His saints. In fact, The apostle Paul prays exactly that way in his Ephesian epistle: "That we might be granted the Spirit of revelation; that we might know the riches of His glory; that we might know the exceeding greatness of his power; and that we might know the love of Christ that passes knowledge!" (Eph. 1:17-19, 3:19)

The reason that God gave His Spirit to man is that man might know Him. As Jesus said: "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.*" (John 16:13-15)

2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Naturally speaking, we know each other because we all have a human spirit and we all have similar feelings, desires, wants and needs. But spiritually, how are we able to know the heart of another? By first knowing ourselves! God exposes our own heart by the sword of the Lord (the Word). When we have had our own heart exposed by the Word, then we can look into the hearts of others.

It was said to Mary: *“Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed”* (Lk. 2:35). We can only know others to the extent that the sword has pierced our own being. When God has pierced our hearts by His Sword and revealed our own hearts unto us, then we can read other people in the spirit. Paul had his heart thoroughly exposed by the Sword, and he knew the heart of the immature Corinthians very well.

When we have had our own heart exposed by the Word, then we can look into the hearts of others.

2:12-13 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. v.13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

The apostle Paul only taught the things which he was taught by the Spirit of revelation. This is what he told the Galatians, *“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Gal. 1:11-12). Only the Holy Spirit can reveal spiritual truths – they will consistently agree with other spiritual truths. Even within the law of hermeneutics, there must be the law of agreement. Even the hidden truths will agree in the law, the prophets, the psalms and the gospels. (See Luke 24:44)

The natural man cannot discern

2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Naaman nearly missed his healing from the curse of leprosy because the prophet asked him to do something that seemed foolish (2 Kg. 5:9-14). Naaman would have rejected his healing if his servants had not urged him to obey the prophet's command. To the natural mind the ways of God always seem so foolish. Even though we may be filled with the spirit, we still must be very sensitive to the still small voice. *"They are spiritually discerned."*

He that is spiritual judgeth all things

2:15-16 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. v. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

There is a lot of variance on the subject of judging. Jesus said in John 7:24, *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."* A spiritual man is supposed to judge and evaluate matters, but not from a human perspective. The Corinthians could not judge or evaluate a matter because they were carnal and did not have the mind of Christ. That was the whole case in point concerning the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3-10). The carnality of her accusers forbade them to make a judgment! *"But we have the mind of Christ."* Paul had the mind of Christ.

The minister must judge

As a minister we are going to be a judge. We are given the responsibility to judge our people, when they come to us for judgments and for counsel. We must judge situations in mercy, considering that we are capable of the same things.

However, we cannot tolerate sin just because of our previous offenses. We have risen above that sin now; we are washed, sanctified, and clean. Moreover, God has elevated us to a position to uphold a standard and we must execute righteous judgments. Eli was judged because he did not judge! The church in Thyatira was incriminated because they did not judge! (See 1 Sam. 3:13, and Rev. 2:18-20.)

*Eli was
judged
because
he did
not
judge!*

The church is to be a place of judgment. This will be especially realized when we study chapter five. (Compare Isaiah 16:5 with Acts 15:16.) The interesting paradox of the Paul – Corinth relationship was that many of the carnal Corinthians were trying to judge Paul, to say that Paul was walking in the flesh. The truth was that Paul was judging them, saying “*ye are carnal!*” Paul had the mind of Christ!



Chapter Three

All to be judged by the fire of God

Paul made it clear in chapter two that the spiritual man has the mind of Christ and the spiritual man is able to judge all things. In chapter three, Paul begins to set them straight (in the mind of Christ). He tells them: “Ye are carnal!” They were carnal because of their partisan view of the ministry. They were exalting some, while debasing others. Some were even putting themselves on the same level as the minister. (See the appendix: “The Corinthian judgement of Paul.”)

It is for this reason; that Paul compares the church to a building project where every builder must give an account for his work. The apostle emphasizes that we are all Gods building, builded upon the one foundation, which is Christ. The foundation has been tried and tested, however the builders and the building must also be tried! Moreover, it is the fire of God that shall test every building and every work. The fire of God shall discover exactly what has been lain to this foundation; and only that which abides the fire shall remain!

** Much of the Corinthian letters are to establish order and judgment in the Church.*

Paul's Judgment of the Corinthians

3:1-2 And I, brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. v.2 I have

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

Paul has to put these new believers in their place as a father does his unruly children. Many of these new converts had an extremely high opinion of themselves. In truth, they were all novices, comparing themselves with each other – like a class of third graders who thought they were something special. We might wonder how a group of young converts could get lifted up so quickly. From personal experience, I have seen new converts filled with the Holy Spirit, and beginning to exercise spiritual gifts – and suddenly they thought they were on the same level as the pastor.

There are basically three groups within the church: little children, young men and fathers, 1 John 2:12-13. The Corinthians were in the *little children* category, and we expect little children to be just that... little children! Paul could not feed them with the meat of the word, but with milk. Milk speaks of the elementary principles (c.f. Pet. 2:2, Isa. 28: 9-10). We could not tell a third grader what is going to be expected from his life because he is not able to receive it. We could tell a third grader what we expect from a third grader. Even the child Jesus had to grow into the revelation of why He was here. Meat also speaks of the deeper truths and the mysteries of the kingdom. If there is not certain maturity in our people, feeding them on the meat will just puff them up with pride! *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age...”* (Heb. 5:14).

Ye are yet carnal

3:3-4 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? v.4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

The words carnal and spiritual are used more in the Corinthian epistles than any other book in the bible. These words stand in extreme contrast of each other: The word *spiritual* basically is used to describe the heavenly or divine nature. The word *carnal* is used to describe the earthy, or the old nature. Ye are carnal because of all the contentions and strife! Ye are carnal because of all the personality cliques!

Personality cliques are a sign of real immaturity. Little children boast, "My father is stronger than your father!" Once again, here is the Greek propensity to glory (boast) in men. Even today, there are Christians who follow some style of ministry. Maybe it's a healing ministry, or an evangelistic ministry, or some prophetic type of ministry. Many of these people are not grounded in a home church and some even follow these ministries around the country.

We used to have a lady in our church that just loved a certain evangelist. Every Sunday morning she used to tell me how good "Brother So and So" was.... "Why, he really came against drink and drugs and disco." She liked him because he never hit the things that she was guilty of: contempt for her husband, criticism, complaining, etc. The evangelist later fell into sin, and that silenced her for a while. She should have been listening to her own pastor and to others who were addressing her real need!

** We need to hear what God is saying to us. If we are camped entirely around a healing ministry etc., we are going to be very deficient and imbalanced.*

The Lord's garden

3:5-6 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? v.6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

In a sense, Paul had to down play the ministry in order to turn their eyes away from personalities and unto the One who had

called them. Apollos and I are just workers in the garden. It is God that gives the new life and the growth!

Rewarded according to our labor

3:7-8 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. v.8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Paul likens them to a garden. One minister planted it; another minister watered it. They both had the same goal and purpose – to produce the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the hearers. They were one in purpose. These ministers were not competing with one another. They were laborers together with the same objective. We have to see the ministry for what it really is. God is orchestrating the work. We (as ministers) are just supplying our part of that work, and we shall all be rewarded according to our investment.

What makes Jesus' parable of the laborers in the vineyard so unique is that the eleventh hour workers were chosen. Many are called into His service, but few are chosen! (Mat. 20:1-16).

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God's building

3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

Paul's simile of the garden is now going to incorporate a building. "Ye are God's building." Not only does the theologian want to reinforce the previous truth, but he also wants to enforce some other weighty truths as well.

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

The wise masterbuilder speaks of the apostolic ministry. The apostle is the chiefest ministry. It incorporates all of the ministries in one. The apostolic ministry oversees all of the other ministries. Paul is warning the other builders to take heed to their work.

3:11 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

The foundation of any true Christian work is clearly the Lord Jesus Christ. Upon this Rock all Christians found their hope of everlasting life. Christ is the foundation of our faith, and every work must shore up upon this foundation!

** The foundation speaks of the doctrine of Christ.*

3:12 *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

I am addressing this especially to the ministry, or those called to the ministry: We have to be on the foundation to be saved, but where we take our people from there can be another story.

<i>There is a lot of wood hay and stubble in the church world:</i>	
Wood	speaks of humanity. This includes works that are solely humanitarian, psychology, and works that are contrived by human efforts. (An "Ishmael.")
Hay	speaks of the flesh. "All flesh is grass..." We are talking about carnality... e.g. music ministries that minister to the flesh etc.
Stubble	speaks of erroneous doctrines etc.

There are other ministries that enrich the people of God and invest the true riches into their lives:

Gold	speaks of the divine nature. Some ministers preach a true message of holiness. They are building the divine nature into the lives of their people.
Silver	speaks of redemption. Some preachers emphasize beautiful life-changing redemptive truths to their people.
Precious Stones	can speak of the gifts of the Spirit. They also speak of divine virtues formed by pressure. Time and pressure form diamonds. Pearls represent the beauty gained from suffering.

Rewarded on what stands in the fire

3:13-15 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. v.14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. v.15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

To a certain extent, these verses have an application for this life as well as the next. I would like to share a vision that I once heard concerning the judgment of the redeemed. (This vision was in heaven.) In this vision there were a number of people standing in a line with an angel confronting them. They all stood there with their life's work represented by the heaps before them. Some had very large piles and others had various size piles before them. All of these piles were covered with straw in order to veil the real content of their work. Then the angel came with his torch and began to ignite these heaps covered with straw. Some of these heaps totally disintegrated to

nothing! Others stayed in tact. Some who had the appearance of doing great things had nothing. One such minister stood weeping, as he stood empty before the Lord. May I say that I wept also, just hearing the story!

This is a scene of how it will be before the throne of God, and yet the last day church shall also experience the consuming fire. God will have a purified church (or bride). Hebrews 12:26-29 foretells a shaking within the kingdom that will include everything that can be shaken. Only that which aligns with Him will remain in the end. It is futile to raise up a lot of works that ultimately bear no lasting fruit and cannot stand the test. We would do better to bring forth 100 Christians who are fruitful Christians than to have 10,000 that have done nothing with their life! What we desire is fruit that remains (John 15:16).

Fruit that remains

We are not rewarded for salvation. We shall not receive a crown because we are saved. Salvation is a free gift. We are rewarded for the way we have invested our life. We are rewarded for fighting the good fight of faith. We are rewarded for the things that we have built upon this foundation. This involves our time, money, and how we have used our talents and energy. What are we building? What are we preaching, teaching, and propagating? What are we investing our lives in?

The theologian declared that some men's works are made out of gold, silver, and precious stones. These materials (spiritually) will abide the fire. Other men's works are made of wood, hay, and stubble. The wood, hay, and stubble will be consumed by God's fire. Let me give you several illustrations of works that shall not abide the fire:

Mother Teresa did a great humanitarian work in India. She ministered to the physical needs of the people. However, she charged her staff not to present the gospel in any wise. Her main intention was to see that the people died with dignity. There will be no fruit in heaven because of her works!

We knew a missionary (no longer living) who proclaimed that his main emphasis was to re-baptize people in his oneness formula. His cardinal doctrine was error, and is a good example of a work that goes up in smoke!

There are many works that will turn out to be wood, hay, and stubble. Many books have been written... end time predictions, predictions of the Second Coming etc. The fire of God will prove all.

Saved; yet so as by fire

I want to be very clear on this particular point. I have heard it preached that we might lose our reward, but not our salvation. The preacher was trying to relate the word "works" to sin. In other words, even if we fall into sin we can never lose our salvation. That kind of error will put people in hell! The works spoken of simply relate to our spiritual investments in life. There will be Christians in heaven that are empty-handed and have nothing awaiting them!

Ye are the temple

3:16-17 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? v.17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Paul brings up this subject of the temple again in chapter six. In both of these references, Paul is likening our body to the personal dwelling of God. This is one of the kingdom mysteries that the apostle often alludes to: "Christ in you..." When Christ claims us for His own, we become His property. We have been washed, we have been set apart for His purpose. We become holy ground (as it were) even though there is a further outworking of His holiness.

But suppose that after being cleansed, we deliberately begin to defile ourselves again. Perhaps we've experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and there has been an overturning of the tables of lust and greed etc. But we set those tables up again, and continue business as usual. We make ourselves a transgressor: "*For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor*" (Gal 2:18). This will be considered further in chapter six.

** Verses 16-17 also substantiate our previous point; that one can lose his salvation.*

Let no man deceive himself

3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool [in the eyes of the world] that he may be wise.

Let no man deceive himself on any of the above! The Corinthians prided themselves in their tolerance of sin. Perhaps they thought it was love or maturity to overlook flagrant sin. Such was the case in chapter five. They were actually puffed up with pride over their tolerance of blatant sin (5:2). Paul prescribes humility and a modest opinion of themselves: "*become a fool [in the eyes of the world] that ye may be wise.*"

** Pride leads to deception (Oba. 1:3).*

3:19-20 *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. v.20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*

Romans 8:7 says that the carnal mind is enmity against God. The carnal mind fights God and opposes God. Even in Christendom people are pretty like-minded with the world. A Gallup poll once stated that the margin was so close between the opinion of the world and the church, that they were basically the same! Can you see what the Spirit of God is saying to the church?

Here is the way that it is supposed to be: *“And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm”* (Speaking of Daniel and his friends, Dan. 1:20).

Hamon, (the book of Esther) is a good example of the Lord's taking the wise in their craftiness. He was hung on the gallows that he had prepared for one of God's saints!

All is yours

3:21-23 *Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; v22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, of things present, or things to come; all are yours; v23 And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.”*

We come back to the opening thought of this chapter – personality cliques, boasting in men, etc. Having made the point that all of the laborers were working on the same project, and they were all going to be accountable to their one Master, Paul proceeds to tell them: “Do not glory in men. Do not glory in us, for we are yours! We are given to you!”

- ◆ Paul, Apollos, and Cephas are all yours – The ministry is God’s gift to men, and they are all for your spiritual benefit. (See Eph. 4:8-12, also Num. 8:19)
- ◆ Life is yours – Jesus said: *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10)
- ◆ Death is yours – As Paul himself said: *“To die is gain.”* (Phil. 1:21)
- ◆ Things present are yours – God made his grace available to reign in life! *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Rom 8:32, also see Rom. 5:17)
- ◆ Things to come are yours – To enrich you forever at the end of life's journey. *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”*

And ye are Christ’s... and surely this is the greatest thought of all! We are in God through Christ, and He is working all things together for good for those who love Him!



Chapter Four

I have begotten you through the Gospel

Paul deals with this church as a father would deal with his son. Indeed, the apostle claims fatherhood of this church. A true father may overlook a lot of personal indignities, but he will not overlook the things that will disqualify his children from being heirs! A spiritual father displays tremendous patience and understanding, but he can also exercise his authority if need be. Many of the Corinthians were out of order and needed the father's hand. Paul was not trying to mislead them when he said: *"What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod..."*

The Lord once declared through the prophet Isaiah: *"I have waited, that I might be gracious."* The Lord was waiting for Israel to correct, that He might be gracious to them. I think that this was the exact intention of Paul's letter – to provoke a repentance – that he might come to them in a gracious way. Some were saying: "Paul won't be back!"

The faithful steward

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

What is a steward? A steward is a person who has been put in charge of another man's goods. This is a very important truth.

Paul considered himself a steward of God who was given a charge over God's house. We could also liken a steward to a treasurer, as seen in Isaiah 22. Therefore, Paul was like a treasurer responsible for the unsearchable riches – the mysteries of Christ. Paul said, "Think of us in this light."

4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

In our walk with the Lord, we will find ourselves in a stewardship position. We will be put in charge of someone else's flock or field or some aspect of duty or commission. How we take care of that which is another man's will determine our own destiny. It will determine what God will do in our life. Jesus said: "*If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*" (Luke 16:12).

Internship

If we want our own pastorate or work or inheritance, we must first be tested in another man's field. This does not mean you will be placed in ideal circumstances or that you will always agree with everything your overseer does. Many years ago, I found myself in a position of being in another man's field. God told me to be faithful there, pay my tithes there, and support the work. During those years, there was a coup attempt and many people urged me to go along with them against the pastor, but I refused. We are tested in another person's field. It can be very difficult. Perhaps the pastor is not the easiest person to work for; perhaps he gives you all of the menial tasks, etc.

I know a minister who was offended over this very thing. He graduated from Bible school and was the assistant pastor of a very large church. The senior pastor only used him to call on

people, do janitorial work, and give people rides to church. The pastor never used him behind the pulpit and he was generally pushed aside when it came to spiritual duties. This brother be-

How we take care of that which is another man's will determine our own destiny.

came so wounded that he not only dropped out of this church, but out of church altogether. He has not attended any church regularly for decades. Many people are offended during their internship, as this man was. However, if we hold steady, if we are faithful to our appointment, God will promote us in His time!

There are great promises to the faithful steward. We find an example of a faithful steward by the name of Eliakim in Isaiah 22. Eliakim was given the key of David because of his faithfulness. This key was about a foot and a half long and was attached to the steward's shoulder. It would open any door in David's house, palace, or treasury. Possessing the key of David is also a spiritual promise to the overcomer in Revelation 3:7-8. The key of David is an authority in the realm of the Spirit to open and close any door.

God knows the heart and God will vindicate

4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self

Throughout these two epistles, we will find that some of these carnal Corinthians were trying to scrutinize Paul. They were trying to evaluate Paul's position in Christ, and some had even made statements against him. We had a young convert many years ago who felt that God had told him that he was wiser than his teachers (meaning me, of course). Statements like that reveal the vanity of one's own heart.

Paul disdained the fact that they were judging him. He said, (in effect) “Your judgment of me is trivial, it is insignificant! I don’t even judge myself (with my human opinion).” The truth is, we don’t know ourselves unless God is shining the spotlight within. It doesn’t matter so much what people think of us; what matters is what God thinks.

4:45 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. v.5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The fact that we may not see our problem does not necessarily justify us either. God does not deal with everything in our life at once. Nonetheless, God will expose things in His time and in His way; and when He does, there will be vindication (where it is deserved). We want our praise to come from God and not men! There was a prophecy given at a convention back in the sixties that went on for about 40 minutes. One of the exhortations of that prophecy basically said this: “If you allow me to deal with you in private then it will stay in private; but if not, then I will deal with you in public and all shall know of it!” (Stanley Frodsham)

There can also be a legitimate time to examine ourselves and to judge ourselves. Paul exhorts the Corinthians along this line concerning the communion table, in chapter 11. One good way to examine ourselves is like David did when he cried for the Spirit of God to search him: “*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting* (Psa. 139:23-24).

Paul's picture of true apostleship 6-13

4:6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Because the Corinthians were evaluating their leaders, glorifying some and putting down others. Paul is going to paint a picture of the true apostolic ministry by using himself and Apollos for examples. We must understand that there were many ministries flowing through Corinth. (This is the kind of thing that happens in revival.) Many of these ministries were very charismatic; some were self-proclaimed apostles. There was a lot of competition between the ministry and even among themselves.

4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from above (Jam. 1:17). Any talent, any true gift that we might possess did not derive from within our own sphere of ability! God gave it, and we can't take credit for it! Yes, we can have a part in the development of that gift by waiting upon the One who gave it! (See Rom. 12:4-8.)

4:8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

They sound like the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:17. They really thought that they were in command of the situation. *"We are rich and increased with goods...."* We have the

moving of the Spirit here; gifts flow here; manifestations take place here! Paul said, "I wish you were reigning that we might reign with you!" One thing that we learn throughout scripture is that God gives gifts to the rebellious also. The psalmist said, "*thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.*" Having gifts does not necessarily make one spiritual!

One thing that we learn throughout scripture is that God gives gifts to the rebellious also.

4:9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

Now we come back to Paul's example of the true apostle... if you want to glory in men, in positions, in ministries... *Learn in us* what it is really all about! It is the life of the cross. We are appointed to death. We are spectacles to men and angels. The word, "*spectacle*" (theatron, Gk.) has the sense of being on stage. As it also says in another place: "We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses."

4:10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

To all outward appearance, Paul looks like he is in last place and the Corinthians were in first place.

4:11-12 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; v.12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

The true apostles experience the life of Christ, while the Corinthians were recipients of the benefits. This was the life of Christ: no certain dwelling place, living out of the field, hard work. The ministry is hard work! Concerning being reviled, Jesus was reviled in his own hometown. Paul even had to labor with his hands, supporting himself during his 18-month stay in Corinth. Here is the true minister; he takes nothing and gives everything. He returns blessing for cursing!

4:13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

In the eyes of many of the Corinthians, Paul was viewed as a nothing. However, to get things in true perspective, let us read a few later remarks from 2 Corinthians 6:9-10: *“As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”* Although Paul appears to have nothing: *“as having nothing.”* Yet Paul possessed all things! Indeed, Paul was reigning and Paul had the power to make rich.

It is interesting when you compare God’s view of things with man’s view of things. The Laodiceans thought they were rich, but God said, “you’re poor!” The church at Smyrna said, “We’re poor,” but God said, “You’re rich!” (c.f. Rev. 2:9, 3:17)

Paul is saying something (in the Spirit) to his immature children. The last shall be first and the first shall be last. We are fools, we are weak, we are despised. But you are wise (with worldly wisdom), and strong (in natural strength), and honourable (with man's acclaim). You who think you are first... The Corinthians did not have the power to make others rich; they were too full of themselves. It is only as we become poor to self that we can enrich others!

Ye have ten thousand instructors... not many fathers

4:14-15 *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. v.15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

Undoubtedly, many colorful ministries were floating through Corinth. They probably had their prosperity preachers telling them they were rich...helping to inflate their already inflated ego, etc. Paul said, I'm not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you. Yes, you have plenty of teachers, yet not many fathers!

The Corinthians did not have the power to make others rich; they were too full of themselves.

Somebody was telling us about a seminar they were having in another country. As it happened, [among the ones who came] there was a little group of ministers who had just been to another seminar. The other seminar was a prosperity rally where the congregation had just been pushed to the third heaven. Be it as it may, these few ministers decided to come to the seminar just to see what was happening. As they said in their own words: "We came in rich, we went out empty." (That is scripture.)

The seminar was on the life of Christ – how He became poor to make many rich. These ministers were so broken when they saw things in the true light that they went out repentant!

I once had a dream of a welfare line. Many were standing in this line for a cup of soup or something like that. There was one man in this line who had his head down, but when he lifted it up, I knew him. He was a very famous prosperity preacher. I

felt as though God was showing me where this message ultimately brings us. Paul said, ye have few fathers!

4:16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Paul had the true message! Paul lived the life of the cross and was a true father to this church. He said, "Follow me as I follow the Lord." He was not trying to embarrass or humiliate them. Instead he was challenging them to assess their behavior. He was showing his sons and daughters how he was living the life of a servant and they were living like kings, and they were going to miss their eternal rewards. Yes, there are many messages and messengers that appear more attractive, but Paul was a true father.

One gospel

4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

It is only fitting that the true father send his true son that will reflect his ways. Timothy was often sent to help stabilize the churches. Timothy knew his spiritual father very well and would bring the gravity that they needed. "My ways which be in Christ..." We think that Paul's message to Corinth was unique. Yes, Paul did have a unique emphasis in this letter to Corinth; but in truth, Paul taught the same standard, the same gospel, in every church.

There is no such thing as an Asian gospel, a European gospel or an African gospel. The gospel message does not impose our

nationalistic customs on other countries. Where there is nakedness, we need to emphasize modesty, purity and honor. (Nakedness is an evil spirit. cf. Lk. 8:27, 35) Where customs are contrary to the laws of God, we need to enlighten them. In some countries wine is customary, and we can't call it a sin. (Drunkenness is a sin.) However, we can preach temperance and self-control. There is only one gospel!

The kingdom of God is in power

4:18-20 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. v.19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. v.20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

Paul affirms that he will soon visit them in spite of what some of the spiritual opposition was declaring. The true man of God spares to use his power for vindication, but seeks to use it rather for edification. Yet, let us not make any mistake about this: God backed Moses up even when he lost his temper! There are many examples in scripture where God demonstrated his power to enforce the validity of the message and the messenger, even in the New Testament!

In Acts 13:6-11, Paul had to declare blindness over a false prophet, and that prophet was blinded. In Acts 5:1-10, Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead as they lied to the apostle. I remember an evangelist who came through our church many years ago. He was a very unusual man with unusual gifts. I have never seen anyone function quite like he did. During the service he went over to one lady and gave her a prophetic word. As he was walking away from her she said to him: "That's not

true!" He turned around in surprise and just said, "What?" Instantly, she fell down under the power of God. When she came to, she apologized and said, "You were right!"

There are many teachers, ideas and doctrines, but where is the power? The power of God is evidence of who has the real message and the real authority. The intellectuals, with all of their reasoning and arguments, have no spiritual power. They have no power to heal the sick or bring life-changing conviction to others.

With a rod, or in love?

4:21 What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

Paul sincerely wants them to correct so that he can come to them in the spirit of love and meekness. No father enjoys using the rod, but he will use it if it will save his child from hell. (See Proverbs 23:13-14.) We are responsible for the conduct of our people. God chose Abraham because He knew Abraham would command and correct his children (Gen. 18:18-19). Eli refused to deal with his sons, and consequently his house did not stand. (1 Sam. 2:27-34)

*God chose
Abraham
because
He knew
Abraham
would
command
and correct
his children.*

** Most judgments come by the word of the Lord – through the rod of the mouth!*



Chapter Five

Purge out the leaven

In scripture, leaven represents sin, hypocrisy, and false doctrine. Leaven spreads and permeates. The Corinthians were permitting very serious sins to exist and to continue in their midst – the kind of sins that even appalled the heathen. In this chapter, Paul addresses a situation of known incest. The church was not only allowing this situation of incest to exist, but they were even puffed up with pride over their tolerance and open-mindedness towards the situation.

Paul insisted that the church join forces with him in judgment toward the offender. This judgment was not only executed in the hopes of saving the offender, but in stopping the spread of this “*leaven*” throughout the church! Paul later points out, that fornication, unlike other sins, defiles the whole body of Christ. It can spread like leaven until it has permeated the whole body of believers. This particular matter in chapter five might well be the most critical point of this first letter. How they would respond to this judgment determined their very destiny as a church! The second letter reveals the outcome of this case.

Chapter five also mentions the feasts of Passover and unleavened bread. We will find all seven feasts either mentioned or alluded to in these epistles.

The Corinthian tolerance of sin

5:1-2 *It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. v.2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*

This kind of behavior even shocked the heathen community: that a son should have relations with his mother! (Some think that it should be interpreted, stepmother.) But either way, the fact that the church was so indifferent toward the situation greatly concerned Paul. Not only were they indifferent (unconcerned), but they were actually gloating in their tolerance over this thing. Perhaps they thought it was maturity to overlook one of the faults of a new believer. Perhaps they thought it was love to gloss over the faults of fellow believers. The problem with this kind of an attitude is that this was not just “a fault.” This was a major contamination! “Why haven’t you removed the offender?”

We knew of a case where there was perversion going on in a Bible school. There were students there who were fully aware of what was going on and they said nothing. When the thing was finally exposed, not only were the offenders put out of the school, but those who knew of these activities and said nothing were expelled as well.

When Israel was committing fornication during the incident of Balaam, some were greatly mourning: *“And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”* (Num 25:6)

Paul recommends judgment

5:3-5 *For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, v.4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, v.5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

Paul was just as concerned about their response to this discipline as he was to the deed that had been committed! As he later says: *"For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things."* (2 Cor 2:9) Paul had judged the situation even in his absence, but now he wanted them to agree with him in that judgment.

Herein is an area where the church is generally remiss. If we do not uphold a standard and execute judgments when they are needed, we will be a Corinthian church. Many churches have some real misconceptions concerning judgment. The idea of judgment is in hopes of saving everyone involved. The church that does not execute judgment will be charged with negligence also! (See Rev. 2:20.)

Here are a few things that judgments are intended to accomplish:

- ◆ *To turn the offender around* – Godly sorrow worketh repentance. There are times when people do not turn back in spite of the hard way.
- ◆ *To help remind the offender* – The imposed punishment or restriction is there to help remind him of that area of weakness.

- ◆ *To serve as a warning to others* – Others will think twice and have a holy fear when they see punishments and restrictions imposed by the church.
- ◆ *Judgment works out Christian character* – When the offender accepts the disciplines that have been meted out, it will begin to amend his character.

In this particular case in Corinth; the church was to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. What this means is that the church released him from their covering to be plagued by some form of illness. Perhaps it was cancer, but we are not told. We might think that God would never do something like this. However, the scripture fully substantiates the point. David was smitten with a disease after his fall. God allowed the enemy to take out Samson's eyes to work repentance in him! Are we any better? When we see Christians continue *unchecked* in their sin – it is not a good sign.

Unanimous judgment

Let us also consider the thought of unanimous judgment. The apostle gave his judgment (in the mind of Christ), and the power of Christ was there to execute the judgment. That tells us that this was done in the counsel of God. Lastly, Paul asks for the cooperation of the church leaders and the church.

Why was it so important to have the agreement of the church? Let us suppose that the church makes a judgment along the lines of 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14. (This concerns breaking fellowship with the disorderly.) Half of the church decides to honor the judgment. The other half of the church decides that they have more love and understanding than the leaders, so they continue to associate with the offender. We know where this

will go, don't we? As long the offender is supported he will feel justified; nothing will be accomplished by it and perhaps worse than that, a church split will follow!

Believe this – if the church were in total agreement in matters of judgment, it would expedite repentance and reconciliation greatly. We had such a case, where we recommended breaking fellowship. The person who was being ignored suddenly became ashamed, returned and repented.

Judgment can be mercy in disguise

We need the mind of Christ in all matters of judgment. Let us suppose that a man offends and we decide to be merciful (in the human realm of mercy). We say: "Well brother, the Lord forgives you and we pardon you; go and sin no more." This kind of statement could be the Lord's mind; but if it is not, we just did this man and the church a great disservice! He will fall again, maybe implicating others and this time he does much damage! If we pardon when God does not, this is what happens! Remember that the whole purpose of this man's judgment was that his spirit may be saved...

Purge out the leaven

5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

Paul is reproving their "false grace" mentality toward sin. Have you ever heard the expression: "One bad apple spoils the bushel?" When sin goes unchecked it spreads like leaven.

Leaven is the same as yeast. This is what the baker puts into the dough to puff up his loaves for baking. In the scripture, leaven is usually mentioned in the negative sense.

- ◆ Leaven of hypocrisy – Luke 12:1
- ◆ Leaven of false doctrine – Matt. 16:12
- ◆ Leaven of malice and wickedness – 1 Cor. 5:8

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. The little foxes destroy the vine. A little folly...

5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

Theoretically, we are unleavened at salvation and we are given a clean slate. However, we will not be that unleavened bread of sincerity and truth unless we continue to purge out the old leaven—the malice, hypocrisy, and false doctrines in our lives. Christ gives grace and power to purge out the former lusts. *“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”* (2 Tim. 2:21). There must be an honest endeavor (in the Spirit) to rid ourselves of the old leaven.

I believe there is also a corporate application to 5:7. In fact, that is probably the main implication of this verse. Leaven spreads! We must purge it out before it contaminates the whole church. (E.g.) If we allow divorce and remarriage in our church, it will spread. We will not be able to control it, and the whole church will be filled with it. If we do not uphold a standard for our young people (for example, a courtship standard), then we will have uncontrollable problems in our church. The pastor is responsible for the state of his flock!

The Passover and the 7 feasts

5:7b *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*

We are going to find all of the 7 feasts of Leviticus 23, mentioned within the Corinthian epistles. All of these feasts of the Lord must be spiritually fulfilled in the life of the believer in order for him to become complete.

The feast of Passover begins our spiritual journey. It speaks of our salvation experience. We are delivered from the wrath to come by virtue of the blood of the Lamb. There must be a personal application of the blood of Christ through faith! (See Ex. 12:11) Israel was then told to make haste and leave Egypt. Egypt symbolizes the world with all of its allurements and mentality.

** See the appendix of the book for the seven feasts*

Unleavened Bread

5:8 *Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

In verse eight, we are introduced to the second feast, the feast of unleavened bread. Notice that Paul is incorporating the second feast with the first. This is a correct analysis because the Passover actually was celebrated with unleavened bread and then the feast of unleavened bread was to continue for the next seven days. (Lev. 23:6) Unleavened bread speaks of the pure doctrine of Christ. Christ was the bread from heaven, He is totally unleavened, and He is absolute sincerity and truth! The fact that it was to be eaten 7 days tells us that this is to be the continual diet of the pilgrim on earth. The 7 days speak of the 7000 years given to man.

** As we feed upon and assimilate the pure Word, it will keep us unleavened! (See the appendix for the 7 feasts.)*

Associations

5:9-10 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: v.10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

We are known by the company that we keep. However, if you want to apply this to the place you work or the places that you do business, you may run into a problem. As Paul said: *“for then must ye needs go out of the world.”* It is one thing to work with unsaved people who live immoral lives; it is another thing to hang out with them after work.

Sometimes believers try to separate themselves from all others. They start their own little community, etc. However, in the process of doing this they lose the vision of being “salt.” God wants us to be the salt of the earth – salt that preserves a corrupt society. If we try to totally sever ourselves from people of the world, we might as well get on a spaceship and leave the planet.

A minister once said: “I will never buy groceries at a store that sells drink.” He then moved to another state where all the grocery stores sold liquor. He had to recant his statement!

5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

This verse is quite clear. We can put up with the godless of the world; but to the one who professes Christ and lives in iniquity – No, don’t even have lunch with him! Their behavior incriminates

you and brings reproach upon all that profess Christ. We are making a statement by refusing to associate ourselves with this person. We are letting both the offender and the world know that he is not one of us!

The church is to judge the church - God will judge the world

5:12-13 *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? v.13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

When the Church becomes holy, it will serve as a reproof to the world.

It is not the responsibility of the Church to correct the world. Our responsibility is to admonish those within the Church. When the Church becomes holy, it will serve as a reproof to the world. God, in His time, will deal with the ungodly of the world. As Peter said: "Judgment must first begin at the house of the Lord" (1 Pet. 4:17).

This chapter ends with the initial theme: "*Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*" Paul again admonishes judgment upon the unrepentant man in verse one. Christ himself recommends that we cut off the member of the body that offends, that the whole body perish not! See Matthew 18:8-9.

**Please note: This was a test case for the Corinthian church. What they would do with Paul's counsel would determine their destiny as a church!*



Chapter Six

The saints shall judge the world

In this chapter, Paul emphasizes the fact that the saints shall judge the world and angels. Yet, it is only the overcoming saints who judge the world. The “saints” at Corinth had not even overcome the faults in their fellow Christians. Instead, they were taking one another to court before the unbelieving world. They were not even prepared to judge trivial matters amongst themselves – much less being able to judge the world system and fallen angels.

Paul again commends judgment within the church. He even suggests that we should suffer the wrong rather than bring reproach to the cause of Christ before unbelievers. Our Lord Jesus Christ established an order for judgment within the church in Matthew 18:15-17. When a brother offends or wounds us, we should go to that brother alone and talk to him about it. If the offender will listen honestly in his heart and make amends, we will be reconciled. If the offender will not hear, but adds insult to injury, then the injured brother should confront him again with one or two witnesses. These could include the pastor or elders. If the

Consider all of the Christian marriages that end up in a divorce court. It testifies to the world that Christ is not the answer.

offender still is hard and unrepentant, then the matter should be revealed to the whole local church. If the offender still refuses to be conciliatory, let him be treated as a heathen (or unbeliever).

Also in this chapter, Paul warns the unrighteous that they shall not inherit the kingdom, and he especially deals with the contaminating affects of fornication. Unlike other sins, fornication affects the whole body!

Litigation

6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?"

How do you dare to take your fellow-believers to court? How does this look to the unbeliever? It just tells the world that Christianity is not real and that it doesn't work! It is a denial of the faith to go before the unbelieving world to spew out all of our ill feelings against one another.

Consider all of the "Christian marriages" that end up in a divorce court. It testifies to the world that Christ is not the answer and that Christianity is just another lifeless philosophy or theory. It is an insult to the Holy Spirit, especially considering what Jesus said in John 17:23, *"that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them..."* Jesus said that the world would know that Christianity was real by the love and unity of the saints. The Corinthian believers were bringing disgrace upon the name of Christ through these actions.

* *A note of prudence:* Some have suffered great injustices by the world because they thought it “not Christian” to take someone to court. We are talking about taking fellow-Christians to court. Sometimes churches have had to use the civil court because of infringements of the law by unbelievers. Sometimes it is very necessary to file lawsuits, etc. Moreover, there may be a justified cause to take another Christian to court. Perhaps they refuse a church tribunal, or any interference from the church. (We are not talking about something petty.) The church has all authority to render a decision, even punitive actions upon their congregants, if the parties involved are willing to submit to the decision. The scripture is quite clear on this from other places also.

The church to be a place of judgment

6:2 *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?*

The psalmist said: *“This honor have all His saints!”* That is, the honor to execute the judgments written, to bind principalities, etc. The key word is – *saints*. We are all called to be saints, but we do not become saints when we are born again. Ruling and reigning is a process that begins in our own life.

Solomon said: *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”* (Pro. 16:32) The Corinthians were certainly not going to rule the nations with a rod of iron, when they couldn’t iron out little disputes in their own hearts.

* **Please note:** This is not in conflict with the statement made in chapter five, verses 12-13: The (overcoming) church will judge the world, not only at the judgment but also in the Spirit.

6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

We generally think of the judgment of (fallen) angels, as something that will happen at the judgment seat. That may be true in part, but there is also an aspect of this that pertains to the mortal saints. There have been awesome revivals brought into being because a governing angel was bound. One of the saints who was used to birth the Welsh revival was given the privilege of binding the evil prince over Wales. When the angel was revealed, the intercessor saw a golden cord coming down from heaven, and he bound the angel seven times with the cord. Revival gushed forth!

If we want to qualify for privileges like this, we had better pay attention to the areas that need to be judged in our own life. Moreover, pastors need to pay attention to the things that need to be corrected in their own flock. People that don't believe in paying bills, people that continue to sin, etc., will not be those who judge angels. See Rev. 2:26-27, 3:21.

6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

Some have interpreted this verse to mean that we should set the simple or unqualified or the most disrespected person in the church behind the bench. This is not what Paul is saying. The following verse clarifies this:

6:5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

"I speak to your shame." Surely there is a wise man among you that is better able to settle these disputes than a heathen judge. In the Old testament, we find many cases where judges were installed to handle particular civil cases. When the case became more difficult, it could end up before the high priest. In any case, part of the ministry of the pastor is to be a judge. People will come to you to settle arguments or differences and you must make a judgment. Your people will ask you what they should do in matters of litigation, family will disputes, etc. We need to hear from God on these matters.

It is said of the Zadok priesthood: *"And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments..."* (Ezek. 44:24). The church should really be a place of clear judgment. It should be as clear as the noonday according to Psalm 37:6. This is one of the reasons that God places elders in the church!

6:6-8 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. v.7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? v.8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

Again, Paul reprimands them for taking each other to court. Paul even suggests that it may be better to take the loss of something than to reproach the name of Christianity. Others among them were the guilty parties, who with malicious intent defrauded their own brethren. Undoubtedly, this is why Paul makes it very clear in the next few verses that thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God

6:9-10 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, v.10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

If a believer continues to commit sin he will not be a part of the kingdom of God!

The reason Paul is saying: “be not deceived,” is because many of them were deceived in regards to their salvation. Paul is not writing this to the lost. He is writing this to Spirit filled believers who thought that they could continue to sin. The apostle John also addresses this in 1 John 3:9. *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

The word, *commit*, in the Greek tense means to continue to commit. If a believer continues to commit sin he will not be a part of the kingdom of God! The blood of Christ covers us as we continue to walk in the light. If we lose the covering of the blood, we lose our salvation. That is why sin must be repented of in order to stay under the covering of the blood of Christ (See Heb. 6:8, 10:26, Rom. 6:1-2, 1 John 1:7-9).

Paul also specifically mentions perverse sexual roles: *effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...* Not only was this a problem in the Greek world, but it is a very prevalent problem of the “liberated” 21st century. The homosexual world is desperately trying to push their agenda into every phase of the community. They want to be accepted as marriage partners, adopt children, be role models in the schools, etc. Unless these sins are repented of they shall not inherit the kingdom. Remember, this is to the church!

Today, society tries to excuse this kind of behavior as lifestyles. They try to rationalize drunkenness as a disease. Divorce and re-marriage are also excused by the church, in spite of the fact that Jesus called it adultery! The good news is that there can be repair for the sin-sick, for all who recognize their need of repentance.

Such were some of you

6:11 *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

I like the past tense on this verse...ye were. I think that it gives a false representation of salvation to walk around saying: "we're just sinners saved by grace." Christ came to save us *from* our sin! *"And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."*

- ◆ Washed – by the blood of the Lamb
- ◆ Sanctified – set apart to be holy
- ◆ Justified – through the only name – the name of Jesus
- ◆ Justified – by the indwelling Spirit of God

Paul's' law of temperance

6:12 *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

Paul basically quotes this verse again in 1 Corinthians 10:23. There are many things that a Christian is allowed to do as far as the letter goes. A Christian can have a drink of wine; a Christian can go to the cinema. He could even walk into a pagan temple,

as was the case in chapter ten. But the question is: "Does it benefit me or edify me spiritually?" Is this thing going to control me, or dominate me, or hurt my relationship with God? Paul said: "I won't be brought under the power of anything!" (We will consider this subject later on in this study.)

Fornication and the body of Christ 13-20

6:13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

I suppose that this verse begins the way that it does, because there is a parallel between the physical appetite and the sensual appetite. The whole quest of carnal man is to fulfill his physical and fleshly appetites which all ends at the grave.

Our body belongs to the Lord, and the Lord does not want his body defiled by fornication. Fornication is a fleshly appetite that will also bring us to destruction. This was already made clear in verse 9. Fornication is a sin committed outside of marriage.

6:14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

In the context of what the apostle is saying, if we want to be raised up (even as our Lord and Master was raised up), then we must flee fornication. Paul will continue in the subsequent verses to tell us why fornication is not just like other sins.

6:15-16 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. v.16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

Paul compares our relationship with Christ to the mystical union of marriage (Eph. 5:28-32). Marriage not only involves the joining together of two people physically (one flesh), but there is a joining together of two (human) spirits! Maybe we don't fully understand this mystery, but there is an attachment and a meshing together of two spirits in the physical relation. People who live promiscuous lives suffer great emotional duress and compulsions that they can't even express. The reason for this is that there is still a tie to many partners, not to mention the attachment of evil spirits.

Marriage not only involves the joining together of two people physically (one flesh), but there is a joining together of two (human) spirits!

When we are espoused to Christ at salvation, we become His property – His body. Committing fornication is like cheating on the one that we are engaged to. We are bringing a harlot spirit into His temple. Not only does this contaminate us personally, but it also contaminates other members of the body of Christ!

6:17-18 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. v.18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

When we are born again, we are joined by one spirit into the one body of Christ. If a Christian should yield to some form of temptation, that is going to affect his personal relationship with the Lord. But if he yields to fornication, that not only brings another spirit into his body, but it affects all the other members of the body of Christ! This was a major problem in the Corinthian church.

6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

The Old Testament temple was always a figure of the spiritual temple, both corporately and individually. Many times this pure and holy temple was defiled. God gave us his Holy Spirit to make us holy. We are His temple; we belong to Him; we are His property; He dwells within us! We are not our own free man!

6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

There was a tremendous price paid to redeem us. Parents would spend millions of dollars to recover their kidnapped son. Our heavenly Father allowed His only Son to be brutally murdered to save sinners like us. Therefore, let us glorify God with our whole being! We were created for the praise of His glory!



Chapter Seven

The permanence of marriage

This is perhaps one of the most scrutinized and controversial of all chapters regarding the subject of marriage. With a careful examination of all the verses, this chapter stresses the permanence of marriage, rather than permission to dissolve the present one. The lifestyle of today's generation is much like that of permissive Corinth. People are coming into the Church with many complex marital backgrounds and problems. In this chapter, Paul answers the questions that they had written to him about physical relationships and marriage. By the answers that Paul gives, we can conjecture what questions they asked:

- ◆ What kind of physical contact should single people have?
- ◆ Should one remain celibate (unmarried)?
- ◆ Is it more spiritual to be single than to be married?
- ◆ If I am a widow (or widower) can I marry again? Should I?
- ◆ If I have an unbelieving spouse, should I separate from him or her?
- ◆ Can one remarry if his or her first spouse is still alive?

Physical relationship between sexes

7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Just recently, I posted a little brochure on our church bulletin board concerning relationships and courtship practices. I wanted to let the church know my mind on the subject and to save a lot of future questions. Today's society has had a big influence on the church. Parents think that it is acceptable to let their 14 and 15 year olds go out on a date. They expect that it is normal for them to get a little physical, but they hope nothing happens. Human nature has not changed in the last 6000 years. What the world calls dating, is in fact insanity!

A courtship is something that takes place when two people anticipate a marriage. It is to be a sacred relationship with a mutual respect and chaste behavior. The following verse explains:

7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

In context and continued from the preceding verse, touching, leads to fornication. Paul is an advocate of marriage! Verse two recommends that most people should be married. It is believed that Paul himself was married earlier in life but that his wife had died. It is clear from the context that he was single when he wrote this epistle (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7). Paul was a member of the council, and marriage was one of the qualifications to be a member.

Generally, it is not good for a pastor to be single. Often there are more women than men in the congregation, and it is better to have a wife who can help him shepherd the women. It is also difficult to give marital and family advice when you've not had any practical experience.

7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

This verse regards marital intimacy. It is very damaging to refuse one another in marriage. I have had to counsel people old enough to be my grandparents concerning this subject. One becomes disinterested, while the other continues to be normal. The next verse continues the thought:

7:4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

In marriage we lose our independence and we become interdependent. We are now connected. As we are now a pair, there must be a certain agreement in what we do. Eve got into trouble because she went off on her own. Pilate should have listened to his wife. If he had, he would not have crucified the Lord of glory!

7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Again, this is referring to the conjugal relationship of marriage. One partner cannot say: "Well, I think I'll separate myself and pray for the next ten days..." One partner may be very weak in that area of their life, and that is too long for them to go without physical attention. They may even be tempted to sin in heart or thought, or worse. There should be an agreement if there is a season of abstinence such as this.

7:6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

There are some that interpret this verse to mean that this is just Paul's advice, and it's not really inspired. Let us balance this

verse with verses 25 and 40. Paul says essentially, “Yes, I’m giving my judgment, but I think I have the Spirit of God.” Paul was sanctioned by God to give some godly advice in response to their letter.

Marriage versus singleness

7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

This verse is a premise for the next few verses. Paul begins by alluding to his singleness and says: “I wish that all men could be as myself.” However, to be content with singleness is a gift from God! Many of the monks who chose the monastic life suffered greatly because there was no grace for being single. They suffered in their thought life and experienced great condemnation. Some who were fasting even suffered hallucinations of women, which added more weight to their guilt. If we are called to be single, then there is grace to be so! Paul continues:

Many of the monks who chose the monastic life suffered greatly because there was no grace for being single.

7:8-9 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. v.9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

Even good marriages can be stressful at times. I don’t think this needs a lot of explanation. Marriage brings a lot of responsibilities and pressures: time pressures, financial pressures, and children pressures. There are many constraints involved in family

life. Paul, knowing this, says: "It would be better to be as I am. Yet, if they cannot contain (control their passion), it is far better to marry than to burn with *passion and desire and fantasy...*"

** May I also insert, that even though marriage has its troubles, God uses those things to work His Christian character out in us. We perfect one another; we refine one another in marriage. We help one another to correct the more hidden flaws!*

The sanctity of marriage

7:10-11 *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: v.11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.*

Paul enforces the solemnity of these verses by saying, "The Lord says." If there is a separation in a marriage, this does not dissolve the marriage. The husband cannot divorce his wife, and they are still to remain (unmarried). That is - they are not to re-marry. The other option is reconciliation, and I always hope that this will be the outcome! Sometimes, during a tumultuous marriage a short separation helps couples to discover how much they really need each other.

Unbelieving spouses

7:12-14 *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. v.13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with*

her, let her not leave him. v.14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Once again, Paul is giving his godly advice (in the mind of Christ). One could imagine that in a revival setting (such as Corinth experienced), there would be many marriages that would fit the above scenario. Paul advocates staying together because the unbelieving partner is actually sanctified (set apart) by the believing mate. What does this mean? It means that God's favor and grace is extended to the house for the sake of the one who believes (See Acts 16:31). Please don't interpret this to mean that the other family members are saved. However, the Lord makes every opportunity available to them for the sake of the one who is saved. This applies to the children also. The godly influence of a parent extends a covering to the children. Lot's family could have been saved because of Lot, but some died in Sodom!

** I know that this can be a very sensitive area; however, unsaved children do not go to heaven (See Psa. 58:3).*

Even today there are many within the church that seek to dissolve their marriage. Perhaps they observe other marriages flowing together in the Lord, while their partner continues on in the old lifestyle. Considering the view of the unbelievers, they married a man/woman who used to be a part of the party crowd, the cinema, and the disco. Now, they have lost their partner. That is why the believers need to exercise great wisdom and kindness and every Christian virtue to try to win their mates!

7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

But if the unbeliever depart (in spite of all attempts to conciliate), then the believer is not under subjection any longer. A wife is bound to obey and to submit to her husband; she is to be under his guardianship as they live in holy matrimony. But if he departs from her, she no longer has any obligations to him. The husband also has obligations to his wife. He has moral responsibility to care for, to provide for, to honor, etc. However, in this case, they are absolved from their marital responsibilities. God wants us to be in peace over such a situation, He does not want us to feel condemned or that we can no longer be of service, etc.

** I must point out that we are still obligated to obey the law of the particular country in which we live. There could be some very unjust laws concerning separations or no-fault divorces.*

However, in the spiritual sense, the deserted spouse no longer needs to be subordinate to their mate. I know a lady who had 18 children. Her husband left her. He drank and ran around with other women. He would then come home for a few nights and leave this woman with another child. She should have refused to let this infidel into her house. Some people read verse 15 as a loophole to remarry. The death of a former mate is the only condition that permits a remarriage.

As ministers we must be very clear on this issue. The New Testament standard is higher than the Old Testament. Jesus only gave one exception for divorce and that was infidelity during the espousal. There was a one-year binding marriage contract and if there were fornication during that time, then a divorce would be permissible. We could cite the case of Mary and Joseph in Matthew 1:18-20. Although some may construe the word "fornication" to have other interpretations, not one case of those "other interpretations" can be cited from scripture! (Also, see Mk. 10:2-12.)

* *Observe: The "other" interpretations for the word "fornication" comes from the Greek translation (porneia). However, Jesus did not preach in Greek, He preached in Aramaic/Hebrew. In Hebrew, the word for "fornication" can only be translated as an act before marriage. This probably was the word Jesus used.*

7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

Paul still recommends staying together. One of the most heart-rending accounts in scripture is the marriage of the prophet Hosea. In spite of the unfaithfulness of his wife, the Spirit of God still pleaded through Hosea for her to come back! "For how do you know that you might not save your partner?" Jesus said that the root of all divorce is because of a hardened, stony heart (Mt. 19:7-8). It is an inability to forgive or care anymore.

Abiding in the call 17-24

7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

One translation says: "However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches" (NRSV).

Not only is this the general tone of the next eight verses, but we find this particular emphasis in much of Paul's writings: "abiding in the vocation." There is a natural application and a spiritual application of this thought. God gives to every man his natural ability (Job 37:7). The whole world is orchestrated by divine

coordination. God seals within the hand of every man his work. Not all are gifted to be farmers or carpenters or mechanics.

The same is true in the spiritual realm; God gives to every man his work (Mark 13:34). There can be a problem when men seek for something (or to be something) that God hasn't given. The capability is not there; the grace is not there; and the anointing is not going to be there. We have known people who think way beyond their aptitude. They envision themselves to some lofty calling when in reality they can't handle the smallest responsibility. There can also be cases where people have been forced into a vocation that they hate. I recommend changing vocations (if possible)!

7:18-19 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. v.19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

*Circumcision	The Jewish nation
*Uncircumcision	The Gentile nations

If one who is an Israelite happens to be converted, there is no need to renounce his citizenship. If one who is a Gentile is converted, he need not become a Jew. I suppose that this needs to be said because of the many doctrines that have arisen over genealogy. The New Testament circumcision is spiritual. It applies to our heart condition. Those who keep the commandments of Christ are the true Israel of God!

7:20-22 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. v.21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. v.23 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

Once more, there is a rather broad application of thought on this subject. It can relate to our natural occupation or to our spiritual calling. It can relate to our heritage, or as in the case of v.21, it can relate to those who were converted as a slave. There were many servants (slaves) in Corinth. In fact, the slaves comprised the greater population of Corinth. Most of the slaves of the first century were war prisoners, or criminals who had the option of slavery. Some became servants to repay their debts.

To the servants, Paul says: "Don't be overly concerned or condemned about your circumstances. Even though you are a servant, you've been freed from your spiritual debt. Yes, if you can earn your freedom then do so, that you might have a greater opportunity to serve Christ. Those who have been converted being free are called to be servants of the Lord." (Paul declares himself to be the slave of Christ.)

7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

Our lives have been purchased when we were slaves (at the sinner's auction block). The precious blood of the Son of God has purchased us. We have been purchased to serve our new Master. Let us not be in bondage to the concepts of men. Let us fear God more than men. Let us not have a part in facilitating the evils of men!

7:24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

If we would all be faithful in the station that God has appointed us, then our Heavenly Father would find pleasure in our lives! An evangelist who decides to become a pastor does not render the fruit that God is looking for.

Paul's advice on marriage 25-40

7:25-26 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. v.26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

Once again, Paul is allowed (by the Spirit of God) to give his advice concerning marital issues. Actually, this is quite an honor to have a part in this holy letter. Paul ascribes this to the Lord's mercy! (cf. 7:40)

We are not told what "*this present distress*" encompasses, and history is also vague on this. However, the word "distress" means crisis. We have the sense that Corinth was facing some very uncertain times, even demanding times. The apostle infers that in such times it is better to be single. Suppose, for example, it is a time of recession or depression. That means that you have the concerns of providing for a household.

7:27-28 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. v.28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

Once we take on the responsibilities of marriage, we cannot escape them. About the end of the 11th century, there was a monk by the name of Bernard. His sermons stirred many a man to desert his family and enlist into his very austere order. History records that women would try to hide their husbands and sons from him when he came to town.

“Art thou loosed from a wife...?” Death is the only legitimate qualification for remarriage: *“For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.”* (Rom 7:2)

But if the virgin marries, or if the widower marry, they have not sinned. Paul said, I’m just trying to forewarn you that there are always extra troubles associated with married life. This will be explained in subsequent verses.

The time is short

7:29-31 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; v.30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; v.31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

Although some of these verses seem a bit unreasonable, we must try to recognize the sense in which this was to be understood. Jesus Himself often made remarks that seemed to be brusque and unfeeling at face value: *“...If any man hate not his father and mother and wife and children, he cannot be my disciple...”* *“If thy hand offend thee, cut it off. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out!”* If we interpreted these verses at face value we would be in trouble! Often times we find overstatements in scripture to emphasize a point. We call them a hyperbole – an exaggeration to make a point.

Paul is trying to enforce a point concerning the shortness of time. So often, people disconnect themselves from being of service in the Lord’s field because of business or marriage, etc.,

as in the parable of the great supper in Luke 14:16-20. Many were invited, but there were many excuses: *"I've bought a yoke of oxen... I've bought a piece of land... I've married a wife..."*

Always in the back of people's minds is the idea that they are going to serve the Lord... after the children get through school; then, after they get married... Then they must help their children build their house. Then, they are taken up with the grandchildren. Do you get the point? We must not be so caught up with this life that we have nothing awaiting us in the next! Paul is diverting their attention to the real purposes in life.

7:32-34 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: v.33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. v.34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

As we have previously stated, marriage has many distractions to it. I have known single people before marriage and after marriage, and I think it more on the rare side to see a couple do better spiritually (as far as service goes) after they are married. When a man is called to the ministry, it is imperative to have a wife who is of the same call. Many a ministry has failed because of a wife that was not 100% with the call. Missionaries have had to return because the wife wanted a better life for the children, etc. There are exceptions, and every now and then you see a Pricilla and Aquila. Paul is trying to save some from the anxieties of marriage.

Many a ministry has failed because of a wife that was not 100% with the call.

* This has to be balanced, because there are a lot of benefits in marriage! Keep in mind that the background of many of the Corinthians was not good, and many of the marriages were not so good either. When two people join together under the right auspices, marriage is beautiful!

7:35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Paul had previously established that singleness was a gift. His advice was in no wise to ensnare them into some wrong concept or bondage, but it was for the spiritual profit of those to whom it may apply. We must also note that Paul gives quite the opposite advice to the Ephesians: Paul encouraged younger widows to remarry (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14).

Pre-arranged marriage

7:36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

This would have to allude to the prearranged marriages that were prevalent in that era – especially in the noble class. If the man feels that his feelings are too strong toward his betrothed, and time is passing them by, let them marry. There is no sin in this!

7:37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, [virginity] doeth well.

The word – virgin, would better translate virginity. Compare Luke 2:36, it is the same word (parthenos), and it translates – virginity.

7:38 So then he that giveth [her] in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth [her] not in marriage doeth better.

The word – her, is not in the original. Therefore this could better read: *“So then he that giveth into marriage doeth well; but he that giveth not into marriage doeth better.”*

7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

Some may argue the point concerning the law, but may I remind us that Christ came to magnify the law and make it honorable (Isa. 42:21). The only dissolution of the marriage covenant is death. Jesus said: *“Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery”* (Mark 10:11-12).

** At death one is free to marry again – only in the Lord (the Lord’s will).*

7:40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

Paul advises the younger widows to remarry in 1 Timothy 5:14. People get married for many reasons other than love. I’ve seen older people who have lost their mates remarry for economic reasons, for company, etc. Unless God’s blessing is upon such a marriage they are often restricted from serving the Lord and they are not happy!



Chapter Eight

Meat sacrificed to idols

In this chapter, Paul begins to deal with the issue of meats that have been offered in sacrifice to pagan deities. It was customary for the one who offered the sacrifice to receive part of it back for his family to eat, or perhaps part of it could be sold to the meat shop (the shambles). This is further elaborated upon in chapter 10:23-33.

The problem that we see here in Corinth is that some of the stronger believers were partaking of this meat, and hereby creating a stumbling block for the weaker ones. For example; some had the knowledge that the meat itself had no spiritual value one way or the other. Others, who were weaker in the faith did not have this knowledge and thus as they partook of this meat, they were being joined to idols. Therefore, some of the stronger believers (those with knowledge) were wounding the conscience and faith of the weaker ones. Paul told the stronger ones to allow charity to rule and not to create stumbling blocks for the weak. Knowledge is the key word in this chapter.

Paul later challenges their so-called liberty, by asking them how they can sit at meat in a pagan temple and then come and sit at the Lord's table: *"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."*

Knowledge puffs up

8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

Perhaps this subject of idols is a continued response to the letter that Paul mentions in 7:1. Paul begins by asserting that we all have knowledge. Although this may seem like an insignificant statement, we must understand that this was to refute one of the major heresies of the first century church, which was Gnosticism. Gnosticism promoted knowledge over faith and claimed some secret impartation of knowledge from the divine spirit realm. It was actually a form of mysticism or spiritism. The Gnostics mixed their heresies into the Christian community, claiming that they were the only truly enlightened ones and possessed the secret knowledge of redemption.

Paul said, “We all have certain knowledge (naturally and spiritually). However, (unsanctified) knowledge only puffs people up with pride.” Even biblical knowledge can inflate one’s ego. In fact, the apostle later tells us that we can possess all knowledge, but if we don’t have love – we’re nothing! *But charity edifieth.*

8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

True spirituality—true wisdom—recognizes that we are deficient at the best. The more we know, the more we realize we don’t know. This is true in the realm of science. The more answers that are found, the more questions appear. The same is true in the spiritual realm; there is always a greater interpretation. We only know in part! (One of the seven anointings symbolized in the seven lamps, is the spirit of knowledge – Isa. 11:2 and Rev. 4:5.)

8:3 *But if any man love God, the same is known of him.*

Having knowledge is not what endears us to God, but having love does. E.g. The ten virgins all had the knowledge that the bridegroom was coming, but their Lord only *intimately* knew five of them. (Knowledge is basically an accumulation of facts.)

Meat sacrificed to idols

8:4 *As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.*

Now Paul gets to the crux of the matter: We who have been illuminated know that there is only one God, and we do not fear the gods made of stone and wood.

8:5-6 *For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) v.6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

The earth is filled with little gods—gods that have been inspired by demons. In fact, every non-Christian religion is demonic, and most of them worship some form or relic. Some years ago we were shopping in a department store in Hong Kong. The whole third floor of the store was filled with gods of every sort. Our heads were swimming because of the demonic presence there. However, we do not fear the demons, we fear the one who allows their existence. We must realize that everything has its time and purpose.

The fact that some ate that meat with guilt made them guilty of idolatry.

8:7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

“However, there is not in every man that knowledge.” Knowledge makes people more responsible, although the lack of knowledge doesn’t entirely excuse one either. Jesus told his critics that because they said, “we see,” they would be held accountable! (See John 9:41.)

We once knew of a man who used to steal little items from motels, such as soaps, shampoo, skin cream, etc. He didn’t realize that those little items were all free anyway, and he actually thought he was getting away with something. This man was guilty of stealing even though he could have freely taken them. This is the very point that Paul is making concerning the meats that had been offered to idols. The fact that some ate that meat with guilt made them guilty of idolatry. It was defiling their conscience even though there was actually no harm in the meat! (See Rom. 14:22-23.)

8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

This is plain enough. As Jesus said: “*Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man...*” (See Mat 15:11-19). Paul also says in Romans 14:2 that sometimes the weaker ones eat herbs. There are sects of Christianity that major on diets, etc. None of this makes us more holy or less holy. The kingdom of God is not meat or drink (or refraining from them), but righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom. 14:17).

Liberty?

8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

We need to have a healthy definition of liberty. Does our liberty allow us to partake at the devil's table? Paul said on several occasions that all things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial and not all things edify. Maybe we could legitimately have a glass of wine—no condemnation. But what about the weaker ones (the new converts) who see us drinking an alcoholic beverage? They might think, "Well, brother John drinks, and he is one of the pillars in the church."

8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

So what does the weaker brother think when he sees the elder brother sitting in the court of a pagan temple partaking with the heathen? He thinks: "well, I've had my questions about coming down to this place, but it must be OK if Brother John comes here." Even though he is wavering in his own convictions concerning this kind of thing, he is emboldened to partake! He is not eating in faith, but simply because he saw the elder brother do it.

8:11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

In actuality, the weak brother is sinning because he is not clear in his conscience. While the one is eating "of faith," the other is not. The one knows that meat is just meat, the other is committing an idolatrous act. Thus, our liberty is causing the weaker brother to offend.

(Rom 14:23) *“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”* (Romans chapter 14 will better help us to see the situation.)

8:12-13 *But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. v.13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

We must always be aware of our place in the body of Christ. None of us live unto himself or dies unto himself. What we do affects the other members of the body. If we hurt other members of the body of Christ, (even unknowingly) we are hurting Christ himself. The minister affects the church the most. Everyone imitates the minister. What the minister allows, everyone allows. What the minister disallows, everyone disallows.

Paul said: *“If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”* There are times within this (framework of liberty) when we must exercise great prudence. For example, circumcision: physical circumcision has no spiritual benefit one way or the other. However, in the case of Timothy, Paul thought it necessary to have him circumcised to keep the peace, whereas, in the case of Titus, Paul would not compromise the doctrine to compel Titus to be circumcised (See Acts 16:3, Gal. 2:3).

* *We will consider some of these thoughts again in chapter 10.*



Chapter Nine

Paul's principal of self-denial

The Greeks fully understood the importance of self-discipline in the life of an athlete. In this chapter, Paul likened himself to a spiritual athlete applying every measure of discipline in order to win the incorruptible crown. Paul denied himself all rights including monetary support while in Corinth. The Corinthians supported other ministers who were far less worthy.

Paul made himself a servant to all. He tempered his life in such a fashion that none could be offended or blame the gospel in any way. He adjusted his life to accommodate others in order to win many to Christ. He then exhorts us to do the same: *“so run, that ye may obtain.”*

Paul's answer to those who challenged him

9:1-2 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? v.2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Paul begins by establishing his credentials before the Corinthian believers, and he will later explain his compulsions for being there. Some were questioning Paul's apostolic authority, while at the same time accepting and listening to false teachers.

(Undoubtedly, these self-seeking ministers that were flooding Corinth had implanted a few of their questions.) Paul tells the Corinthian believers that they were the proof of his apostleship: "Ye are the seal [or proof] of mine apostleship in the Lord."

Paul many times defends his motives by declaring he is a free man. The only thing that compelled him to be there was his love for the Master and his love for them. In one place he says: "I seek not yours, but you!" Paul was not seeking to take anything from them, but to enrich them. There are many hirelings in the ministry – working for reward.

*There were not a lot of itinerant preachers in Paul's day that could claim to be free men. What he meant by that was that he was a citizen of Rome, and he was entitled to every privilege of Roman citizenship. He was saying this because he was being accused of having some ulterior motive for being there.

9:3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

It seems from the subsequent verses that Paul's motives were being challenged in the area of finance. The interesting paradox concerning Paul's motives is that there was not anyone more giving than Paul was. But Paul, foreseeing their carnal little hearts, made sure that he took nothing from them. In fact, Paul supported himself for the whole 18 months that he stayed in Corinth.

May I inject the fact that it took a very great man to put up with this kind of allegation, especially from those that he had nurtured up in the Lord. Furthermore, Paul was not trying to vindicate himself as much as he was trying to save them from the poison that was getting into their system. God is not pleased with this kind of ingratitude, or with this line of questioning concerning one's spiritual father!

9:46 Have we not power to eat and to drink? v.5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? v.6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

Paul responds to their accusations: Don't we have the right to eat and drink.... Don't all the other apostles (Peter, and the brothers of the Lord included) travel with their wives, and they are supported by the churches? Or, should it just be Barnabas and myself who should be exempt from receiving a contribution or from being fed by the church? Should it just be Barnabas and myself alone who should labor with our hands and meet our own needs as we minister here?

9:7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

What soldier ever serves in the army at his own private expense? Or, what farmer plants a vineyard without sharing in some of its fruits? What shepherd tends a flock without partaking of the milk, meat, and wool?" Paul had started the Corinthian church. They were his vineyard, his sheepfold, and he had a right to be cared for by them.

Even work animals are fed

9:8-9 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? v.9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

Doth God take care for oxen? Even an ox is worthy to be fed after pulling the grist wheel all day. Paul was not saying these

things as a mere man; the Word of God was declaring it too. (See Deut. 25:4.)

The laborer expects to partake of some of the fruit

9:10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

This was stated in the Law, not for the benefit of the ox as much as for those who labor in God's harvest field. (See 1 Timothy 5:18, where Paul repeats this). Why does one plow the field? Because he is expecting a harvest! In the spiritual it is the same: we plow, we sow, we cultivate and we thresh, all in the hopes of seeing (eternal) fruit.

9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

Anybody that has been in the ministry knows the work and investment that goes into sowing the seed of the Word – the study, the prayer and the all-consuming burden one carries until it be delivered. When I travel to the foreign field (sometimes for 5-week stints), I never feel relief until my last message is preached. I have gone places entirely at my own expense, with never an offering given. There was an investment made.

If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it unusual to expect physical returns such as an offering, or food and lodging?

9:12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Others were receiving offerings from Corinth, and yet, the founder of the church, who should have been helped, was not receiving anything. Though Paul had every right to receive remuneration from this church, he did not use this privilege. Paul, foreseeing this little inquisition coming, refused all offerings, just to put his accusers to silence, so that the cause of the gospel could not be spoken against.

* I wonder how many of the prosperity preachers would be willing to receive nothing and support themselves if they had a church of 70,000 people?

9:13-15 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? v.14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. v.15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

The priests who served in the temple received their food from the temple, and those who served at the altar received a share of the meat that was offered on the altar (See Lev. 6:16-17, 7:32-34). Supporting the minister is as fundamental as it can get! In light of this Paul said, "But I have not used this privilege, (of receiving support) nor am I writing this now *that it should be done unto me!*"

In this case against Paul, Paul had the superior argument. (This is still in conjunction with verse 3 – challenging Paul's financial integrity.) Therefore he declares: "It were better for me to die than to forfeit the case to you and make my rejoicing void." In other words, Paul was glad that he had never

taken anything from them and thus give them a chance to accuse him!

** Isn't it sad to think that a church could be so gifted and so carnal at the same time?*

A charge to keep

9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.

When a man is given a charge to preach the gospel, that is not a cause for boasting. As Paul says: *"for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.* In other words, there is a demand upon my life. I am compelled to preach, and woe unto me if I fail to do this! The destiny of souls depends upon what we do with that charge.

9:17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

We have a choice as to the service we render: We can do it because we have to, or, we can do it because we want to. David said: "I delight to do thy will, O my God..." (Psa. 40:8) Either way, the charge remains the same.

I am compelled to preach, and woe unto me if I fail to do this! The destiny of souls depends upon what we do with that charge.

What is the reward?

9:18-19 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I

abuse not my power in the gospel. v.19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

Some ministers have their reward here in this life. In fact, Jesus spoke of those who did all of their works to be seen of men and that was their reward (Matt. 6:1-6). Some men's work is for the praise of men – and that is their reward. Some work for hire (a hireling) or even to be wealthy through the means of preaching – that is their reward.

Paul did not abuse any of his privileges as a minister; in fact, sometimes he did not use them at all. His vision and his reward was to present many souls before the Lord in that day. Paul fashioned his life in such a way that he could bring blessing and salvation to men – free of charge! As Christ himself said: *“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”* (Mt. 20:28) This was the heart of Paul, to minister unto others!

9:20-22 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; v.21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. v.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.

The apostle Paul grew up in the cosmopolitan city of Tarsus. He spoke the common language of Greek very fluently. (The ministers from Jerusalem were not so gifted.) He was accustomed to conversing and rubbing shoulders with men from all backgrounds. Paul really had the gift of flowing with all men. He could sit with Jews, and he could sit with the Gentiles. He

could sit with the rich and the poor (Phil. 4:12). The dealings in Paul's life (which had brought him low) allowed him to identify with the weak. Paul allowed himself to identify with all men that he might save some! Christ Himself was very touchable; He allowed common man to touch Him.

Christ Himself was very touchable; He allowed common man to touch Him.

Paul said he "became all things to all men." This does not mean that we lower our standards. For example, a man does not let his hair grow long like a woman's, or wear fake tattoos in order to relate to the hippies. Hudson Taylor became like the Chinese and adapted their customs that he might win them. Yet he did not compromise the truth or become worldly. The reward that Paul foresaw was presenting a perfected people before the throne of God. Paul had a principle of self-denial. He denied himself all things if he might just win some. What a tremendous heart Paul had to win the lost!

* *Without law v.21* – refers to the Gentiles who were never under the Mosaic law.

9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Paul tempered his life for the gospel's sake that he might reap the full reward of the gospel – many souls! Paul's mentality was this: if God so loved the world... why shouldn't I?

Running to Win the Race

9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

The Greeks were athletically minded and they could relate to the analogy of running a race. The Christian life is a race. However, it is a race that we can all have the hopes of winning. We are not competing against one another; but we are contending with many obstacles and hurdles in this race, and it demands that we engage our all to be a winner!

9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

In the natural, it requires great temperance and discipline to be a winner: diet, exercise, practice, and denial of many of the delights of the non-participants – and all for a crown of olive leaves that will later deteriorate to dust. But the crown we shall win in this spiritual race is eternal, and it fades not away! (See Rev. 3:11.)

9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

We must run with purpose and with a goal. We must have direction and stick to it, not hit and miss experiences like the boxer who only connects once in a while. Listen to what Paul says to the Philippians: “*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*”

We must finish

9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Temperance is one of the fruits of the Spirit, but like the other fruits, it must be developed and maintained.

It is possible to be a castaway (or reject) after preaching to others. We have seen men and women in the past who have preached to others and brought deliverance to many, yet they themselves did not make it. This is vividly portrayed at the judgment seat of Christ in Matthew 7:21-23. I remember an evangelist some years ago who had a tremendous healing ministry. Yet, toward the end of his ministry he was turning into an alcoholic and was ministering under the influence of alcohol. Eventually he died an acute alcoholic. In a very real sense, he was like the minister described in 2 Peter 2:19; who promised liberty, but he himself was a servant of corruption. Peter warns in verses 20-22 that it is better for a man never to hear the gospel than to hear and respond and then turn back.

We must be like the faithful Christian in Pilgrim's Progress who had to endure temptation, criticism, rejection, and many trials in order to reach the celestial city. It is a horrible thing to tell people that it doesn't matter what they do after the new birth or that it is impossible to offend God or lose His favor. Christ never taught this! Instead, He taught that every branch in Him that did not bear fruit was cut off and cast into the fire (John 15:2,6). He also said: *"He that shall endure to the end shall be saved."*(Mt. 24:13) We must be faithful to the end!



Chapter Ten

All of these things happened for ensamples

In chapter ten, Paul admonishes the Corinthians from the example of Israel's journey (Old Testament). Paul declares that all of these things were written for our admonition, even until the end of the world. Though many would discount the Old Testament, Paul asserts that all of their history serves as a type (an ensample). A type is a pattern. The Old Testament was the type; the New Testament is the anti-type or the real.

The reasons that Israel failed in the wilderness and never entered the promise land serve as a warning to us. Paul wanted the Corinthians to see this. The Corinthians were guilty of the same sins that kept Israel from inheriting the promise, especially idolatry. Paul continues the theme of idolatry that he began in chapter eight.

Israel's journey

10:1-2 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; v.2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

Paul encourages the reading of the Old Testament. (See Rom. 15:4.) Our spiritual fathers are all the godly men of the Old Testament. We are the real "Israel of God," according to Paul in Galatians 6:16. Men like Moses, Abraham, and David are spiritual fathers to the people of faith.

Paul now begins to spiritualize on Israel's journey: Being baptized in the cloud speaks of our baptism from heaven – baptism in the Spirit. The baptism in the sea speaks of our water baptism experience. The whole journey of Israel is a pattern or type to the church. Paul taught Israel's journey to all his churches. The journey gives the believer clear direction. It shows us where we have come from (*Egypt* – the world) and where we are headed to (*Zion* – the spiritual plane, the rest). However, there is a wilderness enroute to glory land, and there are many tests to pass here. Israel's failure in the wilderness serves as a warning to every believer.

The whole journey of Israel is a pattern or type to the church.

10:3-4 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; v.4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

The bread that came down from heaven was a figure of the bread that we are to live by. This is clear from John 6:32-35. Christ is the bread from heaven (the living word). He is also the spiritual drink, not only in the sense of salvation but also in the mighty baptism of His Spirit (See John 4:14 and 7:37-39).

The spiritual Rock that followed them was a figure of the Christ. We must note that on the two occasions when the rock was smitten, they were a full forty years apart and geographically were miles apart (See Ex. 17:6 and Num. 20:8).

The Rock was Christ

Knowing that the Rock was a type of Christ unveils some important truths. On the second occasion where the Rock was smitten, Moses was instructed to speak to the Rock. Instead, Moses, in the heat of his spirit, struck the rock and thus disqualified himself from entering the promise land – not only because his spirit was provoked, but also because Moses had violated a type. Had Moses gotten away with striking the Rock the second time, then Christ could be crucified again. (The smitten Rock speaks of the crucified Christ!) We find other occasions in scripture where men died for violating a type. In the Catholic Church they crucify the Son of God afresh at every mass.

Warnings from the past

10:5-6 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. v.6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

All of Israel's journey serves as a warning to the church. Many who began this journey did not finish it. (At salvation we also begin a journey.) Paul begins to list some of the reasons why Israel did not complete their journey. We must understand that after we are filled with the Spirit, we also will be brought into our wilderness, our place of deprivation and testing.

Paul mentions that they lusted after evil things; interestingly, some of the things that they lusted for were not evil in themselves. Fish, cucumbers, leeks, and melons are not evil things. But the fact that Israel lusted after them and longed for the good old times in Egypt, was an indictment against their deliverer! (See Num. 11:6.)

Anything that we covet can become sin, especially when we are saying (in effect) that it was better in the world than to follow Christ!

10:7-10 *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. v.8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. v.9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. v.10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

Including verse six, Paul lists five particular sins that were committed by Israel in the wilderness:

Lusting	After the things of the world	(Psalm 106:14-15)
Idolatry	An idol (spiritually) can be anything that we worship, or bow to. We will become a servant to anything that we bow to. In the pagan world, idolatry was almost always linked to immorality.	(Ex. 32:4-6)
Fornication	Fornication brings spiritual death.	(Num. 25:1-9)
Tempting Christ	That could read, <i>challenging</i> Christ. Israel challenged Christ by saying: "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness..." Making a statement like: God has to heal or He is a liar, is a challenge and an insult to God!	(Psalm 78:19)
Murmuring	In this case, their murmuring released fiery serpents and many died. This is what murmuring does; it releases evil spirits against us!	(Num. 21:5-6)

All of these sins can keep us from inheriting the promises of our day or even worse, they could keep us from eternal life! These particular sins were prevalent in Corinth.

10:11 *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

This entire journey was a type and a shadow to the church. (Ensample means, "type.") It serves as an admonishment and a lesson illustration until the end of time!

10:12 *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

Even the eleven disciples had to learn a bitter lesson on this very point. They were all confident that they would stand the test and they all failed! As the proverb says: "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*" (Pro. 16:18) This was the message to the prideful Corinthians and to any who are confident in their own ability!

No temptation unusual

10:13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

The Lord carefully monitors every trial that comes our way. In Malachi 3, the Lord is pictured as a refiner who sits carefully eyeing the molten silver. If the precious metal is not removed at the precise moment, the metal is ruined. It has been said that as soon as the refiner sees his image in the molten silver, the work is done!

The Lord does not send a Job type of trial to a new babe in Christ. Sometimes people think their temptations are

extraordinary, but they are not. All of the thoughts and temptations that people have are “common to man.” There is no unique temptation. If we could put aside our own feelings and look into the heart of others, we would hear the same lonely cry for help. Some have worse problems in certain areas, but God is able to create a way of escape if we avail ourselves of His grace. Grace is divine enablement, power to do what we can’t do. Sometimes we do not want to escape from certain things and therefore we don’t.

Let us consider “the law of opposing force.” How do we become strong? We become strong by pushing against the opposing force. For example, you gain muscles by lifting weights. The law of opposing force strengthens us. It is the same in the spiritual. As we exercise our mind and push against the weaknesses in our life, though it may seem like nothing is happening, in reality we are becoming stronger. Have you ever seen a school of fish going upstream? Seemingly they are just standing still in the swift waters and yet they are exerting a lot of energy to hold their place! In life it appears many times that we are not going anywhere and yet there is an opposing force that is coming against us, and God is strengthening us through that opposition.

Special emphasis on idolatry 14-33

10:14-15 *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. v.15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*

Paul now returns to the subject that he had begun in chapter eight. Idolatry is one of the chief sins in the pagan world, and it involves the breaking of the first two commandments: “Thou

shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image..." (Duet. 5:7-8). Idolatry is an evidence of great contempt for the Lord! I have seen Christian young people bowing before the god of rock music – and even bowing before the so-called artists who are demon possessed!

Paul tenderly entreats the Corinthians to flee from idolatry! Idolaters do not inherit the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9). Paul even appeals to their natural wisdom to judge his following exhortation.

10:16-17 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? v.17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Paul is now going to compare the communion service with those who would partake at an altar. In communion we are remembering our "once for all Sacrifice." The emblems that we partake of are symbolic of His blood, and of His Body that was broken and offered up for us!

There can be great blessing in this cup that we partake of. In fact, this is a service where the partakers are receiving a great blessing. The cup speaks of our relationship to God (The Blood). The bread speaks of our relationship with one another. His body had to become broken bread, so that we could become one bread. There is a great blessing in this ceremony as we are in right relationship with our God, and with our brethren. (Paul gives the negative side of this in chapter 11.)

* Abraham was blessed when Melchizedek served him the bread and the wine, Genesis 14.

What are we partaking of

10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

Paul is trying to show the Corinthians, from the symbolism of the altar, that we become partakers of the thing offered upon the altar. The one who offered received a part of that offering.

10:19-20 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? v.20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Paul had already stated in chapter 8 that knowledge is the qualifying factor. We who believe are not intimidated by an idol, but the fact that the meat was being offered to devils should upset us. Why would a Christian want to be in the atmosphere of demons, or partake of food offered to a devil?

10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

Christianity demands separation. We cannot live on both sides of the fence, and if we do – no one can see any difference between those of the world and us!

10:22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

If the Lord himself hates the sight of evil, how do we dare to participate with it? Are we stronger than He? *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...”*(Hab. 1:13).

There are many things that we can legitimately do as Christians. We can go to the cinema, but are we spiritually benefited or edified?

10:23-24 *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. v.24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.*

There are many things that we can legitimately do as Christians. We can go to the cinema, but are we spiritually benefited or edified? The truth is, most of the time we are not! It's like the food we eat; we can legitimately eat anything, but is it all good for us?

The point that Paul is making is in regards to the meats that have been offered to idols. Though it may be lawful to eat those meats (because we know that meat is just meat), yet for the sakes of others who may be weaker – we abstain! (See chapter 8:8-13.)

Ask no questions

10:25-26 *Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: v.26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*

The shambles means the “meat market.” It was customary for a part of the sacrifice to be sold to the meat market. Perhaps the one who offered the sacrifice received back a portion that was too much for him to use. He would then take the meat to the market and sell it.

Paul's advice was: when you go to the market to buy a roast, don't ask where it came from. The earth is the Lord's and everything is to be received with thanksgiving. Everything is pure in itself.

10:27-29 *If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. v.28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: v.29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*

Again, ask no questions... You are invited to a dinner, and they are serving roast veal. Do not say: "Where did this come from?" But if they happen to tell you: "O, this roast came from an offering down at the temple," don't eat it – not for your conscience sake, but for his. You are letting them know that you do not partake with devils! If our liberty causes others to commit sin, then our liberty needs to be challenged!

Witch hunting

There is a trend today to be a "witch-hunter." By witch-hunting I mean people are looking for some demonic significance in everything: clothing, toys, designs, etc. Sometimes Christians get too caught up looking for some special significance in a product's logo or some hidden symbol etc. These are distractions from the true cause of Christ. If someone gives me a coat with a little symbol on it that I don't understand, I am not going to research the product and try to find the hidden meaning. I will bless that jacket in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, give thanks to Him for it, and use it. People spend their time digging around and finding something wrong with the brand of soap or some paper product, etc. I would encourage people to stay out of the realm of curiosity and suspicion. Do not ask questions

about everything. Just enjoy what has been set before you. Of course, there are some situations where you have to be wary.

I remember an incident told to us about a little girl who was having trouble sleeping at night because she was always having nightmares. When the mother prayed, the Lord somehow revealed to her that the design on the little girl's pillowcase (which was a collage of Amish hexes) was attracting demons to the room.

I am not teaching that we should be gullible, oblivious or blind, but let us not be a witch-hunter either. Do not get caught up fighting the "New Age movement," etc. If we preach the truth, the counterfeit will become evident. We should not memorize evil, but only good. Paul tells us to be simple concerning evil, but to be wise concerning good (Rom. 16:19).

10:30-31 *For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? v.31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

These verses are in the context of the previous verses, concerning eating meat that came from – you know not where. Whatever we eat or drink, we receive with thanksgiving and ask no questions. An unclean bird fed Elijah for many days, and I'm sure he gave thanks and enjoyed. I've had people try to put me on a guilt trip for buying certain products. They said the owner of the company was a Satan worshiper, etc. Later, they apologized because they said they had been misinformed. The tragedy is that many people go on a crusade over something that

does not even matter. Whatever we do, let us do it with the intent to bring glory to God!

10:32-33 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: v.33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Once again, Paul is reiterating something that he has already said in chapter nine. Paul was not preaching something that he did not practice. Paul went out of the way to accommodate and flow with all men. That is not to say that he lowered his standards or compromised the gospel; but he simply tried to bend on issues and customs that did not matter. His heart was to bless others and to see many saved!



Chapter Eleven

Chain of Command & Protocol

In chapter eleven, Paul teaches on the divine chain of command. The more that we understand the kingdom, the more that we see that there is an order and procedure to everything. The church itself has a certain military structure to it. There are ranks, there is an authority structure, and there is accountability. Paul has to emphasize this to the Corinthians because there was a problem in the area of men and women's roles. There was much perversion in their society. Moreover, women often had dominant roles, even in the political scene. Thus, the apostle sets them straight – men and women are not equal. It is the man who is the most accountable!

In this chapter, Paul also addresses the ordinances concerning the communion table. Many of the Corinthians were sickly and there was even premature death amongst them because of the abuses taking place at the Lord's Table. The communion ordinance was the only *tradition* that Jesus commanded his followers to keep!

Worthy of imitation

11:1 *Be ye followers (imitators) of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

Perhaps this verse more appropriately fits at the end of the last chapter. Paul had just admonished the church with his example of *being all things to all men* ...seeking the profit of all men that some might be saved. Paul's life was worthy of imitation because Paul lived what he preached!

11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

It is always good to commend people whenever we can. There were many in the Corinthian church that had adhered to Paul's teaching even though others had deviated from them.

Authority and order

11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

God	is the head of Christ
Christ	is the head of man
Man	is the head of woman

In the divine order of things: Christ was always subject to His Father. Man is accountable to Christ, and the women is accountable to the man. Nothing has changed in this 21st century; God's order still applies. Modern society has tried to tell us that women have now been liberated from man's dominion. Churches have tried to neuter the Godhead. Some have even tried to feminize the Godhead, but God is still the same and His order remains.

Nothing has changed in this 21st century; God's order still applies.

After the fall of Adam, there were judgments given. Adam was to work by the sweat of his brow; and Eve had to answer to her husband. Woman is the weaker vessel in the sense that she was made from the man. The woman was deceived, but Adam knew what he was doing when he sinned! (See 1 Tim. 2:14). Actually, this was God's plan of protection to womankind. The woman is always under the authority of the man. A girl is under the authority of her father until he releases her to another man at the altar. A girl becomes a target when she becomes independent and wanders off on her own (See Genesis 34:1-2).

The symbolism of head coverings

11:4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

In the context of this chapter, the head covering being referred to is hair. Therefore, a man is dishonoring Christ if he ministers with long hair like a woman. This will be explained in some of the subsequent verses. This was not only a problem in first century Corinth but it is also a problem in our 21st century. There is reversal of roles – men with women's hair, women with shorn heads like men – the unisex look. (c.f. 13-15)

11:5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

The hair style issue can definitely send a message. However, just because a lady has long hair does not necessarily mean that she is in subjection to male authority either. It is obvious

from this passage (verse 5) that Paul does not have a problem with women that minister in the assembly, as long as they are subject to a male superior (leader).

In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul said that a woman must not teach or usurp authority over a man. There are many women that teach men on the mission field – that is not the problem. It is when a woman does not have a male covering, such as a pastor or a bishop, or a mission superintendent that she reports to. (See comments on 14:34-35.)

11:6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

Although these verses are a bit sketchy, I would still interpret this in light of the context – being subject to the authority covering. (This is explained in verse ten.) The hair-covering issue is teaching authority structure. Man is subject to Christ. Woman is subject to man. Like a work place (for example), the supervisor is over everybody, but he communicates through his managers. The same is true in the military.

If a woman be not covered – have an authority figure over her; then she may as well be shaven. Being that it is a shame for a woman to be shaven, wouldn't it be better to submit to her husband, father, or pastor and be covered?

11:7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

If man is made in the image of God, then he is to reflect the manly image of God. God is not a woman, and He made distinction between men and women. In the book of Revelation we see demons coming out of the pit with faces of men but the

hair of women (Rev. 9:7-8). That shows us the rebellion of the fallen creation. The perverted music industry of today exemplifies this type of anarchy – men with women’s hair. Paul later tells us that long hair on a woman is becoming, and it honors her role and position to man.

11:8-9 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. v.9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

In the original pattern of things, the woman was taken from Adam’s rib and she was created for him. She was going to fill a void in his life, she was going to be a helpmate. In other words, woman was created to help man to fulfill his task (his ministry). Peter said: “*we are heirs together of the grace of life*” (1 Pet. 3:7). In the pastoral ministry it is almost impossible to be a good pastor without a good wife! The woman’s task is to help build her husband’s house because she will inherit with him.

*Woman
was
created
to help
man to
fulfill
his task.*

11:10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

The woman needs to have an authority (covering) over her head because of the angels. This is why God gave Adam as an authority covering to Eve. He was to be her head because it was a (fallen) angel that deceived her. If Eve had come to Adam when the serpent first appeared, Adam would have bashed the head of that serpent! A Philistine reproved Abraham on this point. He should have been the covering that kept other men from looking at his wife! (See Gen. 20:16).

11:11-12 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. v.12 For as

the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

In the true setting of Christianity, God made man and women dependent upon one another. Yes, the woman came from the man, but then the man also came from the woman. In God's heavenly plan for man and woman, we see matrimony as two people drawing from one another, sharing from one another and caring for one another. When two people are working together in God's plan there is a great inheritance for them!

11:13-15 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? v.14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? v.15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

These verses relate back to verses 4-5. A woman ministering with her hair cut off disgraces a man. It is like a woman muscle builder. It is totally out of character for a woman to have muscles bulging out like a man. Even nature testifies to God's order; the female has the diminutive role.

On the other hand, a man with long effeminate hair (womanlike hair) dishonors his head – which is Christ. The covering that is spoken of here is clearly, hair.

The head covering issue has been around for a few centuries. I have preached in churches in parts of the world where the men sit on one side and the women sit on the other side. The women all wear head coverings in strict adherence to what they think Paul taught on the subject. Actually, in the places where the women don their coverings it is not necessary; the women all have long hair. It is more of a bondage than an act of obedience or submission.

We have known other dear Christian women who thought it a sin to even cut, or trim or style their hair. They wear a large bun of hair and think that this is an attribute of holiness. The main idea being conveyed here is that there is a distinction between the women and the men. Women should wear feminine looking hair; it is for her beauty and honor. Men wear shorter styles of hair, and even that can't be defined because styles change over the centuries. Usually, religion focuses more on the women's styles, but the truth of the matter is that there are more men with long hair, (ponytails etc.) than women with shorn heads!

** Note: A minister was relating how that many young men who had drug problems (1960s) were counseled to cut their hair. The ones that did were delivered; the ones that did not kept their bondage!*

11:16 *But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*

This might better read: "*we have no other custom.*" There are church groups that major on the exterior. In fact, some of them are fragmented over a woman putting a curl in her hair, button-holes or colors of stockings, etc. All of this kind of nitpicking does not enhance the cause of Christ. Styles change, different parts of the world have different customs. Moderation and modesty never go out of style. Submission to God's order and authority never goes out of style. *We have no other custom....*

Abuses at the Lord's Table

Church history records that the early church commonly shared a meal that they called the "love feast." It was intended

to promote love and unity among fellow believers. Not only was a meal shared amongst the participants, but there was also the breaking of the bread, and that would accentuate the occasion. Unfortunately, the Corinthians were turning this beautiful occasion into a time of excess, drunkenness and variance!

11:17-19 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. v.18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. v.19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

These gatherings which should have been to their edification turned out to be a detriment. The whole concept of the communion table was unity: *"Father make them one..."* The body that was to be broken was intended to absorb all of the variance of mankind, thus making harmony possible! But now we see divisions (cliques), factions, and doctrinal heresies.

*Heresy is
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from the
false.*

Heresy is necessary to polarize the true from the false. Heresy is like a disease that only infects the weaker stock – the uncommitted, the halfhearted and those who do not love the truth! That is the purpose for the antichrist; the antichrist and the false prophet are sent to collect the tares from the church. Those who do not love the truth will gravitate to the false!

11:20-22 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. v. 21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. v. 22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

Paul said in essence: How do you dare to call this the Lord's supper? Some are eating, others who are poor are deprived, and others are drunken. Don't you have any respect for the church? Go home and have your supper there!

* Note: Some have taken these verses to oppose having a church fellowship dinner. This is not the point that Paul is making; The reproof was for their despicable behavior at the Lord's table! May I say in the defense of church fellowships that one of our most sacred events, centers on a meal that we have in the upper room of our church. We call it our love feast and we generally have it right before Easter. My wife and I serve the meal. Then different ones share passages of scripture. Someone usually gives a little account of the Pass-over. Then we share communion together and conclude by singing and worship. I can't describe the blessedness of this experience!

Paul again rehearses the ordinance

11:23-24 *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: v.24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

Paul again delivers the precepts of the communion table as he had received them by revelation from the Lord. *"This do in remembrance..."* This is the only tradition that Christ commanded His church to keep. Christendom is filled with traditions – fish on Friday, ashes on Wednesday, etc. – but the only tradition that Christ commanded was the communion table.

The broken bread

The broken bread is a symbol of His broken body. How can we explain the mystery of communion? There is a bonding one to another as the saints partake. We are becoming that "one bread" as we partake in remembrance of His sacrifice.

The cup

11:25-26 *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. v.26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*

We are told in the book of Hebrews that a testament (a will) does not take effect until the testator dies! (See Heb. 9:15-17.) It took the shedding of the blood of Christ to initiate the New Testament. We also understand from this that the New Testament age did not begin till about A.D. 30.

* The cup symbolizes the blood that was shed to redeem us!

We partake of these emblems in honor of our Great Martyr who laid down His life for His sheep. This ordinance is to be carried on till He come!

Partaking unworthily

11:27 *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

The classic example of this verse would be the man who sat at the Lord's table and heard the Master explain these emblems and even partook of them. He had no plans to accept the sacrifice of Christ, but he was willing to watch Him die. He was guilty of the body and blood of Christ.

Let's put this into another case: Suppose one takes communion, they are living in sin and yet make no application of that sacrifice to their life. In effect, they are watching a man die for nothing. They partake (symbolically) of the blood that was shed for them, but make no application of that blood to their sinful soul.

11:28-30 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. v.29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. v.30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

We could again single out Judas: He ate the emblems unworthily; he died shortly thereafter and he was damned in hell!

Paul exhorts self-examination and introspection before communion. Is there unrepentant sin in my life? Am I in right relation with my brother and my sister (the body of Christ)? The Corinthians were not only incurring damage to their health and even premature death, but they were eating and drinking damnation to themselves. There is much sickness in the Catholic church on this very point.

We could again single out Judas: He ate the emblems unworthily; he died shortly thereafter and he was damned in hell! We need to emphasize the sanctity of the communion table. Over the years, I have refused to give

communion to certain individuals. One woman was committing adultery and I refused her the emblems. She went crying out of the church. Most of the flock immediately rallied to my side. The only one who sympathized with the woman later committed adultery herself!

11:31-32 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. v.32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Paul commends self-judgment. What this word (judge) implies is that we scrutinize our own personal life; And better yet, that we invite the Holy Spirit to search us out, convict us and show us where we are missing the mark! David prayed: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psa. 139:23-24). If we would do this, we would not find our life being brought into judgment, or into the dealings of God.

But when we are judged (punished) it is because God loves us: *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* (See Heb. 12:5-11) The Lord corrects us to save us from going the way of the world, and thus being judged with the world. Many of God’s children do not welcome the chastening rod in their life. It is possible to refuse the dealings of the Lord. These are Christians that never change. Recently, somebody in telling me about another Christian brother made this remark: *“He is the same person that he was 25 years ago!”* Generally what happens to Christians like this is that they suffer greatly before the Lord takes them. If we allow God to judge us along this pilgrim journey, then we will have a peaceful transition into glory at the length.

11:33 *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.*

This is the correct procedure for the communion service. After the bread is broken and distributed, then we eat together in union.

11:34 *And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

The communion service is not where we come for supper. We go home for supper! Let us solemnize this special occasion that we call “The Lord’s Supper” and be blessed!



Chapter Twelve

Concerning Spiritual Gifts

There are nine spiritual gifts mentioned in this chapter. Paul makes it clear that God dispenses these gifts to His body for the benefit and common good of the whole body. Some of these dear Corinthians thought that their gift sprang from their own unusual ability and that they were the life flow to the whole church. Paul informs them that some of the best gifts were given to the less honourable or the feebler members. This should have deflated some of them!

Paul likens the body of Christ to the human body in that every single member of the body is essential. He then magnifies the need for each member's uniqueness and gift. In chapter 13, Paul continues by stressing the need to temper the gifts of the Spirit in the nature of love. To have spiritual gifts without the divine nature leaves us empty.

Be not ignorant of spiritual gifts

12:1-2 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. v.2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Paul exhorts the church not to be ignorant concerning the things of the Spirit, as they were concerning the idols that once controlled them. Idolatry is always associated with superstition

and ignorance. The psalmist gives a good description of the dumb idols and those who are led by them:

“They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them”(Psa 115:5-8).

12:3 *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

“No man speaking by the Spirit...” Again, this is in relation to spiritual gifts. Certainly this would seem elementary enough; a person functioning in one of the true gifts of the Holy Spirit cannot malign the Lord. Contrariwise, a person void of the Spirit of the Lord cannot proclaim Jesus as Lord! A devil may proclaim Jesus as the Son of God – but never as his Lord!

Someone once told a story of a Christian man who had been accused of betrayal. (This took place behind the former Iron Curtain.) One night the accused was praying in tongues in the church. The man who was praying did not know the tongue he was praying in, but somebody there recognized the tongue to be German, and this man was glorifying and magnifying the Lord Jesus Christ. Needless to say, the man was absolved of the accusations.

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The function of the Godhead

12:4-6 *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. v.5
And there are differences of administrations, but the same*

Lord. v.6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

In these few verses we can see the work of the “Three In One” or the Trinity: God the Father is the Master, or if we could say respectfully, “The Master Mind” of the whole operation. Christ is the administrator of the operation, He executes the program. The Holy Spirit is (respectfully) the work force, the enabling power! The gifts of the Spirit take on various descriptions and functions, but it is one God working together through these gifts to accomplish His purpose!

The purpose

12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

The Lord gave various giftings to individuals in His body (the church) that they might benefit the other members of the body. Paul will later elaborate on this when he likens the body of Christ to the human body. We need every member of our human body to benefit the whole!

The nine gifts of the Spirit

12:8-10 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; v.9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; v.10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

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1. The word of wisdom
 2. The word of knowledge
 3. Faith
 4. Gifts of healing
 5. Miracles
 6. Prophecy
 7. Discerning of spirits
 8. Tongues
 9. Interpretation of tongues
-

The Nine Gifts of the Spirit

The Word of Wisdom

This is perhaps one of the most important of all the spiritual gifts. In its simplest form, it is the answer to a difficult situation. It is a key word that God gives to a person to resolve a certain problem. For example, a brother is sick and can't seem to receive healing. Then a word of wisdom comes: "There is a person in your life that you haven't forgiven. Freely forgive and freely you shall receive your healing!" There is no problem that cannot be solved if we have God's wisdom (e.g. Acts 27:32).

The Word of Knowledge

This is different from a word of wisdom. A word of knowledge simply shows an existing situation. It does not tell us what to do about it. A word of wisdom tells us what to do; it is the answer. The word of knowledge can function in many ways. The healing evangelist might say: "There is someone in the congregation that has pain in his left knee." How does he know that? By the word of knowledge! The word of knowledge can come in a vision, or it can come to the senses as in the case of the evangelist who felt pain in the left knee. If a sick person comes up for prayer, the Lord can actually reveal the problem by the word of knowledge, but not necessarily the solution. This is where other gifts may be needed to complete the healing or the deliverance (e.g. Acts 8:20-23).

Faith	<p>Faith is purely supernatural. It is a divine impartation for the moment to bring to pass God's will and purpose. An evangelist was relating how that they ran out of concrete while they were working on a church building. The forms were only half full. Suddenly he felt faith coming. He just spoke to the situation, and he could literally see the concrete swelling up and filling the forms. The word of faith was substance to him, and it supplied for that particular need. We must never limit the gift of faith to some little area; the gift of faith can remove mountains. It can also release healing and deliverance etc. (e.g. Acts 13:9-12).</p>
Gifts of Healing	<p>Notice the plurality: <i>gifts</i> of healing. Some people have a gift in a particular area of healing. There is a certain minister who visits our church that has a particular gift of healing for bones and for backs. Others have unique gifts of healing for particular areas – perhaps heart conditions or internal organs or cancer, etc. It is so beautiful to see these gifts touching the needs in the body of Christ! (e.g. Acts 28:8).</p>
Miracles	<p>In the original Greek, the word miracle literally means, "act of power." To cast out demons we need the gift of miracles. Sometimes it is necessary to have three or four of the gifts working together in order to accomplish the needed deliverance or healing. Many times the Lord gives this gift to the evangelist. Philip is a good example of the evangelist: <i>"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed"</i> (Acts 8:5-7).</p>

<i>Prophecy</i>	<p>The gift of prophecy exposes the heart. It can also bring tremendous encouragement, direction and promise. The word in Greek literally means: prediction. Paul told Timothy to wage a good warfare by means of the prophecies he had received (1 Tim. 1:18). The prophecy in Corinth was so sharp (at times) that when people walked into the service they would fall down and say: "God is in you!" We want to pray for a clear prophetic utterance. Prophecy is later considered in chapter 14 (e.g. Acts 19:6).</p>
<i>Discerning of Spirits</i>	<p>This gift actually opens our spiritual senses to the invisible spirit realm. As in every other gift, there are depths to which this gift operates. This is a rather rare gift and it requires a lot of discipline. Let us suppose that one sees quite often into this invisible realm; that means that he must keep his composure and carry on his assignment. God allows the spirit world to exist for His purpose and that doesn't mean we are supposed to try to interfere into that realm, unless the Lord has expressly charged us to do so!</p> <p>As ministers we must seek for the development of this gift that we might know the source of supernatural manifestations. When God is moving there are always the counterfeits, and they can't be discerned through our natural senses. A minister was telling how he was watching an evangelist giving incredible words of knowledge to people and healing etc. The Lord opened his eyes and he saw a dark angel behind this man empowering him. We must discern what spirit is operating because many things look all right to the natural appearance (e.g. Acts 16:16-18).</p>

When the Scriptures speak of “other tongues” it literally means other languages. Many tend to despise the gift of tongues, and I think it’s simply because they do not understand the operation of this gift. When we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues is the initial evidence. I speak in tongues every day. I pray in tongues. I worship the Lord in other tongues, and yet I don’t consider myself to have the “gift of tongues.” Tongues, basically is a language that we communicate to our Heavenly Father with. (Paul will explain this in chapter 14.) However, the *gift* of tongues serves another purpose:

I knew an evangelist who had an unusual gift of tongues. He traveled to other lands and sometimes he would tell the person who was interpreting his sermon into the native language to sit down because he didn’t need him! One time he was praying in tongues for a minister from India during a convention service. His speech had an irritating, grating, almost burping and choking type of sound. It really sounded strange – even embarrassing. When he was finished praying the Indian minister turned to him and said: “Do you realize you just prayed for me in my own dialect and it was absolutely perfect?” The evangelist had a very unique gift of tongues and it was enjoyable just listening to him minister in tongues.

Recently we had a lady stop at our house whom we had not seen for many years. She was a very quiet woman and she just visited for a few moments. As she was leaving she asked if she could pray for us. She began to pray in tongues and I could feel the tongues of fire just licking at me. It was so very real! One should never despise or minimize the gift of tongues. The gift of tongues is not the same as worshiping in tongues or your personal prayer language. It is a separate gift from the language you received when you were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

<i>The Gift of Tongues continued...</i>	<p>Once my wife was in a service in Honduras and as she was praying in tongues, she was praying in Spanish and did not even know it. Someone came up to her afterwards and told her all that she had said. Another time we were in meetings there, and many young people were being filled with the Spirit. One girl who was from the mountains spoke in perfect English for two hours, and she didn't know any English! The gift of tongues is very real. In chapter 14, we will again consider the gift of tongues in relation to a message given to the church.</p>
<i>Interpretation of Tongues</i>	<p>This is an interpretation to a message given in other tongues. Many times in a church service, we worship the Lord in other tongues and we pray in other tongues. No interpretation is needed for these. But when someone stands up and gives a message in tongues to the congregation, it is a message from God which should have an interpretation. There can be exceptions. It is possible that the tongue was a directive to one person there who understood it.</p> <p>Interpretations are not a word-for-word translation of the message in tongues that came. It is basically the sense of the message. Sometimes two or three people will get the sense of what the Lord is saying by the Spirit of God. Paul encourages the church in chapter 14 to pray for the gift of "interpretation of tongues." Much of the church world rejects the gifts of the spirit and especially tongues. I have heard it argued that "tongues" were basically for the first century, and it was for the purpose of spreading the gospel to foreign nations. If this were so, what function does the gift of interpretation of tongues do? Does the interpreter tell the preacher what he just said? Or does he tell the congregation what they just heard - if they indeed heard the gospel in their own tongue? (This will be considered again in chapter 14).</p>

12:11 *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (Idios – 2398 Gr.)*

There are various giftings, but it is the same Spirit that imparts to every man uniquely as He will. In other words God gives to every man his own distinct flavor. People can have the same gift but it can operate with individuality.

Paul compares the body of Christ to the natural body

12:12 *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

When we consider our own human body, we do not think of ourselves in sections. We think of ourselves as being a total being. Every part of my body works together for the comfort of the whole. I do not want to see any part of my body uncomfortable because it's me. This is the mentality that Paul is trying to instill to the body of Christ!

12:13-14 *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. v.14 For the body is not one member, but many.*

The scriptures plainly tell us that we are buried with Him through the waters of baptism; and that we are risen with Him through the same. We are baptized into Christ – one body. The scripture also tells us that when we are saved, the Spirit of Christ enters our heart – one spirit. We are all made to drink into one spirit. (See Rom. 8:9) The human body is the same; it has many members that perform various functions, yet they are still a part of the main body.

12:15-17 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? v.16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? v.17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

We are beginning to see the problem that the Apostle is dealing with. Here is a church full of individuals who possessed certain gifts and they thought that “their” gift was the life flow to the church! How can one member become so exclusive that they don’t feel they need the other members of the body – that certainly is pride! Which member of your human body would you like to be without? The nose speaks of discernment. I am glad I have a nose, but I also am glad I have eyes and ears and a mouth and all the rest of my essentials.

12:18-20 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. v.19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? v.20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

Our human body is constructed so that every joint supplies to the whole. God ordained every part, every function and every mechanism of this body. The body does not function or live through the effort of one isolated member. It takes every member to make this body work properly; and the same is true of the body of Christ!

12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Not only was there certain exclusivity in this church; but there was a putting down of other members (or ministries) that were thought to be less admirable. After you are in the ministry for a while, you will come to appreciate verses like these. We have known people that thought they no longer needed the pastor!

The weaker members

12:22 *Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:*

When I was younger I didn't appreciate the need for fingernails. Then later on, while I was in the meat business, I picked up a fungus that finally infected nine of my fingers. I had that condition for about thirty years. It was embarrassing and at times it was painful. Sometimes I had a difficulty trying to pick things off the floor, such as a dime or a sheet of paper. I came to realize how needful these feeble members were. Thank God, they are now healed!

12:23 *And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.*

Allow me again to use the example of my fingernails: My nails were so unattractive that I spent a lot of time scrubbing them, sanding them and trimming them. They were so hideous that I worked on them, trying to make these uncomely members more comely!

God tempers His body

12:24-25 *For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: v.25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

Let us now come back to the body of Christ. Often times, God will give giftings to the

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weaker members just to keep them in the body. Some people have to feel like they are needed, or doing something, or else they wander off. It is interesting how we view people that have genuine gifts. We have a certain respect and admiration for them because we recognize the hand of God moving through their life! Sometimes, God even gives gifts to the rebellious for these reasons. If they didn't have that gift they would leave the church. (See Psa. 68:18.)

There are other cases where God gives unusual gifts to people simply because they are not greatly favored with natural endowments or graces. Perhaps they can't carry a tune or perhaps their personality is not the most becoming. Somebody related a story about a fellow who attended a certain seminary. He was a person that others avoided. He would walk around praying in tongues and the other students looked down on him. Then one day he emerged with a beautiful gift of "Discerning of spirits." Suddenly, he commanded a great respect from students and faculty because they recognized the anointing! God tempers His body so that there are no schisms – no big 'I' and little 'u'. The Lord wants there to a mutual care and sensitivity one for another.

12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

This is part of the purpose for the local church. It is to be a place where God's people can come and be ministered to and be appreciated. It is a place where God's people care for one another and can feel like they are a part! As Jesus Himself said: "that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." The church should be able to convince the world that Christ is real – through their love and unity!

12:27 *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

In conclusion of this section, every member should have a special place in the body of Christ. Every member should have a special place in our hearts because they are loved by God, and because God has a special task for them to fulfill.

Ministries in the church

12:28 *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

Obviously this is not a complete list of ministries within the church. Paul begins by mentioning ministry gifts: *apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers*. These do not fall into the category of spiritual gifts (See Eph. 4:11-12). The office of a prophet is not the same as having a gift of prophecy.

Paul then mentions spiritual gifts, but he sandwiches two other ministries in the middle: *helps* and *governments*. The ministry of “*helps*” is multifaceted and it simply means – “help.” I have a man in my church who told me that he was given the ministry of *helps*. He is there when I need someone. When there is painting or cleaning or moving to be done, he is there! He is there to assist the church in any way he can. Not too many want to claim this gift.

Governments – fall into the category of administration. The deacon board may fall into this category; they facilitate the upkeep of the building. However, I think this can be more appreciated when it comes to a Bible school or church organization that requires many employees. Although some may not see “the administrator” as being a very spiritual ministry, there are very few of these “spiritual people” who could oversee such a work!

12:29-30 *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? v.30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

Again, the apostle Paul is pointing to the diversity within the body of Christ. No, we do not all have the same gift or ministry or function. *“Do all speak with tongues?”* Here is a verse that people have used to argue that tongues are not the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. May I point out that these verses are still in conjunction with verse 28. We are considering the gift of tongues. As we have previously commented, the gift of tongues has a distinctly different purpose than that which we receive in the baptism. (See comments on the gift of tongues.)

Covet the best gifts and yet...

12:31 *But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.*

Covet earnestly the best gifts. This certainly is an injunction to seek for the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, Jesus encouraged us to seek these beautiful Holy Spirit gifts from the Father (See Luke 11:13.)

This last verse also introduces us to our next chapter and to the central text of this study: *“the more excellent way.”* All of these beautiful giftings do not profit us if we are void of the fruit of love. The difference between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit is that a carnal person can be given a gift; but the fruit of the Spirit is not given *perse'*; it is developed through the work of grace!



Chapter Thirteen

The more excellent way

Chapter 13 brings us to the main text of this book: “The more excellent way.” The more excellent way is love. Love is not just a feeling – love is the very nature and character of God. “God is love.” The Apostle pens very eloquently what love is and what love is not. Love is selfless and forgiving... love runs the distance, love never fails!

Now that we have a better understanding of the Corinthian church, we can even more appreciate *the love chapter*. Corinth was like a spiritual gong show. Many of the members were lifted up with pride and thought that the whole service revolved around their gift. They exalted self and bonged out others. So Paul begins: If I have all of these beautiful gifts and have not love, *I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

Without love, it's all empty

13:1 *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.* (Charity translates “love”)

A few years ago I was making a house call with another minister. As we were standing in the front room, the television was tuned into a program called “The Gong Show.” It was a talent show of some sort. If the audience didn’t like the contestant or

if the contestant made a mistake, they would have them “bonged” out. Perhaps half way through their act they would begin to “gong” them. Some contestants left the stage in tears. It was the cruelest program I have ever witnessed. But thus was Corinth; they were “bonging out” all those they felt to be inferior. Paul said, “Even if we speak in heavenly languages – the kind of utterance that sends chills down our spine – and yet don’t possess that beautiful fruit of love, it is like an empty sounding gong!”

13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

The scripture is filled with examples of gifted people who did exploits for the kingdom, but their heart was never exercised in the way of righteousness. They did not produce the fruits that God was desiring from their own life! Solomon had tremendous gifts and was a great preacher. Yet with all of his wisdom he was empty because he did not practice what he preached! The life of Christ (the Vine in him) was spoiled by the little foxes of lust, pride, and covetousness (Song 2:15). Balaam could just flow with prophecy – he died fruitless and empty!

Jesus himself substantiates this point in Matthew 7:21-23. People can have gifts of healing and miracles and yet at the end the Lord cannot discern them as His own! Let me say as a minister, that success in ministry is not the greatest satisfaction. (Not that I claim any great success). But there have been times when God has blessed and I am grateful. I remember one service in particular, where there were several hundred that made a commitment for Christ. But as I was driving home that night, my heart still felt empty and my heart was still crying out for a greater experience of knowing Him... being like Him, exhibiting the true fruit of the Vine – which is love.

13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

It is incredible what people can do for a cause and still not have true love in their hearts. It can all be done with ulterior motives and ignorance. One can end up a castaway after ministering to others (1 Cor. 9:27). We could use the famed Mother Theresa as an example of one who gave her life to minister to the poor in India. Her intent was to see the poor die with dignity. She forbade her staff to present the gospel to the sick and dying. It was strictly a humanitarian effort! She tried to make people feel better before they died and went to hell! This is not the love of Christ; and in the light of eternity it profits nothing!

Throughout the ages there have been people who have died for the “so called” Christian cause. The crusades are a good example of people dying for a cause that was not God’s – people dying in their ignorance, people who had never had the fruit of the Spirit developed in their life. It was all for nothing! I am not saying that all of these people went to hell, but they spent their life for nothing!

The apostle describes love

13:48 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, v.5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; v.6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; v.7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. v.8 Charity never faileth...

Let me say as a minister, that success in ministry is not the greatest satisfaction.

In these few verses we have a description of what love is, and what love is not:

<i>What love is all about</i>	<i>What love is not about</i>
1. Love suffers long – is willing to wait.	1. Love envies not – is not angered by another’s good fortune.
2. Love is kind – reaches out.	2. Love vaunts not itself – is not boastful.
3. Love rejoiceth in the truth.	3. Love is not puffed up – is not haughty.
4. Love bears all things – puts up with a lot.	4. Love does not behave unseemly – is not disrespectful.
5. Love believeth all things – Faith is grounded in love (Eph. 3:17).	5. Love does not seek its own – not pushing its own agenda.
6. Love hopeth all things – It hopes because of love itself.	6. Love is not easily provoked – is not easily irritated.
7. Love endureth all things – It runs the distance.	7. Love thinks no evil – is not suspicious.
8. Love never fails – because God is love.	8. Love does not rejoice in iniquity – David wept when Saul died!
<i>The Corinthians were missing on every point.</i>	

All of these descriptions of what love is, and what love is not could warrant a sermon. But to summarize love into a sentence: Love is giving and at the same time it is a denial of self. For God so loved... that He gave! Had Christ not possessed every attribute of love mentioned here, He would not have gone to the cross! Christ became poor to make us rich. He emptied Himself of all that He had for our benefit. The Apostle Paul was also like this. I don't think that Paul could have fathered the Corinthian church had he not been filled with the beautiful fruits of love.

The perfecting of love

Love is called the bond of perfection in Colossians 3:14. After all, love is not the beginning of our experience, but it is the ultimate of our experience! God spends a lifetime perfecting His love in us. Christ went to the cross because of His love for the Father and for us. For us, it works the other way; it is only to the degree that we go to the cross (die to self) that His love can flow from us. Peter was eating with the Gentiles, but he withdrew when the Jewish brethren came. Paul later admonished him for this act, and cautioned that our love must be without hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-14). Peter was not made perfect in love. There has to be an outworking of the fruit of love; and of course Peter later gives us the steps to this in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

All around the hem of the priest's robe were golden bells and pomegranates (Ex. 28:33-35). Bells speak of gifts, and the pomegranates speak of love. As the high priest would go behind the veil, the people knew that he was alive because of the ringing bells. The gifts bear witness that Christ still lives; and the fruit of love tells the world that Christianity still lives!

The Pomegranate

Love is not a gift. It is a fruit (Gal. 5:22-23). This is what the Corinthians needed to develop. In the Old Testament, the pomegranate was symbolic of the fruit of love. The only edible part of the pomegranate is the seeds. Love contains all of the other seeds, or the fruits of the Spirit. If we examine this chapter carefully we will find all of the other eight fruits used to describe love. They are the seeds that constitute and make up the fruit of love.

** There are eight attributes that incorporate the chief fruit, which is Love (Gal. 5:22-23).*

1.	Joy	Rejoiceth in truth.
2.	Peace	Not easily provoked.
3.	Longsuffering	Suffers long.
4.	Gentleness	Is kind.
5.	Goodness	Seeks not its own, seeks to benefit others.
6.	Faith	Believeth all things.
7.	Meekness	Not puffed up.
8.	Temperance	Doth not behave unseemly (self-control).

Possessing the gifts does not profit if we do not at least have some evidence of the fruit of love – that is, the fruit of the Spirit!

Gifts fail - but love never fails

13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Anybody who has been in Pentecost for a while knows that the gifts are not fail proof because they are demonstrated through men who are very capable of error. The gifts of the Spirit have their time and purpose. There is no evidence in scripture to support that those spiritual gifts will operate in the next age, that is, the Millennial Age. The gifts of the Spirit are for the Church Age, and they will cease when our blessed Lord reigns upon earth with His Saints. But one thing is certain: love will never fail! We have heard prophecies that did fail; in fact, we might have given some ourselves that failed. But have we ever shown love to anybody that we later regretted? We can't misfire showing the love of Christ to people!

13:9-10 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. v.10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

Some use these verses to say that gifts were for the early church and now that we have the Word we no longer need the gifts. Some use these verses to say that what God wants is love, and the gifts are no longer necessary. May I say from (modest) experience, traveling through various parts of the world, that I have not seen a church yet that I considered to be "made perfect in love!"

The church has been growing these (almost 2000) years; and the scripture fully supports the fact that the Lord will have a completed church. The last day church must come into the full

stature of Christ even as Adam emerged on the sixth day in the image of God. There will emerge from the church a perfected (completed body) that will reign with Christ! However, the ultimate perfection comes when we shall see Him, and then we shall know perfectly!

The gifts of the Spirit are for the Church Age, or for the age of the Spirit. In the next dispensation the gifts are no longer needed to attest to His resurrection – every eye shall see Him!

It's time to grow up

13:11 *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

If we apply this verse to the gifts of the Spirit and say that the gifts are childish things, then certainly we haven't even gotten the grasp on the childish things yet. Most of the church world doesn't fully understand the gifts or demonstrate the gifts. In fact, we are crying out for a greater realization of them. If any man was perfected in the love of Christ, Paul was – and yet Paul certainly exercised the gifts!

No, I think what Paul is addressing here is the immaturity of these Corinthian (babes). Here were "Christians" who were fighting over gifts, and who were filled with pride and envy and bad manners. Paul is saying, "It's time to grow up into the love of Christ – *The more excellent way!* It's time to start acting like mature Christians!"

We see Him vaguely

13:12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

The greater revelation we have of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). Some years ago I had a dream in which I was looking through distorted glass. The Lord was on the other side, and I was desperately trying to see Him.

God wants all the distortion removed from us, in the sense of being transparent and without any pretense.

I was pressing my face next to the glass and trying to see more of Him, but I could not. I could only see Him in a very distorted way. Then the Lord seemed to impress upon me this verse: *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face...* The thing that keeps us from seeing the Lord is the distortion in ourselves. When the distortion is taken out of us and we put away the childish things, then we can see Him clearly as He is. The Lord is working out the distortions in our lives.

The Lord knows us very well, but he wants to bring us into a relationship with Him. This is where we are transformed, as we see Him.

The book of Job talks about the breakings in life that purify us. This is actually how fine glass (without distortion) is produced. There is much grinding, breaking down, and melting. God wants all the distortion removed from us, in the sense of being transparent and without any pretense. New Jerusalem is the habitation of the Bride. The city is clear as crystal and as transparent as glass (Rev. 21:9-11). There is a deep working in our lives to bring us to this place. (See Job 41:25.)

13:13 *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

Faith is produced by hearing from God. *Hope* comes from knowing God – though He hasn't spoken, yet experience causes us to hope. Hope is greater than faith! But *love* is the greatest virtue, because love is the divine nature – God is Love! God's love never fails; and as we are perfected in this love, we shall never fail!

* Peter gives us the steps to have this love worked out in 2 Peter 1:5-10. He concludes that if we would do these things, we would never fall!



Chapter Fourteen

Church Order

Chapter 12 ended like this: *“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.”* Covet spiritual gifts, and yet I show you the more excellent way of love... Paul then proceeds in chapter 13 to show us that the fruit of love far outweighs the spiritual gifts! But then, chapter 14 begins with this exhortation: *“Follow after (love), and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.”* I am sure that Paul (in the wisdom of God) did this just to keep these dear believers from swinging the other direction, thinking, “Well, Paul is saying we don’t need the gifts, just love etc.” No, Paul wanted them to be balanced in every part of their experience!

One of the primary purposes of the first letter was to establish church order. The body ministry in Corinth was way out of line! There was one tongue after another without an interpretation. There were others who thought that the gifts were to operate with spontaneity. In other words, whenever a believer felt something, he stood up and gave it. We can only imagine the chaos this created when five or six people all felt inspired at the same time. To add to this, the women were chattering back and forth, “Well what does he mean by that?”

Paul commends order and lays down a few cardinal rules for the church. May the Lord give us understanding, and may we be edified as we study this chapter together!

Seek to edify the church

14:1 *Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*

The word – *follow* means to pursue, to press toward with intensity. Yea, aspire to the Divine Nature of love; pursue the attributes of the Divine Nature; *and desire spiritual gifts!* Let us consider again the symbolism of the bells and the pomegranates that we mentioned in chapter 13. Around the hem of the priest's robe were golden bells and pomegranates (Ex. 28:33-35). Bells speak of gifts, and the pomegranates speak of love. As the high priest would go beyond the veil, the bells would testify that he was alive. Likewise, the gifts testify that our High Priest is still alive. The pomegranates also testify that our Christ still lives. (As the song goes, "And they will know that we are Christians by our love – by our love!")

On the hem of the priest's robe was a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, and a pomegranate – continuing around the circumference. Do you see the balance here? The Lord wants both the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit to be manifested from His body, the church.

14:1c *"But rather that ye may prophesy."*

Now Paul accentuates the gift of prophecy, "but especially prophecy!" As we shall see in subsequent verses, prophecy edifies the church.

Prophecy is an unction from the Spirit of God that foretells things; it can also reveal the past and the present. It can speak to individuals or to the corporate body. It can bring comfort, exhortation, direction and sometimes warnings (See 1 Tim. 1:18, Acts 11:28).

14:2-4 *For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. v.3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. v.4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.*

Let us again differentiate the manifestation of tongues:

- A. The initial evidence when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit
- B. The language we can pray with or worship with – no interpretation necessary
- C. The gift of tongues – a message spoken to an individual or to the corporate body – The latter needs to have an interpretation.

Paul clearly tells us that tongues is a prayer language, or a worship language that is directed to God. (See Acts 10:45-46.) In the Spirit we are praying and releasing things that we are incognizant of! We are also told in Romans 8:26, that we do not know how to pray for things as we ought, but the Spirit makes intercession for us. I believe that part of this can be realized as we pray in tongues. We are speaking mysteries. We are speaking into situations that we are totally unaware of! There is also an edification of the suppliant. We are rolling off a burden, and we are being strengthened! *“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost...”* (Jude 1:20).

The problem that Paul is addressing here is disruption and chaos. There was one tongue after another being blurted out (perhaps even simultaneously) and there was no interpretation. The church was not being edified, in fact, it was being weakened. Paul’s exhortation is to see the church edified; therefore, he encourages prophecy. Prophecy strengthens, exhorts, and comforts.

Praying in tongues

Let us again consider the legitimate use of tongues that requires no interpretation: In our prayer meetings, someone generally leads in prayer and the others are softly praying in tongues supplementing that prayer. Sometimes, we have a need that we do not even know how to address; I then encourage all of our people to pray in the Spirit together. Yes, we are all praying in tongues; we are all addressing a particular need, it is unto God alone and there is power as we do so.

Worshiping in tongues

Our church also worships the Lord in other tongues: Often time as we are concluding a song of praise, we all respond together worshiping the Lord in other tongues. It is very beautiful, it is very harmonious and there is no interpretation necessary. Perhaps this is what the famed Charles Wesley meant when he wrote: "O for a thousand tongues to sing my Great Redeemers praise..." Our limited language cannot fully express the greatness of our God!

Tongues do not profit the body unless they be understood

14:5 *I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*

Paul clearly sanctions the gift of tongues, but he encourages them to proceed to the greater realm of prophecy. This is one thing about the *spiritual gifts* that is different from the *ministry gifts*; we are encouraged to seek for the best gifts. We cannot seek for the ministry gifts (perhaps with the exception of pastor).

14:5b *Except he interpret...*

The gift of *interpretation* of tongues is equal to the gift of prophecy. Paul's main concern is that the church receive spiritual enrichment. What is this gift all about? This gift gives the sense of the message that was proclaimed in tongues. It is not necessarily a word for word recitation, but rather the sense of the message given in tongues. Perhaps, one person in the congregation has a very limited vocabulary; they move in the sphere of about 2-3,000 words. Another person in the group is much more eloquent, he moves in the sphere of about 60-70,000 words. You can believe that the interpretation from the second person will be far more embellished than that of the first.

I had an evangelist friend who told of an experience that he had in his youth. He grew up in the Catholic Church, but one day he decided to attend a Pentecostal church, just to mock! While he was there, there was a tongue and somebody interpreted that tongue. It just so happened that the tongue was in Latin, and this young man knew Latin. He was actually converted through this experience!

14:6-9 *Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? v.7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? v.8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? v.9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.*

When I was a boy, I went to visit my father who lived in Boston. While I was there, I accompanied him to the Catholic

Church. The whole service was in Latin. I did not understand one word spoken. It was totally boring! I think these verses are clear enough; if we don't get the message it profits nothing.

14:10-11 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. v.11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

I am not sure exactly how many language groups there are in the world, I think there are about 1000. But suppose you were visiting some primitive tribe in the isles of Borneo. They surely do not understand one word you say, and you surely don't understand one word they say. Yes, what they said had meaning, but you simply did not understand it. To them you are a barbarian and likewise, they to you. Can you see the Corinthian church service – distracted with many strange voices?

14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

The word *edify* is used at least 6 times in this chapter (various ramifications of the word). Is not this the very purpose of the spiritual gifts – to profit the whole body of Christ? (See 1 Cor. 12:7) This should be the driving force, to be a blessing to the church!

Pray for the gift of interpretation

14:13-14 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. v.14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

This verse could apply to our private communion with God, as well as our public ministry to the body of Christ. We are being encouraged to seek for the interpretation of this unknown language to God. I believe that God wants us to have the sense of what we are speaking or praying. The word *prayer* is now being used (v. 14). We could pray for hours and never have the comprehension of what we are praying: "*My understanding is unfruitful.*"

14:15-16 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. v.16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

If we put this into the context of the previous verses, we are being told to seek for the gift of interpretation, that we might accompany that *song in the Spirit* with a song of understanding. For those of you that have never heard someone sing in tongues, it can be a very lovely song. But there needs to be an interpretation. Someone will respond to that song with another song, giving the understanding. Likewise in prayer: there are times when a prayer is given in tongues before the whole congregation and there should be a prayer of understanding that follows. Otherwise, the congregation cannot say, amen!

When there is a call for an *interpretation* it is because there has been a singular message given by the Spirit to the congregation. It could come in the form of an exhortation, a song or a prayer. The only exception to this might be when God is specifically speaking to someone in the group who knows that language.

14:17 *For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.*

In other words, it may be a beautiful oration in tongues, but no one is edified by it.

14:18-19 *I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: v.19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.*

I can see the apostle Paul as he traveled down many a road; undoubtedly, he spent many hours praying and worshiping the Lord in tongues. However, in the church Paul's main concern was that they fully understood and got the message. Ten thousand words that we can't understand doesn't help us too much. From this, we can understand why the church stayed in the Dark Ages for so long. The message was in Latin, the common folk did not hear the liberating truth of the gospel, and thus they remained in the dark.

I once visited an island in the South China Sea. The missionary stationed there would gather his students every day and speak to them in English. He kept saying: "they're getting it... they're getting it." They weren't getting it! One of the staff members that could speak the native tongue told me: "They're not getting it!" *I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.*

14:20 *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.*

In other words, be men when it comes to understanding. Paul had a fervent desire for his converts to grow into the things of God, to come to maturity and perfection. On the other hand,

be babes (be simple) towards evil. As the scripture says: “unto the pure all things are pure.”

Tongues were specifically a sign to the Jews

14:21-22 *In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. v.22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.*

We may find all of the miracles in the Old Testament in some form, but there is never a case where tongues are evidenced.

Paul is quoting from Isaiah 28:11-12, from the Septuagint (or Greek Version of the Old Testament). The King James reads: “*For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.*” These verses were prophetic of the baptism in the Holy Ghost and speaking in other tongues. This experience brings rest to the weary. It is God's refreshing for His people, yet the Lord foresaw that many of His people would not receive it.

This is interesting because the unbeliever in this case is the Jew. This was an irrefutable sign to the Jew – speaking in tongues. We may find all of the miracles in the Old Testament in some form, but there is never a case where tongues are evidenced. There was never a manifestation of tongues until the day of Pentecost. The feast of Pentecost was initiating the Church Age and the Jews would reject the move!

The feast of Pentecost

As we have previously stated, all of the 7 feasts can be found in the Corinthian epistles in some form. Paul mentions the Feast of Pentecost in 1 Corinthians 16:8 only in name. However, the Corinthian epistles address the phenomena of Pentecost more than any other New Testament book. Verses 21 – 22 are a good example of this; speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit, and of course this phenomena began on the feast of Pentecost.

Prophecy edifies the church

14:22b But prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

In the context of these verses, the Jews would reject the spirit of prophecy as well. The gift of prophecy was given for enrichment to the church, and it would also be a witness to the unsaved. We shall see this in the following verses:

14:23-25 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? v.24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: v.25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

There is no contradiction here; the unbeliever in these verses is referring to the unsaved, not the Jew! The unsaved man is convinced that God is real because the spirit of prophecy reveals his heart. Revelation 19:10 says, "The testimony of Jesus

is the spirit of prophecy.” Prophecy is Christ speaking His mind through you unto others. It is amazing that such a carnal church could have such profound gifts. But that enlightens us on many issues, for example: gifts do not substantiate one’s character!

Some years ago, my wife and I went to separate churches. She was not at all convinced about the Pentecostal experience. Then one night she accompanied me to the Pentecostal church where I attended. After arriving at the church, we learned that we were to have a guest speaker that night. The visiting minister was late so he just stepped up to the pulpit to preach. About half way through his message he stopped and singled my wife and my self out and began to prophesy over us. Well, little did he know that he was revealing the very (unusual) conversation my wife and I had on the way to church. That night my wife was converted to Pentecost. Her heart was thoroughly exposed: *“he is convinced of all, he is judged of all...”*

Paul lays down the ground rules

14:26 *How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.*

<i>A psalm</i>	a spiritual song
<i>A doctrine</i>	a teaching
<i>A revelation</i>	some revealed truth
<i>A gift</i>	tongue, interpretation

Certainly we can appreciate the zeal of these new converts. They all had something from the Lord and they all wanted to share their gift with the body. The problem was that they all wanted to share their little treasure at the same time. They were all kind of vying for position (with a lot of un-channeled energy.) Confusion is not edifying.

Hold at three

14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

Paul puts a boundary of three tongues (maximum) until they were interpreted. The best manner is when there is a tongue, there is an immediate interpretation. This does not imply that there are only to be three tongues during the whole service; but no more than three until the interpretation follows.

14:28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

There were many manifestations of tongues during the Welsh revival. They finally put a check on them because they were not sure how to handle the situation. The Welsh revival was very Pentecostal!

This verse certainly refutes the idea that tongues were to promote the gospel. Actually, the common language was Greek, and all of the empire spoke Greek as a second language. (See comments in chapter 12 on *interpretation of tongues*.)

This verse is often misapplied to praying in the Spirit or worshipping in the Spirit: When the whole church is worshipping the

Lord in other tongues there does not need to be an interpretation! This verse only applies to one who is giving a message in tongues to the church.

When the whole church is worshipping the Lord in other tongues there does not need to be an interpretation!

Prophecy must be judged

14:29 *Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.*

There is a difference between a “church prophet” (one who has the gift of prophecy) and one who has the office of a prophet (one of the five-fold ministry gifts) (Eph. 4:11-13). The Lord does not want His people to be gullible—to accept everything that is spoken. In fact, we are exhorted to try the spirits: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”* (1 John 4:1).

The Spirit and the Word agree, and this is why there are appointed leaders. A leader must be espoused to the Word and be in tune with the Spirit. It is his responsibility to guard the flock!

Once, during the charismatic renewal there was a gathering (many there were Catholics) during which a prophecy was given, magnifying the mother of Jesus. Most of the people there did not know the Word well enough to judge left or right. One dear Christian woman who knew her Bible stood up and set them straight.

We have power to control the unction

14:30-32 *If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. v.31 For ye may all prophesy one by*

one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. v.32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

Again, Paul is dealing with disruptions: The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. That means that we have the power of containing ourselves. Every time we feel an unction, or have a vision or have a word come to us is not the license to stand up and let go. We have the power to hold our revelation until the other member is seated. Do you see the problem here? There could be three or four people taking the floor at the same time. Paul said: *“ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.”*

14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

May I again point to the duty of the minister. As a minister (pastor), we are in charge of the service and it is up to us to teach God’s order to the congregation. Paul said (in essence),
 “This is the rule for all the churches of the saints.” The shepherd must bring his flock into rest!

If this verse literally meant that women could not pray or prophesy or preach, then we have a lot of scripture to reconcile.

Woman talking in church

14:34-35 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. v.35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak [talk] in the church.

To add to the other distractions, the women were calling across the aisle to their

husbands: "Well, could you explain that?" Traveling in Europe, we can still see some of the problem that existed many years ago. In some places, the women sit on one side and the men on the other side, and there is chatter. I have been told by some who have been in Greece that the problem still exists there; the women call across the aisle to their husbands' etc. "Let them ask their husbands at home."

How often has this verse limited the ladies from any form of expression. If this verse literally meant that women could not pray or prophesy or preach, then we have a lot of scripture to reconcile. I heard one rather well known minister declare that women should not even sing a solo in church.

Philip the evangelist had four daughters, which did prophesy (Acts 21:8-9). (This is also a subject that we previously considered in chapter 11.) Certainly women are allowed to express their gifts in church as well as men, or else the Spirit of God made a mistake by giving gifts to women. Katherine Kuhlman had a tremendous gift of healing; over 100,000 people claimed healing in her services.

The word "speak" is best translated, "talk" (2980 *Laleo* Gr.).

14:36-37 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? v.37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

This verse gives us an insight into the spiritual pride in Corinth. Here were Christians that had only been walking with the Lord a short time and they thought that they were God's special oracle on earth. In fact, some thought they knew more than the apostle Paul. Paul said, "If you are truly spiritual than you will acknowledge these things to be commandments from the Lord!"

14:38 *But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

This could translate, "If any wants to be ignorant." Here is an interesting phenomenon – the ignorant usually continue to be so. God gives wisdom to the wise, but the foolish will reject wisdom.

Covet to prophesy

14:39-40 *Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. v.40 Let all things be done decently and in order.*

Let us consider Paul's emphasis on the gifts:

- ◆ *14:39 Covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.*
- ◆ *14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied.*
- ◆ *14:14 Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.*
- ◆ *14:1 Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*
- ◆ *12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts.*

And to this we might add what Jesus said: *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"*(Luke 11:13).

Clearly, Paul's "love chapter" did not annul the need for spiritual gifts. *"And forbid not to speak with tongues."* Over

the centuries many revivals have forbade the gift of tongues simply because they could not explain it. May God give us the wisdom to direct God's people into the way of blessing and edification!

In First Thessalonians 5:19-20 Paul says: "*Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings.*" Prophecy, tongues, and all the other gifts of the Spirit are available to the Church today. Let us earnestly desire spiritual gifts. These gifts are given for the purpose of edifying the Church.

* This particular chapter was given to promote acceptance and order in the function of spiritual gifts; and to promote tranquility in the church.



Chapter Fifteen

Hope of the resurrection

Chapter fifteen is the most comprehensive chapter in scripture on the subject of the resurrection. The resurrection was one of the Apostle Paul's basic and cardinal teachings to the church. If the resurrection of the dead can be denied, that means that the sting of death prevails; and we are still in our sins. (The sting of death is sin, verse 56).

The denial of the resurrection was one of the heresies in Corinth. In this chapter Paul gives us a very clear picture of this rebirth into the eternal kingdom. The theologian even uses nature as an example and exposes the fallacy of those who disbelieve. A seed must be sown in the ground and die before it brings forth new life. As one star differs from another in glory, so is it in the resurrection. Paul shows that believers have varying degrees in the resurrection. But even a greater mystery lies ahead; we who are alive at His coming shall be changed instantaneously, in the twinkling of an eye!

A Lutheran man once told me about an encounter he had with death. He had died on the operating table, and he went to heaven. He saw the gates of pearl and an angel met him there at the closed gate. The angel said: "You cannot come in here because you are not ready. You have rejected the offering that God gave." He was given another chance. He said, "When I came back I really changed my life." The life hereafter is very real. We should live each day with eternity in mind.

The Apostle reiterates his teaching

15:1-2 *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; v.2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

Paul is not declaring anything on parchment that he had not already declared unto them verbally. Our faith is consummated when we receive and believe the word spoken to us. However, it is possible to cast away the truths that we once embraced and make void our faith (cf. 2 Pet. 2:20-22).

15:3 *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

Again, Paul is reiterating one of his cardinal doctrines of the faith – Christ died for our sins. The *scriptures* that are mentioned in this verse would have to be Old Testament scripture. Just to mention a few:

- ◆ Exodus 12:3-13 – (1 Cor. 5:7)
- ◆ Numbers 21:8 – (John 3:14-15)
- ◆ Isaiah 53:5-9
- ◆ Daniel 9:26
- ◆ Zechariah 13:7 – (Mark 14:27)

15:4 *And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

The burial and resurrection was not only necessary to complete the redemptive work, but to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies as well. Just to list a few O.T. references:

- ◆ Psalm 16:9-10 – (Acts 2:27)
- ◆ Psalm 49:15
- ◆ Jonah 2:1-10 – (Matt. 12:40)
- ◆ Isaiah 26:19 – (Matt. 27:52-53)
- ◆ Isaiah 53:9-10 – (Matt. 27:57-60)

The witnesses

15:5 *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:*

This was fulfilled in Luke 24:34 and in Luke 24:36-43.

15:6 *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.*

This is the only reference to the 500 witnesses. The number 500 speaks of *abundance of grace*.

15:7 *After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*

Tradition holds that the James mentioned here is the half brother of our Lord. “*All of the apostles*” would seem to indicate others besides the twelve. There were others in the New Testament who were called apostles. Perhaps some of them were of the seventy. Barnabus was called an apostle and is thought by some to have been one of the seventy. This seems to be one of the prerequisites of an apostle – they have seen the Lord.

There is a big movement on today where many are lauded as “an apostle.” There is a very general interpretation to the word “apostle.” Even a missionary can fit the interpretation of a “sent one.” But in truth, the apostolic ministry has a very

high criterion. It is the highest ministry, and those who are true apostles have the life and the power to back up their message! Paul said: *“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience...”* (2 Cor. 12:12).

15:8 *And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

Paul also saw the resurrected Christ and was converted! (If there had ever been an unbeliever it was Paul!) The latter part of this verse could read: *“before the due time.”* Although Paul’s message has relevant application for every generation, many see the apostle as a particular messenger to the last day church. Paul has a unique emphasis on the end times, the perfection and glorification of the church, the rapture, etc. These all have special application to those living at the end of the age.

Although Paul’s message has relevant application for every generation, many see the apostle as a particular messenger to the last day church.

Paul attributes all to grace

15:9-10 *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. v.10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

Paul’s life pictures *the true grace* more than any other New Testament figure. Paul (Saul) persecuted the church with a passion. It is said that this “Saul of Tarsus” was responsible for having at least 10,000 Christians incarcerated, and for persecuting others

to the death. But then Saul experienced a very dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, and the church that he had labored to destroy he now labored to build. Herein is an example of true grace! (cf. Acts 22:3-21, Gal. 1:23).

15:11 *Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.*

Paul is saying, "It does not matter who preached – whether I or the other apostles – ye now believe." (Faith cometh by hearing the Word.)

Heresies concerning the resurrection

15:12 *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

One of the heresies of the Corinthian church concerned the resurrection. Some were saying that Christ had not risen. There were also other heretical teachings on the resurrection:

- ◆ There was the teaching that the resurrection was past – (2 Tim. 2:18).
- ◆ Some taught that the resurrection is not literal – they were spiritualizing it away.
- ◆ There was the Gnostic teaching of a secret resurrection.
- ◆ There were other clouded teachings such as "soul sleep," etc.

If there be no resurrection - your faith is in vain

15:13-16 *But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: v.14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our*

preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. v.15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. v.16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised...

In order to complete the redemptive plan, Christ had to arise from the dead. (Otherwise the sting of death would have prevailed!) Christ is called the *Firstfruits* from the dead in verse 20. That means that He was the pattern or the sample of those who shall rise in the resurrection. Therefore, if our pattern (our forerunner) did not rise, surely we have no hopes of the resurrection either! That also means that we are false witnesses; that means that the saintly apostles, the holy women, and the 500 are all lying! That also means that it has all been for nothing; our preaching has all been for nothing and your faith is all for nothing!

15:17-18 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. v.18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

Consider all of the implications here. If Christ did not rise then we are yet sinners! If the sting of death is sin, (v.56) then sin won. Sin brought us to the grave, but Christ did not triumph over sin or the grave if He did not rise. He had to conquer death and be resurrected to break the power of sin and the grave!

I just had a graveside service four days ago. I began by declaring that sin had brought us to this place, and if Christ had not risen from the dead then we go to the grave as sinners. Christ's victory over the grave gives us the hope of victory over sin and the grave! (That is for those who have committed their life to Him.)

15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

There are several ways that we could view this verse; but let us be generous and suppose that what Paul meant was that it is only during our lifetime that we have the hope that Christ would come and give us the power of eternal life. In other words, once we are dead, all hope is gone and we will perish. That would be a miserable prospect, especially for the older saints.

Christ the Firstfruits from the dead

15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

But now is Christ risen as the firstfruits. Christ not only died on a feast day, (Passover) but He also was resurrected on the feast of "The Sheaf of the Firstfruits" (Lev. 23:10-14). The feast of Pentecost (which means 50) was fifty days after the feast of the Firstfruits. There were 50 days between Firstfruits and Pentecost. The feast of Firstfruits was basically an agricultural feast. The husbandman would take a sheaf of the barley harvest and wave it before the Lord. It was a kind of thank-offering and also an invocation for God's blessing on the harvest that was to follow.

Christ was the sample fruit from the dead. There were also a few others who were literally resurrected at that time to fulfill the scripture. A sheaf is a bundle – a token amount. (c.f. Isa. 26:19, Matt. 27:50-53) This is why Jesus told Mary not to touch Him, because he had not yet ascended. He had to be accepted by God the Father and could not be touched by human hands. Later that day Jesus invited His disciple to touch Him because He had ascended and had been accepted as "The Firstfruits."

*We fulfill this feast when we are risen with Him through the waters of baptism.

15:21 *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

Paul later expounds upon the two Adams – the one from earth who brought us death, and the One from Heaven who brought us life. The thought continues in the next verse:

15:22 *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Perhaps it doesn't seem fair that because of the sin of one, we must all die. But, there is also the hope that is set before us: in Christ we can all be made alive! Those who accept the opportunity of the "second birth" will not experience the "second death!"

15:23 *But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*

There is an order in the resurrection. This is also expounded upon later in the chapter. Some translators put the comma after Christ: "*Christ, the firstfruits...*"

- ◆ Christ
- ◆ The Firstfruits
- ◆ Those at His coming

This certainly had a partial fulfillment at the time of His resurrection (See Matt. 27:50-53). But it is also clear from Revelation 14, that there is a firstfruit company that will have precedence at the end.

The extended ministry of Christ throughout the millennium

15:24 *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.*

We are now looking at the end of the Millennial Age and the great resurrection that takes place at that time. At the end of the millennium, the Great White Throne judgment takes place, and all that have ever lived will be bodily resurrected (Rev. 20).

In the following four verses, we have a little synopsis of the extended ministry of Christ throughout the millennium. Christ will put all enemies under His feet before He presents the totally restored kingdom back to the Father:

15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Everything must eventually be subject unto Him. The book of Hebrews declares that He sits at the right hand of the Father until His enemies become His footstool. Part of that must be realized through the Church (which is His body). It is through the Church that there shall be a great defeat of the enemy! (c.f. Heb. 10:12-13, Rom. 16:20)

15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Death continues through the millennium because there is still sin in the millennium (cf. Isa. 65:20).

15:27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

All is put under the domain of Christ with the exception of God the Father, who gave all authority to Christ.

15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

After the millennial reign and the "Great White Throne judgment," Christ will still be subject unto God the Father. It is

important to realize the chain of command; some segments of Christianity do not recognize God the Father.

Baptism a type of death and resurrection

15:29 *Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?*

“Baptized for the dead” is an inference to Christ from verse 15. What purpose would there be to be baptized into Christ if Christ rose not? The whole concept of water baptism is to identify with the death and resurrection of Christ. (Rom 6:4) *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* We come up from the waters of baptism to walk in the newness of life. Why would we do this if the dead rise not?

15:30 *And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?*

Why would we hazard our lives for a cause that is not even true, if indeed it were not true? Paul is taking the advocate position, showing the Corinthians the inconsistency of those who said, “The dead rise not.”

15:31-32 *I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. v.32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.*

Verse 31 might better read: *“I protest by your rejoicing which you have in Christ...”* The “I” is not in the original text. Paul is still addressing a segment of “believers” who were saying: “the dead rise not.” Why rejoice if the dead rise not? I die daily for

the cause of Christ... I have wrestled with beasts at Ephesus (evil spirits). What advantage do I have in doing all of this if the dead rise not? We might as well live for this life and enjoy all the pleasure we can.

Paul is quoting Isaiah 22:13, (v. 32b) which has the implication of casting off restraint and living like the world.

Evil associations

15:33 *Be not deceived: evil (communications) corrupt good manners.*

Evil *associations* corrupt our morals, corrupt our doctrine and affect our position in Christ. Here is a thought repeated many times in scripture. Wrong associations affect our thinking; they cloud our judgment. The good king Jehoshaphat corrupted the kingdom through his wrong alliance with Ahab.

15:34 *Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.*

We are known by the company that we keep. Our associations affect us in a major way. When Paul said: *some have not the knowledge of God...* this particular form of the word (knowledge) comes from the Greek word - *agnosia*. This is where we get our word, agnostic. If we associate with agnostics, that says something about our character. The famed missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson, once claimed atheistic beliefs because of his association with an atheist during his college years. He later repented after he observed the untimely death of his friend. His friend died being greatly tormented and tantalized by demons that had come to take him home.

*If we
associate
with
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Paul explains how the natural laws reveal the spiritual

15:35-36 *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? v.36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:*

One of the first laws of creation is that every seed will bring forth life after its kind.

Paul is now going to absolve all doubts on the subject of life from the dead by showing how the natural realm reveals the spiritual realm. One of the first laws of creation is that every seed will bring forth life after its kind (Gen. 1:11-12). A seed must first be planted to begin the germination process. It must rot (break-down) in the ground and then out of that corruption springs new life.

15:37-38 *And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: v.38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.*

Again, we look to the laws of Genesis: every seed reproduces itself. An apple seed brings forth an apple tree and eventually an apple. A thorn will resurrect a thorn!

15:39 *All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.*

What Paul is eventually going to prove through this lesson is that there are distinctions in the resurrection. Every beast is going to reproduce itself. We are not going to die a sinner and be resurrected a saint. The law of genetics proves that we are going to pass on our strengths and weaknesses to the next generation.

The point being that a weak Christian will be resurrected “a weak Christian.” (This is in regards to his eternal place!)

15:40-42 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. v.41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. v.42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

Now, Paul is comparing the distinction between physical bodies upon earth, with the distinctions of the celestial panorama. Some celestial bodies are very brilliant and very clear. Other celestial bodies are very faint, very distant. Some are almost invisible. We are getting a picture of how it shall be in the resurrection; there will be many distinctions:

Some will be called great	Matt. 5:19.
Some will be called least	Matt. 5:19.
Some will have a crown, some will have none	Rev. 3:11.
Some will have rewards, others will have none	1 Cor. 3:14-15.
Some will have positions; others will have none	Matt. 25:19-28.
Some will have an eternal name	Psa. 45:17.
Some will have a closer dwelling to the throne, others will be distant	Num. 24:17.

*...and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:
(Heb 11:35)*

15:42b *It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:*

In the second part of verse 42, Paul is alluding to our physical bodies. Our natural bodies will decay and rot in the grave, but in the resurrection we shall come forth with an immortal body. The following verses elaborate more fully:

15:43-44 *It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: v.44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

The natural body dies, often of disease or infirmity or perhaps even reproached by the world (Heb. 11:36-38). But it shall be raised in glory and power! Jesus demonstrated the resurrected (spiritual body). He broke bread with them, they touched Him, and then He walked through the wall!

The two Adams

15:45 *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

The two Adams are in reference to the one who was made of the dust, and the Other who came down from heaven. The first Adam brought us back to the dust through his fall; the second Adam has the power to bring us up from the dust through His resurrection. Paul gives greater clarity to the two Adams in Romans 5:12-21.

First the natural - then the spiritual

15:46 *Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.*

The principle of "first the natural and then the spiritual" helps us to understand many concepts.

This particular verse is one of the key verses in the realm of Bible hermeneutics. (Bible hermeneutics is the science of interpreting scripture. There are keys within the Word itself, which help to unlock its sacred pages.) The principle of *"first the natural and then the spiritual"* helps us to understand many concepts. For example, the Old Testament journey of Israel helps us to understand our spiritual walk of faith. There will be battles, temptations, and the kind of tests that the ancient pilgrims faced before entering the promised land. Of course, Paul is using the natural realm of creation to help us to understand spiritual principles, namely, the resurrection.

* Note: Even natural Israel helps us to identify what is happening in spiritual Israel – the church.

15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

Again, we are contrasting Adam and Christ. In the book of Hebrews 2:6-10, we find a good analogy of Adam and Christ. Adam lost the crown because of disobedience, Christ showed us how we can regain the crown through the cross.

15:48-49 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. v.49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Adam represents mortal man. Christ represents immortal man. We have been subjected to the weakness of man because of Adam's fall. But in Christ we shall possess the triumphant nature and immortality!

15:50 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

Simply put, we cannot enter the heavenly realm in our mortal body. This mortal body is doomed to decay and ultimately deteriorate in the grave.

In Christ we have victory over sin and the grave

15:51-53 *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, v.52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. v.53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

At the last trumpet (this is speaking of the Second Coming) the great mystery takes place. The dead are transformed from the dust into an immortal and beautiful body; and the saints who are living shall likewise be transformed in an instant!

* Note: This takes place after the tribulation period (See Matt. 24:29-31).

15:54-55 *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. v.55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

Paul is quoting from Hosea 13:14 and Isaiah 25:8. The Christian does not have to fear the grave because Christ defeated hell and the grave. The spirit of the redeemed immediately goes to heaven and they shall be with the Lord until the full redemption comes – the resurrection of the body.

15:56-57 *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. v.57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Man was destined to die because of the serpent's bite – sin. And the law was given to man to make him fully conscious of the sin nature (Rom. 7:13). But there was an antidote given to save man – and that was the cross. Man can transmit his sin to the cross as Israel did in Numbers 21:6-9, and John 3:14-15. But the death of Jesus in itself did not complete the cure; He had to defeat sin and the grave by being resurrected and thus proving that there is victory over sin and the grave! Thanks be to God!

The death of Jesus in itself did not complete the cure; He had to defeat sin and the grave by being resurrected and thus proving that there is victory over sin and the grave!

15:58 *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Now that Paul has totally refuted the heretical doctrine of the resurrection, he encourages them to continue on, to be steadfast and unmoveable in their faith. It is easy to understand how a heretical teaching such as this could immobilize the work. All of their work would seem quite in vain “if the dead rise not.” But your labor is not in vain in the Lord!



Chapter Sixteen

Closing Exhortations

In this final chapter, Paul reveals his tentative plans for the future, which include another visit to Corinth. Paul also gives specific instructions in regard to the collections being made for the Jerusalem Church. He recommends that their collections be done on a weekly basis and not some impressive offering at his coming.

In Paul's closing valediction he also sends greetings from Asia province and he commends special acceptance of certain brethren.

Special collection for the Jerusalem church

16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. v.2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

This particular offering was not a tithe, but a special collection for the suffering church in Jerusalem. (It is interesting how the gentile churches poured into this need.) Paul recommends that this offering take place on a weekly basis – on the first day of the week, which of course is Sunday. I think that we should take special note of this fact, because the Sabbatarians contend

that we should be worshipping on Saturday. It is obvious that the church gathered on Sunday.

16:3-4 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. v.4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Paul wants the church to certify the men that shall transport this donation to Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, this would be a large collection! Paul said, "If it works out, I too shall go."

We must understand some of the conditions of the Jerusalem church in order to appreciate this offering: The Christians in Jerusalem were going through quite a time of persecution. People lost their properties, were forbidden jobs, and were being boycotted in their businesses because of their faith. Paul later writes to the Hebrew church and says: "*But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the [confiscation] of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance*" (Heb. 10:32-34).

Paul promises to come again

16:5-7 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. v.6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. v.7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

What the apostle is saying, is that he will come when he can stay for a season. Paul was going to be passing by them

(perhaps a transient visit – overnight), coming down through Macedonia but would not visit them at this time.

The effectual door

16:8-9 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. v.9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

In all probability, Paul was writing this first letter from Ephesus (AD 57). Some conjecture this epistle to be written from Philippi, however, the fact that Paul sends greetings from the churches in Asia (v. 19) nullifies this position.

To give us an idea of this “great door” that was opening in Ephesus, all of Asia province was to be affected by Paul’s teaching ministry there.

“And this continued by the space of two years [Paul’s teaching ministry in Ephesus]; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”(Acts 19:10)

“Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands.”(Acts 19:26)

We will also find in Acts chapter 19, some of the great opposition that Paul is talking about: *“and there are many adversaries.”* Sometimes we think that because God is opening a door for us, it means everything will be easy. Generally, it is just the opposite. If you study the giants in the Old Testament you will find that Goliath had a few brothers. One of these brothers was named Saph (2 Sam. 21:18). Saph means – *threshold*. Many times when God is opening a door there is a Saph (or demonic

principality) to keep us from going through that door. *An effectual door* was open to Paul but there were many adversaries. You can almost measure how important a move is by the amount of artillery being brought up to stop you!

Pentecost

As we have previously stated, all of the seven feasts of the Lord mentioned in (Lev. 23) are found in the Corinthian epistles. This is the only place that the feast of Pentecost is mentioned *perse'*, although the Corinthian epistles are full of the Pentecostal portrayal.

The feast of Pentecost involved leaven (see chapter five for leaven). In Leviticus 23:17, the two loaves offered to God were baked with leaven. The two loaves represent the Jews and Gentiles, and both were permeated with leaven. This proves that God pours out His Spirit upon people who are filled with leaven, upon those with many problems in their lives. He pours out His Spirit upon all flesh. Remember that God does not give us the Holy Spirit because we are holy, He gives us the Holy Spirit to make us holy. (See the chart on "The Feasts" - appendix).

Receive Timothy

16:10-11 *Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. v.11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.*

Timothy was often the man that Paul sent to help stabilize a work. (See comments on 1 Cor. 4:17) Timothy was a man who

reflected the virtues of his spiritual father. He was not self-seeking as many others were (cf. Phil. 2:19-22). However, it does seem as though Timothy had a personality that could be intimidated; perhaps his age had something to do with it. (Compare 1 Tim. 4:12, and 2 Tim. 1:7-8.)

There are times when we travel in strange places and we can feel the suspicion or mistrust, etc. I believe that Paul was trying to create an atmosphere of acceptance and hospitality for Timothy: *“that he may be with you without fear...”*

Apollos will come later

16:12 As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

Obviously, Apollos was with Paul in Ephesus, and Paul was hoping to have Apollos return with the other Corinthian brethren (Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus - v.17). Apollos promises to come at a more agreeable time. Remember, that Apollos was one of the “well-knowns” in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12). This passage also shows us that Paul had no problem with other sound ministers helping to build God’s people. Many ministers try to guard their field to a fault and thereby deprive the church of other anointed ministries!

Don’t give up!

16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

- ◆ *Watch ye* – stay awake; be vigilant.
- ◆ *Stand fast in the faith* – persevere; hold the position.

- ◆ *Quit you like men* – finish like men; don't be quitters.
- ◆ *Be strong* – be strong in the power of His might.

Too many people give up when the pressure is on. We will lose our reward if we give up!

The motivational factor

16:14 *Let all your things be done with charity.*

We want love to be the motivational force of our Christian experience. We want our faith to be grounded in love (Eph. 3:17). We want the love of Jesus to flow out through everything we do!

Recognize the holy brethren

16:15-16 *I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) v.16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.*

Clearly, Paul counted Stephanas as one of the ministry team and now asks the church to recognize him as such. Stephanas is christened as the firstfruits of Achaia. (Achaia comprises the southern province of Greece.) The firstfruit is the sample fruit. In other words, here was fruit worthy to be imitated. Paul continues, *"That ye submit yourselves unto such..."* Not only should we submit to men such as Stephanas, but unto all that were of his character.

"They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints."
Herein is a good addiction – to be a servant, as was Christ!

They have supplied your lack

16:17-18 *I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. v.18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.*

Here are three Corinthian brethren that brought a refreshing to Paul's spirit. Undoubtedly, with all of the deficiency that seemed to cloud the Corinthian church, here were three shining ones! Paul said: "they have refreshed my spirit [concerning you]."

* *And yours* – should better read: "concerning you".

I am sure that Paul could see a hope for the Corinthians, exemplified in these three men. Sometimes, it is just the few that are really getting the message, that encourage us that others will come along!

These men were probably the couriers of this first letter. Paul wanted the church to honor this kind of men.

Final valediction

16:19 *The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*

Again, this passage would substantiate the view that Paul was writing from Ephesus rather than Macedonia. We are not told which churches were presently existing in Asia (province) but eventually there would be at least seven (well known) churches mentioned by name, besides the church at Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla had a house church in Ephesus. You will recall that Aquila and Priscilla were laborers with Paul when he was in Corinth (Acts 18:2-3).

16:20 *All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.*

This is still a custom in this part of the world – the holy kiss. It is between brethren.

16:21 *The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.*

Paul did not usually pen his own letters, but would often authenticate his letters with a mark. In this case, Paul gives his personal salute. The reason that Paul would give his special mark was because there were some who forged letters in his name (See 2 Thes. 3:17).

16:22 *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.*

Anathema means – to be accursed. *Maranatha* means – when He comes, or, He is come. In other words, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ*, he will be cursed at His coming!

16:23-24 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. v.24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Paul always recommends the grace of our Lord, because without grace we do not make it! “*My love be with you*” is not just a trite statement. Paul sincerely loved the Corinthian church. Paul had every hope that he would present a people that had been made perfect from Corinth! Amen!



Second
Corinthians

Second Corinthians

Introduction to the second letter

Paul first visited Corinth in A.D. 52, while he was on his second missionary journey. He stayed there for 18 months teaching them in depth (Acts 18:1-17). According to secular history, the population at that time was about 700,000. It is believed that about ten percent of the city was converted to Christ. Undoubtedly, Corinth was the most fruitful of all Paul's missionary endeavors (at least in numbers). He left Corinth in the spring of 54, and revisited them a second and third time. He also wrote them at least three letters; but only two are preserved in Scripture. The unrecorded letter must have been sent between AD 54-57

His first epistle was sent from Ephesus in the spring of AD 57. Thus, when they received this first letter, the oldest converts in this church would have been less than five years old in Christ. The second epistle was written in the autumn of the same year (AD 57) from Philippi. It was delivered shortly before a third visit there.

Titus brings comforting news to the Apostle

One of the central issues of First Corinthians was a matter that concerned a church judgment. The very destiny of the church was hinging on the outcome of that decision. Paul was very concerned, and eager to hear what had transpired there. Titus was the messenger who brought Paul word concerning the result of the first letter (2 Cor. 7:6-14). And Paul was greatly comforted to hear not only that the man who had been living in incest had repented, but that the church had also repented for their tolerance of the matter. Our reference to this episode is found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.

The tone of the second epistle is noticeably different from the first. In the first letter, Paul did not mince his words; in fact, he was almost abrasive. But in the second letter, we see a kinder, gentler Paul. The Word of the Lord had convicted the church, and there was a real turn-around. *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend"* (Pro. 27:6). Paul's entreaty with firmness and tears and prayers had paid off – there was a real repentance by many! We have to believe that people can be changed through the Word of the Lord and by the power of His Spirit. The first letter brought the church to a godly sorrow, and the fruit of *"that sorrow"* worked repentance.

The Corinthians need further admonishing

Although Paul's first inspired epistle had brought very positive changes in the church, the work there was by no means done. In this second epistle, the apostle still had to address some

serious problems. There were still factions that challenged Paul's authority. There were false apostles/teachers who were undermining their faith. And there were still those who had not repented at the admonishments from letter one.

In this second letter, Paul charges some of them very sovereignly, with the confidence that a number of them would take heed. The apostle also spends a few pages on the thought of liberality. Paul had a great desire to see their hearts enlarged so that the goodness of God could flow through them!



Chapter One

The ministry of consolation

If we desire to have a ministry of consolation, then we must first know something about trouble. We can only minister comfort to others to the degree that God has comforted us in our troubles. As God meets with us and enlightens us, we can do the same for others. A good teacher is one who has had many quandaries and questions resolved in his own life. There is no other way to have authority.

Without doubt, the apostle had experienced some mighty shakings in his life and had met God in those desperate times. That is why Paul stands out as the *father* figure: Paul's teaching was not theoretical, Paul had been there! The reason that the apostle could deal with the Corinthian pride was because Paul fully understood pride. Saul/Paul had been full of pride on the road to Damascus – and was greatly humbled. Paul could now console; he could give hope and reasons for the humbling times in life.

A good teacher is one who has had many quandaries and questions resolved in his own life.

Salutations

1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:*

Once again, Paul verifies his credentials from heaven - *an apostle by the will of God. And Timothy...* obviously Timothy was with Paul at the time. Paul is not only writing to the church in Corinth but to all the saints in the province of Achaia (Southern Greece).

1:2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Herein is Paul's usual opening format (see comments from 1 Cor. 1:3).

The God of all comfort

1:3-5 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; v.4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. v.5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

Verse three certainly distinguishes God the Father. The earth is orchestrated to the tune of the Father's mercy (see Psalm 136). Even some of the perplexing events, when man demands to know where God is, are really acts of mercy in disguise! God even gives the lives of some as a ransom for others (Isa. 43:4). And God removes others, simply to save them from future ruination. The earth is full of His mercy!

Who comforteth us - that...

Suffering is an essential part of the ministry. Basically, we can only console people to the degree that we have experienced

their sorrow, and have been comforted and helped by God. This is why God passes ministers through many experiences. It is so they can touch the lives of others. People who have never suffered in their body, mind, or soul are inadequate to help or comfort others.

Job said of his comforters: *"Miserable comforters are you all."* They had never been plunged to the depths of despair as Job, and they had no empathy for him. All of their counsel was surface and theoretical. The true minister must be acquainted with the sufferings of Christ (Phil. 3:10). The just have to suffer for the unjust. Oftentimes it requires vicarious suffering on the part of the righteous to stabilize others (cf. Col. 1:24-25, Heb. 5:2).

**If a minister never suffered, never struggled
with weakness and temptation, then he could
never relate to the needs of the people!**

1:6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

Paul was not saying that they would not suffer, but what he did say was that his sufferings served as a means to succor (minister) to them through the trying times. It is a great comfort to know that others have preceded us into the dark valley and come out again! If Joseph had known that (in the dungeon) it surely would have been a solace to him!

1:7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

Sometimes people go through years of dealing, but God always justifies everything in the end. Moses declared in Psalm 90:15: *“Make us glad according to [in proportion to] the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.”* The benefits we reap from our affliction are far greater than the affliction itself. Paul later speaks of the *“light affliction that worketh for us a far greater and eternal weight of glory”* (2 Cor. 4:17).

The benefits we reap from our affliction are far greater than the affliction itself.

Moses spent 40 years on the backside of the desert being stripped of all confidence in the flesh. Then he spent the next 40 years seeing the mighty hand of God work through his surrendered life. Suffering puts iron into our soul and takes out compromise. When you suffer, all of the lesser things in life become so dim that only the true and enduring riches have significance.

I was once lying in a hospital bed, thinking, “This is the end.” The only things that mattered at that moment were the eternal things!

The death experience in Asia

1:8 *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:*

No doubt, this is in relation to the “open door” Paul spoke of in (1 Cor. 16:9). That “open door” incorporated “many adversaries!” Paul had major trouble in Asia. What being pressed out of measure involves we could only imagine. However, the word

“measure” from the Greek, is a word from whence we derive the word “hyperbole.” A hyperbole is an exaggeration. To me, this means that whatever Paul went through was not ordinary. He says in another place, that he wrestled with beasts at Ephesus – demonic powers. Paul actually despaired of life. However, he had the witness of life from within, as explained in the following verses.

Gethsemane

Gethsemane means the oil press. To have the true anointing, we have to be pressed out like the olive. There is no greater example of this than that of Christ as he prayed in Gethsemane. Christ was being pressed by the powers of darkness until He sweat drops of blood and had not an angel strengthened Him, He would have died! This is the cost of having the precious anointing and being a deliverer. Christ means “Anointed One.”

The power from within

1:9 *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:*

The word sentence relates to a judicial sentence. Paul had the power from within that kept him from succumbing to a physical death. I can't say that I have ever struggled against the powers of evil to the point of death. However, I've heard of those who have struggled with such agony against these powers that they surely could have died – and perhaps some have literally died.

Humanly speaking, it sounds like Paul should have died, but he chose to put his trust in the One who raises the dead! (Acts 14:19 would be a good example of this.)

Past - present - future

1:10 *Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;*

<i><u>Past</u></i>	<i><u>Present</u></i>	<i><u>Future</u></i>
who delivered us...	and doth deliver...	He will yet deliver....
<i>What a statement of faith! (Here is a good message to preach when you are feeling a bit low!)</i>		

The gift of prayer

1:11 *Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*

Many times we have asked our colleagues: "What can we do?" The response is often: "Pray for us!" The word *gift* (charisma) is in relation to spiritual influence. The church was giving Paul a spiritual offering of prayer, and the result of those prayers would benefit many.

We should get our people to pray for us. Some churches think that it is the pastor's duty to pray for all of them. While this is true, the people should also pray for the pastor. Many times Paul said, "Pray for us, brethren." As the people pray for the leader, God will pour out his anointing upon him, and many others will be blessed through his life and ministry.

Our behavior has been open and sincere

1:12 *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom,*

but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation [conduct] in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

Paul could rejoice out of a good conscience because he had lived out his message before them. *“Simplicity and godly sincerity...by the grace of God.”* Our preaching and lifestyle should be in simple honesty and godly sincerity (in agreement). A life of honesty and sincerity is the key to a clear mind. Many theological institutions emphasize fleshly wisdom—psychology, philosophy, and intellectualism. At the best, this only produces artificial fruit.

Many theological institutions emphasize fleshly wisdom—psychology, philosophy, and intellectualism. At the best, this only produces artificial fruit.

I trust ye shall comprehend

1:13-14 *For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; v.14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

These verses seem a little ambiguous. However, if we substitute another word for the word *acknowledge* – comprehend – this will help us. What Paul was saying was: We are not writing anything to you that is beyond comprehension; and we trust that you shall fully comprehend us, that we may rejoice together in the end!

Why Paul had refrained his coming to Corinth

1:15-16 *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; v.16 And to pass*

by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

Paul's original intention was to pay Corinth a visit on his way from Macedonia to Judea. And as he states: "*that ye might have a second benefit...*" However, Paul's intentions were obviously checked by the Lord.

1:17-19 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? v.18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. v.19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

The apostle had planned to visit them on his way to Macedonia and then come again on his return trip from Macedonia. In his tentative plans, he had not used "lightness." Paul did not treat this matter lightly. However, it seemed that Paul had changed his original plans, and some said he was inconsistent. Paul affirms that what he had said he meant, and he meant what he said. Our word was not: "Yes, and no, or maybe" – and it is the same way with God. When God makes promises to us, He means what He says. Yes, Paul was going to come to them, and he tells them in subsequent verses why he had interrupted his plans.

*We might point out that this appointment was a delay, not a cancel! When God delays his promise there is a good reason!

1:20-22 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. v.21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; v.22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

The promises that God gives us should be received with a “Yes, and Amen!” The Christ (in us) bears witness to the truth. The Spirit within us bears witness to the truth. God has anointed us and given us *an earnest* of His Spirit. It brings glory to God when we respond with – “Yes Lord!” One translation says, that Abraham said “Amen” to God.

Paul calls it the Holy Spirit of promise in Ephesians 1:13-14. “*Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance....*” The Holy Spirit bears witness to the promised possession!

An *earnest* is a legal term meaning a down payment with a promise that the rest will be paid. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is only an earnest. It is only a small portion of the Spirit. There is much more to be given later. The fullness of the Spirit is given at resurrection.

To spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth

1:23 *Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.*

The reason Paul delayed his coming to Corinth was to spare them the rod of judgment. Paul was waiting for things to be corrected before he came. I believe that God does the same. We often wonder why God waits, and waits, and waits. The prophet Isaiah said: “*And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment...*” God waits (for things to get into order) so that He might come with great mercy, and be gracious unto us (Isa. 30:18).

Often we have to commit people to prayer and allow God to work in them. We can't just correct and address every little thing in their lives. Jesus addressed a certain individual in the church at Thyatira, saying, *"I gave her a space to repent"* (Rev. 2:21). Thus, we see the nature of God. He gives people time to repent. The Lord does not want to come as a Judge.

* You will notice later on in this epistle; that Paul emphatically tells the Corinthians that he will come again.

1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Paul was not trying to lord over his converts, or threaten his converts, or try to get his converts to depend upon him for their every move. No, Paul was seeking to build them up in the faith that their joy might be full! We cannot stand in the faith of our spiritual father. Some leaders so absorb the lives of their converts that their converts camp around them. The problem with this kind of dominance is that if their leader falls, they might fall also. Paul wanted them to stand on their own: *"for by faith ye stand."*

*We
cannot
stand in
the faith
of our
spiritual
father.*

Chapter Two

The power of the pen

In chapter two, Paul specifically makes reference to the incident of 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. As you will recall, the church was tolerating a known case of incest. In letter one, Paul addressed the seriousness of the situation, and even prescribed certain measures that had to be taken. The very destiny of the church was hinging on the outcome of their decision: *“For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.”* (Verse 9.)

Would they disregard Paul’s counsel or would they follow through with the judgment? The apostle’s concerns were alleviated when he learned of their repentance; not only had the offender repented, but the church had also repented for their neglect. Paul’s previous letter was charged with power and conviction, and it transformed the church. *“His letters are weighty and powerful...”* (10:10). Let us never underestimate the power of the pen!

2:1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

Verse one follows the flow of the preceding chapter: Paul had withheld his coming in hopes that things would amend, and that he might come with benefit rather than reprimand.

Paul lauds their repentance

2:2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

The same group that had been saddened by their spiritual father's rebuke had now gladdened their father. The man who had been judged had also repented.

2:3-4 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. v.4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

Herein is the true love of a father: Paul is concerned for their eternal state; he pleads out of the anguish of his heart, not to grieve them but to see them mended. Paul wanted his spiritual children to know the fulness of joy – the kind of joy that Paul himself knew!

The true father deals with his sons. There were many other attractive and charismatic ministries in Corinth that had glossed over some serious issues. To be a good father sometimes makes you unpopular!

2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

The crime of the incestuous man had grieved Paul in part, and he had also been grieved with others who were puffed up and had not mourned over this deed. However, he was unwilling to lay too heavy a charge upon the whole church, since they had

cleared themselves in the matter by obeying the directions he had given them in his former epistle.

Forgive the repentant man

2:6-8 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. v.7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. v.8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

The unanimous judgment of the church had helped bring about this man's repentance. The idea of inflicting judgment on this man was not just to punish him, but it was in the hopes of his reclamation. If a judgment is done in God and the whole church cooperates, it can bring about the repentance of a person swiftly.

Now, Paul exhorts the church to accept him back into fellowship. (Please don't interpret this to mean that we reinstate a repentant person back into office or ministry.) Paul is exhorting the church to show the man love and acceptance lest he lose hope.

2:9-11 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. v.10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; v.11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

As the church had been obedient in executing the judgment, now Paul exhorts the same in forgiveness. It is interesting how people can swing from one extreme to the other. Some churches are willing to forgive and restore before there is any sign of repentance. Other churches are like the prodigal son's elder brother, resenting the one being restored. Remember

that although the prodigal son was restored, he lost his inheritance. Some prodigals never return – and we certainly do not rejoice in that!

We are not ignorant of Satan’s devices. Satan would like to see the elder brother full of resentment. When we don’t forgive, bitterness gets in, and we may end up in a worse place than the repentant man! Paul said that he was there in spirit when the church judged the man (1 Cor. 5:4). Now he says, I am with you as you forgive the man. (Also see Luke 15:25-32.)

Although the prodigal son was restored, he lost his inheritance.

Paul recalls his meeting with Titus

2:12-13 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, v.13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

At this point, Paul begins to digress from the subject (restoring the repentant man) and recalls his meeting with Titus in Macedonia. Titus was Paul’s contact-man concerning the things that had recently transpired in Corinth. This is not made clear until we arrive at chapter seven. It seems that Paul takes quite a tangent from verse 14, until he returns to his thought five chapters later in 2 Corinthians 7:5-6.

In spite of the fact that a great door was opened in Troas (vicinity of ancient Troy), Paul was still in a great quandary of spirit because he had not yet made contact with Titus. (Only a true father can identify with this kind of agony!) The apostle then leaves Troas and comes into Macedonia; and as we shall see in chapter 7, Titus refreshes Paul’s soul.

Titus was one of Paul's spiritual sons and faithful laborers. This is the Titus to whom Paul wrote the epistle bearing his name. Titus is probably the courier of the second epistle to the Corinthians.

Paul's word a savor of life - a savor of death

2:14-17 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. v.15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: v.16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? v.17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Success cannot always be measured by outward appearance, but it is the witness from within that says we have done what we were supposed to do! When we are in Christ we always win. When Paul preached in Athens it was not a "success story." However, Paul had faithfully fulfilled his commission there.

The Lord said that we are the salt of the earth. Salt has two purposes – it can preserve and it can kill. To the one, our words are the savor of life, to the other our words are the savor of death. That is the solemnity of preaching: to the one who hears – it is life! To the one who rejects the message, it is hell and death! We have the power of life and death in our tongue. It is a two-edged sword that can kill or set free.

The true Christian carries a certain presence with him wherever he goes. During my working years I worked in different places. In some places when I walked into the break-room people would walk out. In other places, people wanted to be there. We must not take this kind of thing too personally because it is the "Christ in you" that offends or that attracts!

"For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." Many who preach the word of God are not sincere. They have their own agendas, motives, and their own causes to promote. Paul said in Philippians 1:15: *"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will."* We must realize that as a preacher we are simply a mouthpiece for God. We are His messenger; it is His program!



Chapter Three

Living epistles

In chapter three, the apostle begins to re-establish his credentials, and he will continue this theme throughout subsequent portions of the second letter. Sadly, there were still other ministries undermining Paul's authority, and Paul is forced to say a few things – not to defend himself as much as to save those who had been seduced.

Perhaps the apostle's greatest argument was "they" themselves: *"ye are our epistles..."* The Corinthian church did not come into being on its own, but through us! We have written a few pages into your life through the Holy Spirit – and your life testifies to it!

Also in this chapter, the apostle Paul draws a great contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Written by the ink of the Holy Spirit

3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

Do we need to prove ourselves to you again? In the Jewish community, the synagogues would actually send out letters of recommendation from synagogue to synagogue to put their

stamp of approval on certain people. Paul said, "Do we need a letter from you, or to you, to avouch the validity of our ministry?" In the first letter Paul had said, "*You are the proof of my apostleship*" (1 Cor. 9:2).

3:2-3 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: v.3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

Not only are you written in our heart, but also you are being read by all. It really is amazing what people know about us. As Paul says in another place, "We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses."

Many years ago, I went to make restitution to a man – thinking he knew nothing of me. He proceeded to tell me everything about me. But even more than what people know about our biography, it is the "Christ life" that speaks the most. Paul had penned some indelible evidence upon their heart through the Holy Spirit – through his teaching, through his example, through an impartation of a father to his children!

3:4-5 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: v.5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Paul had great confidence that his impartation to the Corinthians was a work of the Holy Ghost and that he himself was just the scribe – "*ministered by us.*"

The Old Testament versus The New Testament (vs. 6-18)

3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

The letter kills

"The letter kills..." Here is a little phrase that has been greatly distorted. Some interpret it as: "We don't need the bible; we just move in the Spirit; the ten commandment don't apply, etc. Yes, the letter can kill! If the Word is not in synchronization with the Spirit it can kill. If you sit in a church week after week and hear the same message, it can be death (especially if it does not apply). Job's friends were killing him with the Word: "You reap what you sow." True, but it did not apply in Job's case. However, when a word is spoken in season it brings life!

We are commanded to live by the spoken or quickened word (Mt. 4:4). The Word comes to us in two forms: "the logos," which is the written word or letter, and the "rhema," which is the spoken or quickened word. The Jews had all of their concepts right to the letter, yet most of them never grasped the spiritual implications. This was true in the life of Saul who later became Paul. He had memorized both versions (Hebrew and Greek) of the Old Testament, yet his own heart was veiled from the true meaning until his encounter with Christ.

If you sit in a church week after week and hear the same message, it can be death.

* The minister is commanded to read and study the Word, the "Logos."

The ministration of death

3:7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious...” Why was the Old Testament death? Because there was no power in that covenant to enable them to live up to its precepts. At the giving of the law three thousand people perished. The stone tables upon which the law had been written were broken, signifying that it was a law that could not be attained unto. Israel could achieve a superficial attainment at the best! (This will be explained further in verse nine.)

It was the ministration of death, and yet at the same time it was so glorious that the face of Moses had to be veiled. There was an awesome manifestation of the glory of God at the giving of the law, but as Paul tells us, that glory was to cease!

3:8-9 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? v.9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

The ministration of condemnation versus the ministration of righteousness

As great as the glory was at the giving of the law, there is a greater glory at the giving of the Spirit. As we have previously pointed out, three thousand people perished at the giving of the law, but three thousand people were redeemed at the giving of the Spirit. (Compare Ex. 32:15-28 with Acts 2:41). As we walk in the Spirit, we keep the law and fulfill its righteous demands (See Gal. 5:16, Rom. 8:1-4).

* There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1).

The Old Testament is called *“the ministration of condemnation”* because it could only show them their inability to keep

the law! *“For by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (Rom. 3:20). There was a certain fear that presided over this covenant (Heb. 2:14-15). When the Old Testament saints died, there was fear in death. There was always a consciousness of sins (guilt) because the Old Testament sacrifices could never erase their sins. The Law made them very aware of their sins but had no power to help them live a holy life.

Consider the tabernacle of Moses: Where was the law in the tabernacle? It was inside the ark behind the veil.

The Old Testament sacrifices were not sufficient enough to allow the people to enter within the veil (to experience the righteousness of the law).

When Jesus died the veil was rent, signifying that we can now have access by His grace to experience the New Covenant – the law written within our hearts.

The greater glory

3:10-11 *For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. v.11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.*

According to Exodus 34:33, there was tremendous glory at the giving of the law, so much so that the face of Moses was covered with a veil. Yet, Paul says it was a diminishing glory and that the glory that would remain (speaking of the glory of the New Covenant) would be greater! We must realize that the church of the 21st century has not seen this kind of glory yet. In fact, even the early church only saw a token of this glory, and they only saw a token of the miracles of Christ. They did not see the *greater works* that Christ had promised (John 14:12).

The early church only saw a token of this glory.

We have to conclude from this that it is the glory of the latter house (church) that shall exceed in glory and righteousness, and that it shall be a remaining glory! This certainly agrees with Paul's description of the glorious Church that Christ will come for (Eph. 5:27). Also see Haggai 2:9.

The Feast of Tabernacles

As we have previously pointed out, all of the seven feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23) can be found in the Corinthian epistles. The seven feasts also equate with the seven parables that Jesus gave in Matthew 13. When Jesus gave the seven parables, the first four were given to the multitude, while the last three were given privately to His disciples.

The church throughout the ages has generally understood the first four:

- ◆ Passover – salvation
- ◆ Unleavened bread – feeding on the pure doctrine
- ◆ Firstfruits – water baptism
- ◆ Pentecost – the baptism in the Holy Spirit

The last three feasts are a bit more ambiguous – not readily seen by the church. One of the reasons for this is because the last three feasts were to have a (corporate) fulfillment by the latter church. So it is in the Corinthian epistles; the first four feasts are mentioned by name, while the last three feasts are here in substance.

The greater glory that Paul speaks of relates to the glorious “Feast of Tabernacles,” which climaxes the Church Age! Solomon's temple is a good example of this: After the temple was

completed, it was dedicated during the Feast of Tabernacles, and it was filled with glory.

So shall it be at the conclusion of the Church Age. Christ said: *"I will build my church...."* *The Temple of His Body* shall come to completeness and maturity, and it shall be filled with glory! The glory of the latter house shall not only be greater than Solomon's house, but it shall be a remaining glory that shall usher in the new age – the Millennial Age. The revival of the last day Church will retain its glory and resemble the glorious Church in heaven.

Seeing then that we have such hope

3:12-13 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: v.13 And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

With great boldness, Paul declares something that is coming – that is in the future. The hope of the Christian in this 21st century is the glorious revival that is coming. It shall transform the church, and that revival shall not dissipate.

And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face... Moses (in this instance) symbolizes the people of the Old Covenant. They were veiled from the fact that their covenant was going to be terminated!

Blinded by the letter

3:14-15 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. v.15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

But their minds were blinded. We have to realize that this was part of the curse that came upon Israel (Isa. 6:9-10). The letter blinded them; they could not see the spiritual implications or the spiritual fulfillment of their law. They were more concerned with the letter of the law than with the One who gave the law. The One who gave the law to Moses was hanging on the cross. The law said that one should not hang upon a tree after sunset (Deut. 21:22-23). The Jews were afraid of dishonoring their law, but weren't afraid to crucify their Messiah. That is blindness! (Also see Isa. 28:13.)

Which veil is done away in Christ... This same veil was over Paul's eyes until he was converted, and this same veil remains upon the Jews until this day. I might also point out that even within the church there is certain blindness in the reading of the Old Testament. Many of God's people do not understand the types and symbolism of the Old Testament. This is why Paul prays for the church to have the eyes of their spiritual understanding opened (Eph. 1:18). Believers who have never experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit are often very dull to the things of the Spirit.

When Israel turns to the Lord the veil is removed

3:16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

As a nation, Israel remains under the curse of blindness until the second coming of Christ. At that time the veil is removed from their eyes and they see the nail prints in their Messiah's hands (Rom. 11:25-27). In spite of the curse that was upon the nation as a whole, there has always been a remnant (in every generation) who have believed, and the veil is removed!

The Spirit of life

3:17 *Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

In the context of what the apostle Paul has been saying in this chapter, the “dead letter” brings bondage and death. Even though the word itself is true – the logos is true – it can still bring death if the Spirit of God is not speaking it! Living out of the rulebook, living by principles alone, can bring bondage!

But where the Spirit of the Lord is moving there is life and liberty – with freedom from sin and condemnation, and freedom from fear and anxiety. There is power to fulfil the righteousness of the law, thus bringing peace and joy!

The atmosphere of churches differ greatly one from another—especially between churches that embrace the baptism of the Holy Spirit and those who do not. The Psalmist said in Psalm 78:41, “*They limited the Holy One of Israel.*” Many believers who do not embrace the baptism of the Spirit limit what God can do in their lives and in the church. Where the Spirit of God is allowed to move, there is true worship and revelation and miracles!

From glory to glory

3:18 *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Here is a principle that holds true both in the positive and in the negative. We become like the one we worship. We take on

the characteristic of the one we worship. Those who worship idols become like the gods they serve (Psa. 115:4-8). The apostle John said, "*when He shall appear, we shall be like him...*" As Christ reveals Himself to us, we are changed. We become more and more like Him as He reveals Himself to us. We are transformed as though we were looking into a mirror, and He mirrors his image into us. The Song of Solomon is a good example of this, the woman in this poem is becoming more and more like her beloved (the King) until you can't tell them apart. She looks like Him, smells like Him, and even thinks like Him!

The Lord wants us to behold His glory. It is not a matter of our ego, or a thing of vanity to seek His glory. In the tabernacle there is the Outer Court gate (representing salvation), where everyone is welcome to enter. However, the Glory of God is at the other end of the court in the Holy of Holies. Not just anyone can come into that place. There is a working of His Spirit to make us kings and priests that we may enter. God wants to bring us from the Outer Court of salvation unto His glory (Heb. 2:10).



Chapter Four

The treasure in earthen vessels

We are only a vessel, a container. It was said of Paul in Acts 9:15 that he was “*a chosen vessel*” to bear glad tidings to the Gentiles, to kings, and to the children of Israel. In this case it is not the vessel that is important, but what is deposited within the vessel. God places His treasure within us (4:7). That treasure is the Spirit of God (the Divine nature, the power, the gifts, and His wisdom and joy). Let us, as did Paul, concentrate on the inner life. The power comes from within – Christ in you! It is hard to be defeated when you have reality in your life. Joy is not determined by the conditions around you, but by the condition within you. The renewed inner man looks beyond the visible and sees the eternal. Chapter four helps us to stay in focus.

4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

As we examine the ministry of the true apostle, we are looking at an incredible lifestyle of pressures, demands, inconvenience, and suffering. This is not the type of ministry that we seek after. It is God who gives it, and when God gives it then there is grace to sustain it. We do not faint when we receive mercy from God. Mercy determines the outcome of everything! Let us throw ourselves upon the mercy of God, and let us hope in His mercy.

4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

The minister must be circumspect in every area of his walk. He must have financial integrity, moral integrity – and his life “back-stage” must be irreproachable. People should have a good witness in their hearts about us.

So many people distort and misrepresent the Word of God for some personal gain or some cause of their own. Many ministers are building their own kingdom, not God's. Just recently, several of my colleagues who returned from overseas were quite appalled by the extravagance and opulent lifestyle of certain ministry. People think that because you are from the U.S.A. you are wealthy. They should hear some of the stories of the church in other lands. Even some of the itinerating ministries demand a fee of \$25,000 (American dollars) before they will come and speak. If they do get to heaven, they have had their reward!

Why the nations are blinded to the light

4:3-4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: v.4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Satan is the god of this world, and his objective is to keep people in darkness, blinded from the truth. However, there is another aspect to this that we should consider. The reason that nations are in darkness is not just because Satan blinded them, but because God allowed Satan to blind them.

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind...” (See Rom. 1:18-28.) God not only gives people over to another spirit, He gives nations over to another spirit. During the “Boxer rebellion” in China, many missionaries were killed, not to mention many Chinese Christians. In 1900, the wicked empress said: “I reject your truth!” When people reject light, they are given over to darkness.

*When
people
reject
light, they
are given
over to
darkness.*

Revival can only come when God mercifully removes the veil! *The gospel is hid* to multitudes of people because their minds have been blinded. They cannot see or comprehend the light, but when the covering is destroyed then everybody is crying out for God to save them (See Isaiah 25:7).

In many ways it is God’s mercy that He leaves people in darkness, because He knows what they are going to do if they are given light. We are judged according to what we have done with the truth that we have, and that is the reason God does not allow certain people to come into the light. God knows who will reject the truth. If they are shown the truth, that will only make them more responsible. Everything is done in God’s mercy. The servant who knew the Lord’s will and prepared not was beaten with many stripes, but those who did not know His will are beaten with few stripes (Lu. 12:47-48).

4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

We are not promoting ourselves, but Christ. In fact, we are depriving ourselves for you!

The light/treasure within

4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This glorious light is hid from the lost, but this glorious light has illuminated our hearts – the light of Christ within. If there was ever a blind man it was Saul (Paul). He did not know God until he met Christ – and that awakening was like Genesis chapter one. The light was dawning for the first time!

4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

When we consider Jesus Christ in His earthly form, what do we see? There is no comeliness or attraction about His physical appearance that we should desire Him. Yet, out of this vessel flowed unsearchable riches of knowledge and virtues that cannot be valued. If you were blind what would you give for your sight? If your little child was dying what would you give? What would you give for peace and forgiveness and assurance? It is not the beauty of the human vessel that is important. It is what we have inside that is important.

Paul states later on in this same epistle that he would gladly suffer infirmity, reproach, and necessity in order to have the power of Christ. He desired to have the priceless power of God flowing from his being unto others. He only wanted to be a channel to enrich many. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you." It is "*Christ in you the hope of glory.*"

The Feast of Trumpets

We have previously stated that the seven feasts of the Lord are to be found in the Corinthian epistles. The first four are mentioned by name in the first letter. The last three are a bit more ambiguous and are found in the second letter – but only in substance, not in name. It almost seems that the last three feasts were being revealed to those who had repented at the first letter. (See the comments on the Feast of Tabernacles in 2 Cor. 3:10-11.)

“The treasure in earthen vessels” could be compared to the Feast of Trumpets.

“The treasure in earthen vessels” could be compared to the Feast of Trumpets. The feast of trumpets also equates with the fifth kingdom parable in Matthew 13, “the treasure hid.” The Feast of Trumpets basically is a wakeup call to Israel – a cry that there is yet a rest, a destiny! There is something beyond where we are. There is something beyond the Pentecostal experience – there is a greater glory.

In the parable of the treasure hid (Matt. 13:44), the man sees a treasure that nobody else sees. He then sells everything he has to obtain the treasure. He “sells out” for the kingdom. Thus it was so in the life of the apostle Paul. Paul had a wake-up call; Paul heard a trumpet sound; Paul saw a treasure veiled (in Christ) to human eyes; and Paul sold everything to win that prize – that treasure! Many within the kingdom do not have a vision for the greater kingdom message, and thus are not willing to pay much of a price!

Never defeated through the cross

4:8-12 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; v.9 Persecuted, but not forsaken;

cast down, but not destroyed; v.10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. v.11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. v.12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

The true Christian life does not promise immunity from trouble. Jesus never preached such a gospel, nor did Paul, nor has any other true minister. Jesus said: "Take up thy cross and follow me..." Paul said that the way into the kingdom was through much tribulation (Acts 14:22).

- ◆ Trouble – yes, but we are not distressed by it!
- ◆ Perplexities – yes, but we are not in despair!
- ◆ Persecuted – yes, but Christ is here, and we're not forsaken!
- ◆ Cast down – yes, we've even been knocked to the ground, but we get up again!

No matter what happens, we can't be defeated as we identify with the crucified One. The more that we die to self, the more grace we experience, and the more resurrection life flows out to others. *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest.* As St. Paul was dying to self, the Corinthians were experiencing the flow of life.

This is the message of the crucified life. As we are dying daily, then we can experience the power. We can only have the real power as we identify with the death of Christ and die to ourselves. We do not want people to see us but to see Christ in us. This message still had not fully penetrated the hearts of the young Corinthians. The only way to overcome Satan (Rev. 12:11)

is to not love our lives unto the death. Satan loves himself. He is dedicated to doing his own will. If we are *un*crucified, we are just like him, and we have no power over him.

The spirit of faith

4:13-14 *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; v.14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.*

This is a quote from Psalm 116:10. St. Paul was motivated by the same spirit of faith as those who penned the scripture. (They were all motivated by the Holy Ghost!) What we may think is “our faith” is really “His faith!” (See Hab. 2:4, Eph 2:8)

We believe that the same God who raised up Jesus shall by Jesus raise us up. Paul had the faith of Jesus bearing witness within, and thus he spoke! Yes, Paul manifested the crucified One through his life, but he also had the witness of the resurrection life from within.

All is for your sakes

4:15 *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.*

Here is the true father spirit: *For all things are for your sakes...* The father spirit denies self, if it may benefit the children. St. Paul wanted his children to experience the measure of abundant grace that would in turn glorify the Father in heaven. Let us take note of the phrase: “*through the thanksgiving of many.*” Some

may interpret this to mean that many shall give thanks because they have received the abundance of grace. While this would surely be true, there is also the thought that when we are thankful in our circumstances, it releases the abundance of grace!

Looking at the eternal

4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Paul again uses the phrase, "faint not." A word study on the word "faint" develops into a very encouraging message. The reason St. Paul did not faint during the rigors of the trial was because of the renewing of the inner man (the continual pouring in of grace)!

A submarine is subjected to extreme outer pressures but it is the pressure from within that keeps the walls from caving in.

There is such an emphasis today on the temporal/physical things. I receive mailers almost every day on longevity, miraculous anti-aging pills, miraculous weight loss tonics and pills that promise to renew youth. Perhaps medical science can help you to live healthier for a few more years, but still the outer man perishes.

What really counts in the end is the kind of condition my inner man is in! This is the man that God will be looking at. Paul went through extreme pressure and physical duress, yet he bounced back with new resiliency because of the renewing from within!

4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Did you ever consider some of Paul's "light" afflictions? He was shipwrecked, beaten, robbed, defamed, jailed, betrayed, and he suffered from sickness and rejection. In the light of eternity, the balance tips in our favor. These little trials we go through in life are so small in comparison to the golden crown and the eternal place God is preparing for us.

4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

We must see beyond our time and circumstance. All of the men of faith looked beyond their day. They were looking into eternity. Abraham looked for a city. Moses endured as seeing Him who was invisible: *Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward* (Heb 11:25-26).

The people who had their eyes on temporal things failed miserably in life: (e.g.) Esau, Lot, Balaam, the rich young ruler, and Demas. Let us keep things in true perspective; let us focus on the eternal. Amen!



Chapter Five

The New Creation

As an ambassador of Christ, Paul seeks to reconcile man with God. He even pleads with men, knowing the terror of the Lord and the awesomeness of His judgment seat. (Continue to bear in mind that Paul is speaking to Christians.) Sin separates the Christian from God; therefore, there needs to be continual reconciliation.

Chapter five continues the flow from the previous chapter – our focus on the exterior man is not to be our main concern. It is the inner man, the “new creation” man that should demand our attention. The outward man will perish, but God has a new body prepared for us in the realm of the eternal. The walk of faith will keep our eyes on the eternal things!

Our eternal/immortal body

5:1-4 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. v.2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: v.3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. v.4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

It is comforting to know that there awaits for us an immortal body in heaven. It is flawless, it is youthful, and it has no limitations such as hunger or tiredness or anxiety or sickness or even gravitational pull. Paul having experienced such a dimension (2 Cor. 12:2-3), longs for the bliss of that eternal state.

Paul is not longing to die, but rather he is longing to be clothed upon with immortality. Paul's expression, "*not being found naked*", is referring to his spiritual garments. If man returns to God naked, that means that he has not appropriated the covering that was made available through the shed blood. Herein would be a picture of "lost Adam," unredeemed Adam!

The guarantee of this new body

5:5-8 *Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. v.6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: v.7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) v.8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

Not only has God prepared this immortal body of which we speak, but in the mean time He has given us **the witness** (the earnest of the Spirit). An earnest is a down payment or deposit with the promise that the full measure will be given. We will receive the full amount of the Spirit when we receive our new bodies. Let us also take heed that we may present our guarantee when we arrive at the Celestial City. The pilgrim (in *Pilgrim's Progress*) lost his parchment and had to retrieve it. We cannot enter the city without our parchment (the witness)!

For we walk by faith, not by sight... This is one of the major differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament saints walked a physical journey to a physical promised land – serving as a type to us! Faith does not function on what we see (physically) but on what can't be seen! We know that to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord *by faith!*

There is a doctrine called "soul sleep." This teaching asserts that when we die we are just in a comatose state until the last trumpet sounds. Of course, this is not true and does not agree with Scripture. When Christians die they go immediately to heaven and are with the Lord. When God met Moses at the burning bush He said, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

These had already died, but they did not go into oblivion. God is a God of the living, not of the dead.

We must all appear at the judgment seat

5:9-11 *Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. v.10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. v.11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*

St. Paul speaks of the terror of the judgment. If somebody as saintly as the apostle Paul recognizes how awesome the judgment seat is, should we not re-evaluate life? Even Moses trembled and said: *"I do exceeding fear and quake!"*

Paul said in another place: *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do* (Heb. 4:13). Our lives are open and manifest to the eyes of the One who sees all, and *I trust this is made plain to your conscience!*

This is why we labor – yes, we engage all of our powers to do the Master’s will (“*A Charge to Keep*” – Charles Wesley). Because we shall all appear before the Judgment Seat and we shall all give an account of things done in this body. I emphasize this last point because there was a *Gnostic* idea that we only have to account for sins of the spirit, and that the flesh doesn’t matter. That is real license isn’t it?

Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. (Pro. 23:17)

Let us glory because of good conscience

5:12-13 *For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. v.13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.*

Perhaps we would have to return to 2 Corinthians 3:1 to get the full sense of this verse. Paul’s commendation to the Corinthians was through the witness of his inner life. Paul also wanted to give his spiritual children an authority to answer (on behalf of the truth) those who gloried in outward appearance. The apostle had just gone into some depth expounding upon the inner life: *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”*

In verse 13, Paul was saying that we go through great extremities for the Gospel's sake. Whether we appear to be of rational mind or mad, it is unto God and it is for you!

* Festus said that Paul was mad, *And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness* (Acts 26:24-25).

I'll live for Him who died for me

5:14-15 *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: v.15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

Perhaps, this is where the old 19th century hymn came from - *"I'll Live For Him Who Died For Me."* St. Paul said, "The love of Christ constrains us (compels us)." We live because he died for us. He took our death sentence for us! Therefore, let us not live for our own selfish purpose any longer, but let us live to serve Him!

*Was not this the reason that God delivered Israel from Egypt? "Let my people go that they might serve me."
(Ex. 8:1)*

Cannot discern by the flesh

5:16 *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.*

Obviously, the humanity of Christ ended at His death and resurrection. We don't know whether Paul actually saw Christ in His human form. Perhaps Paul was speaking on behalf of (the many) that did company with Christ. Peter knew who Christ was (though veiled in flesh), not because of any human ability, but as Jesus said: *"For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 16:17).

Even the great prophet Samuel would have put the wrong man on the throne, judging from the human perspective (1 Sam. 16:6-7).

I think that this verse is especially relevant to the theme of the last few chapters. The Corinthians judged a book by the cover. St. Paul has been telling them that it is not the exterior that tells the story, it is the hidden man of the heart. The only way that we can discern another person is by the Spirit of God. Remember that a tare cannot be discerned by casual observation.

Even the great prophet Samuel would have put the wrong man on the throne, judging from the fleshy (human) perspective (1 Sam. 16:6-7).

The new creation

5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Here is the Genesis story again. The new day dawns and we begin to see everything (as it were) for the first time. In relating his "born again experience," someone said it was as though he heard the birds singing for the first time. The old world of darkness, chaos and disorder was now coming into order.

New birth is instantaneous, but it is also progressive. Like a newborn baby, we have to grow into the revelation of how it is supposed to work. There is a progressive weaning away from the old life! We can see that the Corinthians still had some of the old life that needed to become new. The renewing of the mind takes time (Rom. 12:1-2).

Ambassadors of Christ - reconciling the world (vs. 18-21)

5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

Let us first understand the word “*reconciliation*.” Suppose that there are two parties that are at odds because the offending party owes a great debt to the other. Then a third party enters the scene and pays the offender’s debt. Thus there is a reconciliation or settlement.

What St. Paul is saying is that Christ is the third party that reconciled us to God, and now that we are reconciled, He has given us (Paul) the ministry of reconciliation – showing man how he can be reconciled to God.

5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

God the Father was going to absolve our debt through the person of His Own Son. God the Father was reaching out through His Own Son. He was going to allow His Own Son to pay for our offenses and trespasses! Now, says Paul, “*He hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*”

5:20 *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

In the United Nations, the ambassadors sit under their particular national banner. As ministers, we represent the kingdom of God, and our duty is to reconcile men to God. That is why God is particular about His ministers. We are representatives of Christ. When Moses lost his temper in front of Israel (Num. 20:12), the Lord said: "You didn't sanctify me in the eyes of the congregation." In other words, "You were a bad reflection of me before the people!"

Christ said: *"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."* (John 17:19)

Christ was very careful to maintain an image for His disciples to imitate!

Why would Paul have to urge the people at Corinth to be reconciled to God? They were born-again, Spirit-filled people. However, there were problems in their lives that grieved and vexed the Holy Spirit. Many times God's people do not know when they are hurting or offending God. That is why we need an expository word, a word that can show the people their need and the remedy.

Reconciliation through the cross of Christ

5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

The cup that Christ was loath to drink was sin. Christ had to become sin; He had to drink (as it were) the sins of the

world. Or as it says in one place: *“being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”* And yet in another place: *“Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses...”*

Christ took our sin. He took the curse and He took all of the weaknesses of man, nailing them to the cross through His Own Body! He removed our transgressions from us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He gave us the power to become holy, and He ever lives to plead for our cause! Praise ye the Lord! (See Isa. 53:6, Gal. 3:13, and Matt. 8:17.)

** The ministry of reconciliation bears good news. Our debt has been paid. Provision has been made for us to have friendship with God. However, we must continue to walk in the light to have fellowship with God (1 Jn. 1:6-7). This is the word of reconciliation that St. Paul preached!*



Chapter Six

Approving ourselves...

In chapter six, Paul exhorts his converts to “receive not the grace of God in vain.” Paul gives a graphic illustration of what grace is all about in his own ministry. In every extreme, whether of good or ill, Paul always upheld a high standard in order that the ministry might not be blamed (or reflect a bad image on God's kingdom). The apostle urges them to be enlarged that they might be thoroughly acquainted with this grace.

Receive not the grace of God in vain

6:1-2 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. v.2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

Verse one is still following the flow of the previous chapter. As ambassadors of Christ, we beseech you not to receive the grace of God in vain. Is this possible, to spurn God's mercy and His entreaty and His love? O yes! The scripture is full of examples of those who rejected the Word of the Lord – of those who rejected their day of visitation – of those who failed to enter into their rest. Paul later tells the Hebrews to beware lest they fail of the grace of God (fail to appropriate God's grace).

Grace can be resisted and rejected. Consider Hebrews 10:29: *“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”* This is speaking to those who had been cleansed by the blood, yet counted it as nothing!

Now is the accepted time... this is a quote from Isaiah 49:8. I hope that we can recognize the awesomeness of these verses. God limits a day (Heb. 4:7). In other words, we can't just come to God on our own terms or in our own time. God draws, convicts, entreats, warns, and even pleads with people (and nations). But then the door of the ark closes, the flood comes and it's too late!! Now is the accepted time (when God is speaking). We have no promise for tomorrow – only today!

*We can't
just come
to God on
our own
terms or in
our own
time.*

* Once again, St. Paul is sending a message to some of the Corinthians that were exhausting their day of grace.

Paul commends his ministry as an example of “true grace” (vs. 3-10)

6:3-5 *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: v.4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, v.5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; v.6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,*

Paul exhausted every effort to be a true ambassador of the kingdom. Sometimes it takes everything we have to keep our mouths closed so that we don't bring reproach upon the gospel. We have to go through many situations wherein we are tested, often before many witnesses. Everybody watches the minister's behavior!

"In all things approving ourselves..." The apostle now begins to list a few of the areas that test the minister - (there are probably 30+).

<i>Approving ourselves in:</i>	
Patience	The minister must not show irritation.
Afflictions	The minister must endure afflictions.
Necessities	The minister must go through lean times with a good spirit.
Distresses	The minister must face distressing situations.
Stripes	Paul rejoiced.
Imprisonments	Paul sang praises.
Tumults	Paul kept his composure.
Labours	Paul made tents to support his work.
Watchings	Paul was vigilant.
Fastings	He fasted often.

The list continues:

<i>Approving ourselves by:</i>	
Pureness	Paul exhibited chaste behavior.
Knowledge	He was a master.
Longsuffering	Paul suffered long with his converts.
Kindness	He was as a nurse (1 Thes. 2:7).
By the Holy Ghost	(By the witness of the Holy Ghost).
Unfeigned love	Paul's love was genuine (1 Cor. 13).

The approval rating continues:

6:7-8 *By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, v.8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;*

<i>Approving ourselves:</i>	
By the word of truth	Paul's word was living!
By the power of God	Paul was confirmed by signs and wonders.
By the armour of righteousness	Paul wore the armor whereof he spake (Eph. 6).
On the right hand and on the left	Paul vanquished the enemy on left and right!
By honor and dishonor	Paul took them both the same.
By evil report and good report	He said, "being defamed, we entreat" (pray).
As deceivers, and yet true	Even Christ was called a deceiver.

6:9 *As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; v.10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things*

Here is the paradox of the gospel. The same stone that causes some to stumble is embraced by others. Paul found the grace of God in every circumstance. He experienced the extremes of both ends of the pendulum, yet retained balance and contentment!

<i>Approved under many conditions:</i>	
As unknown, and yet well known	<i>He was little recognized and yet was so great!</i>
As dying, and, behold, we live	<i>Dying to self, but declaring "Christ liveth in me!"</i>
As chastened, and not killed	<i>"For thy sake we are killed all the day" (Rom. 8:36).</i>
As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing	<i>In the inner man, he was always rejoicing!</i>
As poor, yet making many rich	<i>Paul enriched his converts with the true wealth.</i>
As having nothing, and yet possessing all things	<i>To outward appearance Paul had nothing, yet Paul was a possessor of heaven and earth!</i>

O ye Corinthians, be ye also enlarged

6:11-13 *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. v.12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. v.13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.*

When Solomon took the throne, he requested that God would enlarge his heart (1 Kg. 3:8-10). He wanted to have an understanding and a place in his heart for every one of his subjects. As a minister we need continual enlargement. David said: *"thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress."*

Let us (momentarily) return to the original thought of this chapter. This chapter opens with a sovereign warning not to receive the grace of God in vain. Paul then proceeds, as an ambassador of Christ (one that reflects the kingdom), to show them how that grace had brought divine approval upon every facet of his ambassadorship!

Having thus delivered his soul unto them, it is as though St. Paul cries out: *"O ye Corinthians, we have much room in our hearts for you, but you have little room in your hearts for us."* We have spoken; we have discharged our heart to you. *"Now for a recompense in the same..."* For a fair exchange, open your heart to us; be enlarged in your hearts to receive what God is saying. Recognize us, recognize the true grace that God wants to impart – don't exhaust the day of grace!

The separated walk v. 14-18

6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

In these next few verses, Paul addresses one good reason for their lack of discernment and their half-hearted reception of Paul himself – mixture. God hates mixture because this is exactly what it does; it dulls our spiritual senses!

Marriage to unbelievers:

It is one thing for a person to find the Lord after they have been married. It is another thing for a Christian to marry an unbeliever! What fellowship is there? What kind of sharing can there be? What kind of house can they build together? What kind of children will they produce?

Nehemiah addressed a similar condition in his day. Israel had intermarried with the heathen nations (unsaved). This is what they produced: *“In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people”* (Neh. 13:23-24). When children grow up in a divided home, they will only speak half your language at best!

6:15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

When our friendships and alliances are with the people of the world, then there is a serious problem. May I say that if those alliances continue, in the end, we will follow them, they will not follow us! What fellowship has the righteous with the wicked (*Belial*)? Or what common ground does a believer with an infidel?

6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

These verses tell us there was still a serious problem with idolatry in the Corinthian church. There

We can't expect God to inhabit this temple when it is filled with other loves and desire and imagery.

was still a mixture in their affections and in their worship. Paul tells them: *ye are the temple of the living God* – both corporately and individually. We can't expect God to inhabit this temple when it is filled with other loves and desire and imagery. (Of course the idolatry was quite literal here.)

The second part of this verse is a quote from the Old Testament. Actually, you could find parts of this verse in a number of places, and they all relate to Israel just before they fell. Israel was filled with idolatry, but God promises a cleansing and then a new covenant. (See Jer. 24:7, 31:33, 32:38, and Eze. 11:20, 37:23, 27-28.)

We cannot know the full reality of the New Covenant until the idols have been dissolved in our life. Then will the Lord fully inhabit His people... *dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

6:17-18 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, v.18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Sanctification demands separation from worldly influences and people. It also demands a separation (unto) the things that are holy and to the Lord Himself. "*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate.*" As we study the walk of Father Abraham, we see a life of continual separation: from his homeland, and from idolatrous parents and relatives that did not share the same vision.

Touch not the unclean thing

The phrase, *touch not the unclean thing*, comes from long list of Levitical ordinances. Those ceremonial ordinances all had spiritual implications to them that need to be understood by the church. They concern things that can defile you, things that have death in them, things that have spirits attached to them. There are materials that are full of uncleanness, and materials full of evil spirits (occult). There are many things that Israel was told not to touch, for example, certain pictures. Pictures can have spirits attached to them, as can magazines, books, etc. (See Num. 33:52).

(Acts 19:19) *“Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”*

“And [then] will I be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” There must be a cleansing of our temple before Father God will manifest (or glorify) His true sons and daughters. (See 2 Thes. 1:10.)

* The following chapter follows this theme of holiness (7:1). The church must experience a corporate cleansing (the atonement message) before they are glorified. “The Day of Atonement” precedes “The Feast of Tabernacles.”



Chapter Seven

Godly sorrow worketh repentance

The opening remarks of chapter seven would seem to fit more appropriately at the conclusion of chapter six. St. Paul is still admonishing the Corinthians to perfect holiness that they might receive the full benefits of sonship. (The sixth feast of the Lord will be considered in this portion.)

Chapter seven also continues where Paul had left off in chapter 2:13-14. Paul had begun to tell the Corinthians about what had transpired after writing the first letter and how he had finally connected with Titus. Titus was Paul's contact man who had visited Corinth and had observed their reaction to the first letter. The apostle tells of his joy at meeting Titus, but then diverts from his sentence for the next five chapters. Now St. Paul will resume his story and give further details on the repentance that took place in Corinth. Godly sorrow does work repentance!

The atonement message

7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Having therefore these promises... What promises? The promises that had just been given at the end of the last chapter. The Lord had said that if they would separate themselves from their worldly associations, their idols and their lusts, then He would be their Father, He would walk among them, inhabit them and be their God! If the temple of His Body is to know the full glory of God in these last days, then there must first be a cleansing of the temple! This is spoken to Spirit filled believers!

Sanctification is twofold; it is not only separation from the worldly influence, but it is separation unto the heavenly influence. Therefore, we can play a part in separating ourselves from the unclean things and unclean people. As we seek to please God in this manner, we will find that God will be drawing us in a fresh way, and thus we can play a part in the out-working of the holy nature in our lives. In effect, the more that we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, the holier we become!

The Feast of Atonement

As we have previously mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3:10-11, and 4:7, the first four feasts are named in the first letter. The last three are a bit more ambiguous and are found in the second letter (but only in substance, not in name). It almost seems that the last three feasts were being revealed to those who had repented at the first letter.

The last three feasts have their corporate fulfillment in the last day Church. (We are the last day Church.) Therefore this last day church must have a full understanding of them. In 1973 there was a war in Israel called the Yom Kippur war (the war of atonement). It was called this because it began

on the Jewish feast of Atonement. God was declaring to the world that it was His time to deal with sin in His church. In fact, even naturally speaking, there was an uncovering of sin and corruption in the high places of government. Within the course of the next year, there were over sixty governments in the world that had major house cleanings, including our own "Water-gate."

Today, God is dealing with sin in His Church and is also dealing with us individually. If we are truly walking in the Spirit, God will bring us into upsetting circumstances, the kind that will expose a nature within us that He wants to cleanse. Those who truly fear the Lord will submit to such dealings. It may be captivity, where we must submit to people or circumstances. However, when we submit to these things, knowing that it is in God's purpose, that will allow God to do a deep work in our life! There will be a rooting out of the "old nature" and an implanting of the "new nature" (by His grace). The people who submit to this work will be those who will experience the glorious revival of the last day Church!

God will bring us into upsetting circumstances, the kind that will expose a nature within us that God wants to cleanse.

"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jer. 24:7). (See the appendix on the feasts.)

Receive us

7:2-3 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. v.3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

Once again, Paul is encouraging an enlargement within the hearts of the Corinthians. It was not the idea of his needing personal acceptance or for some personal gratification. We must see the spiritual implications here. It is as Jesus told His disciples: *“He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me”* (Matt. 10:40).

To reject God’s man is to reject the Spirit of God. This was Paul’s concern! In view of the fact that Paul had only done them good and loved them, the apostle says, *“Receive us...”* Receive the message that we are speaking!

Paul conveys his confidence in them

7:4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

Yes, there were some who needed to open up to Paul, but overall Paul had confidence that there was some very good fruit in Corinth. It even seems that the apostle had made his boast (of faith) concerning them. (See verse 16.)

The apostle now proceeds to share his joy at the meeting of Titus. Titus had brought such a good report concerning Corinth that Paul was comforted even in his apparent tribulation.

News from Titus

7:5-7 *For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. v.6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; v.7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.*

As previously mentioned, Paul had taken quite a detour from his opening remarks concerning his meeting with Titus in chapter two. He now continues the story. It seems that Paul had been quite distraught in his spirit as he came into Macedonia (2:13), not only from the apparent troubles that existed there, but also because of the great concerns that the apostle had regarding the first letter he had sent to Corinth. Had they received it? Had they been humbled by it? Had they repented? Had they obeyed? And where was Titus?

“Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” Titus’s coming into Macedonia brought great relief to Paul, not only because he was glad to see Titus, but because of the news that he was bearing. The Corinthians had been greatly humbled and there had been a major repentance.

St. Paul describes the affect of the letter

7:8-10 *For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. v.9 Now*

I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. v.10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Paul did not repent for the letter he had sent them (even though it had grieved them). However, in light of the fact that the church had a major repentance, Paul also had repented (changed his mind) concerning the impending judgments that he had spoken of. Paul had the mind of Christ!

* *“If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them”*(Jer. 18:8).

The letter had brought great conviction to the church; indeed, it had put a certain fear of the Lord in their hearts! But as St. Paul says, this kind of sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation – *“godly sorrow.”* The world sorrows but there is no hope in their end!

The church had passed the test

7:11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

This is still in reference to the incident in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.

As it is stated in the book of Job: *“How forcible are right words!”* The anointed words of St. Paul had pierced their prideful hearts and their was a real acknowledging of their

error. Perhaps we cannot appreciate all that is said in this little verse: *“what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge.”*

May I say from my own experience that when the Lord truly exposes a flaw in your life, and you realize how careless and indifferent you have been, and you realize the damage that might have transpired from your own neglect, how indignant you become with yourself! What fresh resolution comes! What desire to be straight! Paul said, *“Ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”*

True love corrects

7:12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

Paul says in another place, “whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.” Paul not only wrote to deal with the offender and the offended, but to enforce the fact that he cared very much for them. When a father does not correct his son, it only shows that the father does not truly love his son, nor does he care how he shall turn out!

Even Titus is impressed

7:13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

Even the Corinthians must have realized that the judgment inflicted upon the offender was unto life. They must also have

been comforted in the fact that they had been corrected and consequently were on higher ground!

No matter how hopeless the situation looks, the Word of the Lord is going to cause some to hear and there is going to be a change.

* A true son receives correction! The pilgrim (in Pilgrim's Progress), when he erred from the path, was made to lie down and was chastened. Then he went away rejoicing!

Even Titus was impressed with their repentance and their change. We have to believe that the Word of God is doing something. No matter how hopeless the situation looks, the Word of the Lord is going to cause some to hear and there is going to be a change. I am sure that not all of the Corinthians repented, but many of them received the message and had a change of heart.

Paul's boast (of faith) in the Corinthians found true

7:14-15 *For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. v.15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.*

True love believeth all things and hopeth all things. Paul must have declared some very positive things to Titus concerning his beloved Corinthians, and they proved to be true (whew!) This whole situation affected Titus also. Indeed, Titus's heart was very much enlarged toward the Corinthians as well. The Corinthians had given Titus a very honorable reception – with fear and trembling!

Corinthian credibility has improved

7:16 *I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.*

After the church had obeyed Paul's recommendation for dealing with the offender, and had humbled themselves as they did, Paul had a new joy and witness in the Spirit that they would come through.

If our people think that we have confidence in them, they will want to fulfill our expectations and do the thing that is right!



Chapter Eight

That ye abound in this grace also

Chapters 8-9 both deal with the collection for the poor. Statistics tell us that 80% of the offerings given in church comes from 20% of the people. If you have a congregation of 100 people and they give \$1,000, this means that 20 of them gave \$40 each, and the other 80 give about \$2.50 each. Generally speaking, it is not the wealthier people who are the givers.

In writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul puts quite an emphasis on giving. They were not exactly excelling in this grace of *giving*, thus revealing a real spiritual deficiency. True spirituality giveth and giveth and giveth again! Paul wanted the Corinthians to abound in this grace also!

The Macedonian churches an example of giving

8:1-4 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; v.2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. v.3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; v.4 Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

Firstly, observe the fact that God had bestowed this special grace (of giving) to the Macedonian churches. Secondly, observe the depth of this grace. They were willing to give “richly” out of their deep poverty, and even beyond their power – “begging us to receive the gift”! It certainly is a rare scene to see people begging you to take from them. The collection, of course, was for the poor saints in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-3).

When Paul later writes to the Philippian church (Macedonian province) he commends them as the only ones who had sponsored him during a time of need. *“Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only”* (Phil. 4:15). By the way, God promised the Philippians that He would supply all of their needs! Paul was trying to provoke a holy emulation within the Corinthians to give of themselves and of their substance!

Let your spirituality be proved in giving

8:5-8 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. v.6 In-somuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. v.7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. v.8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

The Macedonians had gone beyond Paul’s expectations, giving themselves first to the Lord. Often people substitute giving for service, possibly thinking that their giving to the Lord justifies or makes up for their lack of service to Him. This was not true of

the Macedonians. They were fully at the Lord's disposal, and they were fully at Paul's service also. Their contributions were just an extension of their inward commitment!

It seems as though Titus had already approached the Corinthians about the great need in Jerusalem. Perhaps there had been a token offering taken, but now Paul urges a follow-up of that offering that the depth of their sincerity might be proven. The apostle says, "You abound in spiritual gifts, but put your spirituality into reality!" James tells us of those who can so spiritually say to those in need, "*Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled...*" (Jas. 2:16), without helping to give them food and clothing.

*Be provoked by the church in Macedonia
and abound in this grace also!*

The greatest example of all time

8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Some years ago I was teaching in a very poor country, and while I was there, I happened to preach in a poverty-ridden village. After the service, some of the people began to exclaim their amazement that I should be there. For me to leave the land of luxury and wealth (that's how third world countries view us) and visit their poor village was astonishing to them.

What I did was miniscule in comparison to what our Lord and Master did. He left the ivory palaces above; He left the angelic choirs that worshipped Him; and He left the presence of His Father – to become poor. He divested Himself of the riches

and wisdom and blessing to become a servant. (We are talking about the Co-Creator, the One who spanned the universe!)

He acquainted Himself with poverty and grief and pain... and why? To make us rich! No, He never distributed humanitarian or monetary aid. But, He came to pay a debt we could not pay. He gave us the power to enjoy the true riches of faith, righteousness, love, joy, peace, contentment and power. He gave us power to regain the crown that Adam lost, to regain the sonship that Adam lost, and to regain the paradise that has no end! How can we measure this? (See Phil. 2:5-11.)

Jesus never distributed humanitarian or monetary aid. But, He came to pay a debt we could not pay.

Paul's advice concerning the collection

8:10-11 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. v.11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

It is apparent that the Corinthians had earnestly set into motion a collection for this appeal (for Jerusalem) a year earlier. But as often happens, their campaign had lost momentum. St. Paul urges them to follow through in this endeavor. The way that Christians finish a project says a lot about their character. A wise teacher once told us that he could tell who the "finishers" were by the way they finished their essays. Many who begin with great luster often fizz out at the end.

We might also observe that Paul was not asking for that which they didn't have, but for that which was within their means! "*So there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.*" If

an evangelist asked people to give beyond their capability, I would think twice!

8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

Observe firstly, that giving is an attitude of heart and mind. Secondly, we are evaluated on what we do have, not on what we do not have. I think it was John Wesley who said, "We shall be judged (evaluated) more on what we have left." The woman who gave her two mites was giving her all. The Lord looked upon the intent of her heart and declared that she had given more than everyone there! (Mk. 12:42-43).

Life's reciprocating process

8:13-15 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: v.14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: v.15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

The Christian life seems to have its ebb and flow of supply. I believe that God has ordained it so, that we might experience the grace of giving and receiving. It seems that at this particular time, Corinth could well afford to carry more of the burden. The churches up north had given beyond their ability, and they too were going through hardships.

St. Paul encourages Corinth to pick up the slack because they too would have their time of need and then others would supply for their want! "*That there may be equality.*" Every part of the body of Christ has its time to supply.

Verse 16 is a quote from Exodus 16:18. Paul uses the example of the daily manna to enforce a principle of the Christian faith. Those who labored, gathering much more manna than they could use, had nothing left – it all rotted away! Those who only provided for their present need had no lack! Let us learn from this principle of faith. Let us be open-handed with this life's goods!

Paul verifies the commission of Titus

8:16-19 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. v.17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. v.18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; v.19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

It may seem a little strange that St. Paul gives thanks for Titus's concern for them, when his concern seems to be collecting money. We must understand that the Corinthians were deficient in this area. Indeed, they had robbed themselves of blessing because they had not given out! Observe what Paul says to the Philippians: *Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.* (Phil. 4:17) The concern was that the Corinthians might lay up some treasure in heaven! (See 11:8-9.)

Titus had accepted the challenge. In fact he was coming to them with another brother, who is thought to be Luke. Luke was of good report in all the churches. This brother was also elected to this ministry by the other churches. Let us understand

that this whole endeavor was to the glory of God, as God delights in those who consider the poor; and further, it would be a declaration of the Corinthian's eagerness to supply. (Titus undoubtedly delivered this letter.)

8:20-21 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: v.21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

There are many who would desire an occasion to blacken the integrity of the church. For this reason, the minister must conduct himself in a very scrupulous manner in regards to money matters. People have tried to accuse Billy Graham of financial impropriety, but could not due to the good bookkeeping of his responsible men. Being honest before God is not enough; we must prove to be honest in the sight of men as well! There was going to be a large distribution of money, and St. Paul urged prudence.

8:22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

The apostle now recommends yet another brother, who was also of faithful character. This man had a great zeal for the endeavor, especially because of Paul's great expectations of the Corinthians.

Being honest before God is not enough; we must prove to be honest in the sight of men as well!

8:23-24 Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the

glory of Christ. v.24 Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

Paul again verifies the commission of Titus and the other brethren. He then adds, "Prove to them also the sincerity of your love." In other words, "Give liberally for this worthy cause!"

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble" (Psa. 41:1).



Chapter Nine

Sow bountifully - reap bountifully

Chapter nine continues the theme of giving. The apostle Paul is promising the Corinthians a visit. To save them embarrassment, he forewarns them that he might have some visitors with him from Macedonia. As you will recall from the previous chapter, the Corinthians had begun a fund-raising campaign a year earlier (for the suffering church in Jerusalem) but had not followed through on this effort. In the mean time, Paul had acclaimed their zeal for this project, which had in turn sparked great enthusiasm in Macedonia. Now St. Paul says, “... lest they come and find you unprepared...”

In this chapter we shall see some of the natural and spiritual benefits of sowing bountifully!

The reason for the early arrival of Titus 1-5

9:1-2 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous [unnecessary] for me to write to you: v.2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

Let us first observe the thought of, *the ministering to the saints*. Ministry involves more than exercising a spiritual gift. It involves meeting the physical needs of God's people as well. I was in a

country where there had been a great disaster, and the foreign churches had sent in much relief (mainly from the U.S.). There was a storehouse full of supplies: clothing, food, blankets and medicine. It would have shocked you to see some of the indifference of the local ministers. They amply partook for all their personal needs, but did not put forth much effort to supply for the needs of their flock. These are not true ministers!

As we have learned from the previous chapter, the Corinthians had eagerly undertaken a relief fund a year earlier, and that endeavor had sparked a crusade.

9:3-5 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: v.4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. v.5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

As the apostle had already proclaimed that the church in Achaia (southern province) was preparing for this effort, Paul wanted to insure that there would be no embarrassment at their arrival. (Paul was coming with visitors from Macedonia.) For this reason, Paul had sent the brethren ahead to complete the effort. We would have to imagine that the Corinthian church incorporated many churches throughout the region. Let us suggest a minimum of 300 churches. This was no small project that needed to come together.

“That the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.” Paul was encouraging willful giving – of their bounty. It was not as though they had to give or that he was trying to extract something from them. Paul did not want

to give the impression that he was coveting something from them, but only that they would fulfill their pledge and come through on their good intentions. Paul said in another place: *"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold..."*

Promise to the liberal

9:6-7 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. v.7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

The law of reciprocity (investment) says that we receive back more than what we invested. This is a law of nature, and it is a law of the spirit. We plant one potato in hopes that we will reap eight potatoes. In the spirit we also reap in greater measure than what we have sown. A minister is sowing when he is behind the pulpit. As ministers, we want to sow the finest of wheat (Psa. 81:16).

- ◆ (Hosea 8:7) *"For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind..."*
- ◆ (Hosea 10:12) *"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy..."*
- ◆ (Hosea 10:13) *"Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity..."*

What we have sown spiritually comes back in greater measure!

There is also the thought from Proverbs 11:25 that the liberal shall live liberally. In other words, life will pour out its wine of cheer and goodness to those who are liberal hearted! God loves a cheerful giver because giving is the very nature of God! God loves to give good gifts to those who ask. He gave

the supreme gift to us, His Own Dear Son! We used to know someone who only gave what she had to – right to the penny! Her tithe might read \$12.96. That is also how she fared in life, right to the penny!

Grace to supply

9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Again, this is the promise to the liberal, that every grace would be extended, that there would be a supply to meet every need – that they might continue to be a blessing to every good work!

The psalmist prays: *“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations”* (Psa 67:1-2). What this prayer is saying is, Lord bless us, that we might take thy saving health to the nations! That is why we want to be blessed and that is why we want to have liberal hearts! *“Give and it shall be given...”*

The righteous give

9:9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

This is a quote from Psalm 112:9. Giving is an act of righteousness. The righteous give to the poor, the righteous extend themselves to further the kingdom of God. The righteous sponsor those who are sent to the mission field, etc. Proverbs 19:17 says: *“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord: and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”*

May I insert here, that the righteous are also prudent in their giving. Naturally speaking, we would never invest into a company that showed little promise of a return. The same must be true in the spirit; we must invest into a work that we believe shall stand the test of time and shall yield eternal dividends. How many Christians have poured their money down the drain in support of some televangelist that was building his own personal empire!

The principle of giving

9:10-11 *Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) v.11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.*

Verse 10 reminds us of what the prophet Isaiah said: *“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater...”* (Isa. 55:10). The same One who gives seed to the sower and supplies bread for your need is God.

Paul is applying a principle: It is God who gives us the power to give seed (monetary seed) to the sower. (In this case, Paul is the sower.) It is also God who blesses the investment, and causes the investor to prosper and accrue spiritual fruit to his account in heaven.

Example: the parable of the pounds: *“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy [invest] till I come”* (Luke 19:13).

Observe: It was the Lord who gave the pound to the investor, and later it was the Lord who blessed the investor for his prudence! For our part, we must exercise both diligence and prudence in the resources that God shall hold us accountable for.

Lastly, this generous act would cause many to be thankful *through us*. Paul was the one who would distribute their liberal gift. This is reiterated in the next verse.

9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

This generous act was going to supply the needs of many saints, who would in turn, overflow with thanksgiving to God.

9:13-14 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; v.14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

Because of their service in giving, the Corinthians were proving (as James said) true religion. They were proving that they were doers of the Word, not just hearers (James 1:22-27). Their generosity would also inspire the recipients to recompense the kindness by prayer for them because their hearts were being touched by the *exceeding grace of God* in them. Truly, when one sows bountifully, he will reap the same.

How can I say thanks?

9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

While we certainly appreciate the goodness extended from His saints (and especially during our time of want), let us not forget the One from whom all blessings flow. How can we measure or even begin to fathom the gift that God gave to us in Christ? Romans 8:32 says, *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* Thank you Father!!!!



Chapter Ten

Defense of Paul's apostleship

The last four chapters of this epistle are flavored with Paul's defense of his apostleship. St. Paul was compelled to defend himself because many false apostles had infiltrated the church and were corrupting the gospel. The Judaisers (for example) taught that the Old Testament customs and regulations such as circumcision should be observed. In order to propagate such error in the churches, they had to undermine the founding father of the work. Thus, the Jewish ministers (and others) were discrediting Paul and his apostolic authority. These teachers whom Paul terms "false apostles" had almost crippled the churches of Galatia. It is sad that Paul had to exonerate himself in such a preposterous manner, but it was not just to defend his apostleship, it was to salvage those who were being seduced by error.

St. Paul's entreaty / warning to his opponents

10:1-2 *Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: v.2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.*

Paul begins his appeal with a gentle entreaty (in the meekness and gentleness of Christ). Even as a father with his children, he hopes that they will be corrected by a simple admonishment. *Who in presence am base among you...* Paul is using the very words that they had spoken against him. They had said, "Paul talks big in his letters, but in real life Paul is nothing!" (See v. 10.)

Paul continues: "But I beg you that I will not have to come and prove my authority against some who think we just walk in the flesh." There was still an element in the church that was saying, "Paul has nothing; Paul is just a man, etc."

There have always been the "Korah companies" that say: "We have what Moses has. Moses is just a man. We don't follow man..." But the true Moses does not want to make some kind of exhibition to prove a point. There are many ministers that I consider my equals. But then there a few who know Christ face to face – and I would not wish to compare myself to them, let alone oppose them! (See Num. 16.)

The spiritual warfare

10:3-4 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: v.4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)*

One of the major differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the transition from the physical realm into the spiritual realm. In the Old Testament the warfare was quite literal – physical weapons against physical enemies. Paul said, "Yes, we are still in this physical form, but our warfare is not in the physical realm. Our battle is in the spirit and our weapons are of the spiritual nature." Paul lists some of the (offensive) spiritual battle equipment in Ephesians 6:10-18:

- ◆ *The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*
- ◆ *Praying always with all prayer*
- ◆ *The anointing – power of his might*
- ◆ *Faith – (by faith) Waxed valiant in fight* (Heb. 11:34).
- ◆ These are a few weapons that bring down spiritual strongholds. There are other things such as spiritual gifts that equip us against the enemy.

Enemies that war against the mind

10:5 *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against [contradicts] the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

Many of the revivalist kings of the Old Testament cleansed the land of the visible idolatries, but it is also said: "...the high places were still there." In other words, there were still the hidden places where the people worshipped other deities. Spiritually, the high places speak of the imaginations—sins of the spirit. In these last days, there shall come a revival that will go beyond the exterior and get to the hidden man of the heart (heart circumcision).

St. Paul had previously mentioned that the god of this world seeks to blind the minds of his subjects, lest they should see the truth (2 Cor. 4:4). The battle against the mind doesn't end when we are saved. The enemy continues to assail our minds with doubts and fears and lies and error and discouragement and things from the past that have never been dislodged, not to mention doctrinal assaults, philosophies, ideologies and reasonings. False doctrines are doctrines of devils that seek to incapacitate us, or damn us if they can. Many of the *strongholds* that we contend with are in the mind – such as some form of delusion that governs our life!

*The battle
against
the mind
doesn't
end when
we are
saved.*

The spirit of antichrist seeks to change God's ordinances and decrees. Of all generations, the 21st century has been corrupted by false ideologies such as: the woman's rights movement, children's rights, free lifestyle rights, etc., These are just a sample of the kinds of spirits that fight against what God says! The fellow-worker is appalled that you don't endorse "children's rights," but they don't consider the fact that children's rights deny parent's rights! "*Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*" As David said, we need our head covered in the day of battle (Psa. 140:7).

10:6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

We cannot exercise this "holy revenge" until we ourselves get into line! Let us draw from a previous statement that Paul had made: "...*what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*" After the Corinthians had experienced repentance, they had a fresh resolve within themselves to retaliate against unrighteousness, beginning in their own lives! (See Psa. 51:13.)

There is also the thought that Paul was waiting for some of them to clean up their act before he took action against the rebellious.

Paul's opponents were "evil affecting" their minds

10:7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

The Corinthians were notorious for looking at the outward appearance. However, the big problem was that their minds were

being evil-affected by those who were trying to discredit Paul and undermine his doctrine! They were saying, "Paul is not of Christ!" Paul was fighting against a spiritual force that was vying for the minds of the Corinthians. (See 2 Cor. 11:3-4.)

10:8-9 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: v.9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

Though some were saying that Paul was trying to terrify them with letters (by threatening their destruction), Paul asserts (unashamedly) that he is far more interested in using his authority to build them up!

10:10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

The opposition was saying that Paul speaks with authority in his letters, but in reality Paul is nothing, and has nothing to back up his talk. They were even appealing to the Corinthian's feeble sense of judgment - judging by outward appearance. Paul's humble (non-assuming) appearance and his non-charismatic voice were to be interpreted as: "weakness." Yet, is it not so, that God uses the weak things and the base things to confound the mighty?

Paul establishes the measure

10:11-12 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present. v.12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

*Here were
a band of
novices,
comparing
their
spiritual
prowess
with other
novices!*

The problem with comparing ourselves with one another is that most of us move in a certain circle of fellowship. When I graduated from a trade school back in the 60's, I considered myself to be topnotch. That was until I started to work with the professionals. Then I had to put my dunce cap on and stand in the corner.

Paul said, "We do not compare ourselves with those who honor themselves." Here were a band of novices, comparing their spiritual prowess with other novices who thought they had something – not a wise procedure! The truth of the matter was, they were all apprentices at the best, and Paul was the master. Paul's rule was: "We don't claim something we don't have – What we have said, we will do!"

We don't claim what God hasn't given

10:13 *But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.*

Consider what King David said: "LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." (Psa. 131:1) In other words, I don't try to involve myself in things that are out of my sphere (things that God hasn't given to me or revealed to me).

Paul was essentially saying this to countermand those who were infringing upon something that was not theirs. Paul had a spiritual inheritance in the Corinthian church, as he says: *a measure to reach even unto you*. The authority that Paul had was God-given, and the Corinthians were included in his jurisdiction!

Corinth was within the given boundary

10:14 *For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:*

We are not stretching beyond our (God-given) limitation when we reached out to you with the gospel, but you were included within that measure.

A spiritual inheritance is God-given. As the psalmist declared: "He shall choose our inheritance for us..." Israel had precise boundaries as tribes and as a nation. In one place the Lord says, "I will not give you so much as a foot breadth here!" (Deut. 2:5).

10:15 *Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,*

Paul did not want to take credit for another man's work. Paul was not a proselytizer. He was not trying to take over somebody else's field or flock. Actually, the reverse was happening to the apostle. Others (false brethren) were trying to impose their false message, and were seeking to draw disciples after themselves.

Taking over another's inheritance

Let me share an incident that took place concerning this very thing. There was a missionary working within a certain fellowship that had the vision and the promise for a particular nation. This missionary decided to pull away from the fellowship and commandeer the work. The head of the fellowship prayed concerning the matter and the Lord said, "Let them keep it because all of his labor is going to be credited to your account!" (The dissident missionaries were not pulling away for any justifiable cause.)

10:15b *But having hope, when your faith is increased...*

Paul continues to hope that as their faith increased, they would also be a means to help further the gospel cause! If the Corinthians lived by Paul's abundant rule, they would further the kingdom indeed!

10:16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

The thought continues from the previous verse. The matured Corinthians would then assist the apostle to preach the gospel in the regions beyond Corinth (not where others had labored). They would not be like the false apostles who took credit for the exploits of others!

Let us glory in the One whose opinion matters

10:17-18 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. v.18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Let us also abide by St. Paul's rule. The gifts and callings come from God; therefore let us glory in Him! Let us also abide within the sphere of God's appointment and seek to have His approval, not the applause of men. As king David said 1000 years before Paul: "*My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad*" (Psa. 34:2).

Throughout this study, the author is giving a particular slant on various verses. Please do not limit other points of view.

There are often many legitimate (spiritual) interpretations to the same verse.



Chapter Eleven

St. Paul resorts to boasting?

In order to counter the (pseudo) ministers, who were boasting of their own greatness and (pseudo) achievements, Paul himself now resorts to boasting. However, Paul's boasting is the antithesis of their boasting. St. Paul will boast of the things, which concern his frailty and peril and cost.

Some years ago I was doing some pioneering work up in Canada and I was staying with some "faith-oriented" people. As we would converse from day to day, their conversation was centered on their personal exploits "in the name of Jesus." They commanded this and that - "in the name of Jesus." They spoke this... they decreed that. They took authority over everything that you could think of (even on the moose hunt). Actually, it was quite depleting to listen to them.

St. Paul lets the Corinthian believer know that there is another side to the gospel and to the true gospel messenger: There is a cost, and there is a loss and there is disappointment and there is pain; yes, and there is failure! But the real faith continues on, and the real ministry goes on!

Paul prepares the Corinthians for some extremity

11:1 *Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.*

As this chapter begins, Paul begs their understanding, as he is about to talk foolishly. Perhaps this is what Paul meant when he said: *“For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God...”* (2 Cor. 5:13). As we get into this chapter, we will see that Paul takes the Corinthians to the extreme edge of the **true** apostolic ministry. The apostle was trying to pull the church back to the middle of the road, after some pretty flamboyant ministers had infected them with their own pride. (The word *folly* means senselessness or foolishness.)

Holy jealousy

11:2-3 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. v.3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

As we study the word of God, we will find that the word *jealous* (in most instances) is a word that relates to God’s feeling for His bride – the church. God is jealous for His people, and His true ministers share the same jealousy! In the Song of Solomon, the young woman is saying to the king: “Be jealous over me. Let the fire of your jealousy burn for me” (cf. Song 8:6). It is a wonderful thing when God is jealous over us and won’t let us go our own way.

The jealousy of God was residing in Paul for the Corinthian believers. He was very particular about what they listened to and who influenced them. He wanted to present his converts *“as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* Paul realized that the subtle influences of the false apostles were corrupting those who were intended to be that bride.

“As the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

The Spirit of truth is not complex. Eve was deceived through her dialogue with the serpent. The serpent took a simple commandment of the Lord and rationalized it away. Adam was not deceived; he knew what he was doing and knowingly went along with the deception because he did not want to lose Eve.

Because women are weaker in their spirit and in their emotions, they are more vulnerable to deception. Most spiritist mediums are women. It is usually the woman who is deceived by the man who flatters. That is why the daughter must always be under her father’s jurisdiction until he releases her to another man at the altar.

The gospel is not complicated. However, man can make it complicated when there is not a clear anointing. But the true anointing makes the gospel message very simple. Isaiah 35:8 says that even a fool will not err on the path of holiness because it is so plain. False doctrines are usually complicated, and they contradict many other parts of scripture.

The daughter must always be under her father’s jurisdiction until he releases her to another man at the altar.

Jesus gave us the key for recognizing the true doctrine:
“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (Jn. 7:17).

Another gospel

11:4-5 *For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not*

accepted, ye might well bear with him. v.5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. (See 12:11)

Paul now begins to toy with the Corinthian mentality of bearing with ministries that had excesses or problems. The Corinthians were very impressed with the flamboyancy of these charismatic apostles – though they preached another gospel. This may seem a bit strange, yet even today the Pentecostal world is impressed with a lot of noise and a lot of flash. We see people crowding into the auditoriums of charismatic ministers who have no message, and worse – no life! They too, preach another gospel: A “cross-less” gospel, a “give-me” gospel, an “easy way” gospel, and a gospel that requires no suffering or endurance. O yes, they do miracles – though they are amply rewarded for them.

Yes, bear with them because you tolerate fools, *seeing ye are so wise* and discerning (18-19). Receive your super-apostles, although I don’t think that we are too far beneath them! (St. Paul uses quite a few puns to show the foolishness of the simple.)

Ordinary in Speech - Extraordinary in Knowledge

11:6 *But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.*

Paul: Well, I might not be quite as eloquent as these (false) apostles are; however, I don’t feel that we are inferior in knowledge. Furthermore, we have made that knowledge clear to you in every way!

Paul’s free service not appreciated

11:7-8 *Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel*

of God freely? v.8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

Paul: Was it a mistake that I chose to abase myself by working with my hands that I might minister to you (Acts 18:3)? Not only was it to refute all challenges to Paul's motives, but as he discloses in verse 12 it was to silence those who claimed equality with him. Paul further states: "I even took from other churches that I might render more service to you!"

11:9-11 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. v.10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. v.11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

It is interesting that these (wise Corinthians) amply supplied the needs of other ministers (1 Cor. 9:12). However, when Paul was there, and in need, he took nothing from them - while he did receive from the churches in the north. Paul was not afraid to receive from the Macedonian saints, but was very loath to receive anything from the Corinthians. Paul knew the carnal hearts of some within the church that were seeking an occasion to challenge his motives and also to claim equality, saying, "We have what Paul has!" (More than likely, it was the opposing ministry.)

"I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself..." Here is one claim that I plan to keep in Achaia: I will take no personal remuneration of any kind! Is it because I don't love you? Paul explains why in the next verse:

11:12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

Paul: "I will continue to refuse any form of personal compensation, that I might silence those who are seeking an occasion to claim that they have what we have." In other words, let them also deny their privilege to be compensated! Let them boast on this one! (Most false ministers can be nailed for unscrupulous financial dealing!)

Please observe the fact that Paul is basically addressing a certain opposing segment within the church. This particular address did not apply to everyone in the church.

Satan in the pulpit

11:13-15 *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. v.14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. v.15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

Satan's greatest challenge is not to delude the world. Those in the world are already deluded and blinded to the truth.

Satan's greatest challenge is not to delude the world. Those in the world are already deluded and blinded to the truth. The greatest challenge of the enemy is to operate behind the pulpit - to distort the truth, and at the least, to incapacitate the believer from accomplishing anything for the kingdom.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Our adversary is not a fool, he is not going to blatantly attack the blood of Jesus, or the cross of Jesus; in-

stead he appears wearing a cross. He is now a minister of righteousness, a messenger of light! Satan has many ministers.

Somebody once related an incident that happened during World War II. It seems there were a few German subs that had infiltrated the North Atlantic near the territory of Iceland. When our Allied planes were flying over that area, the Germans would feign themselves to be Americans and tell the pilots to change their coordinates. It was nothing major, just a degree or two, but over the course of several hundred miles that degree or two was just enough to cause these pilots to miss their refueling station and run out of fuel over the Atlantic and crash!

The man who was relating the story was on one of these planes. He told how the American voice came over the intercom telling the pilot to change his coordinates. However, the pilot asked the voice to identify the code word for the day, and the voice on the other end began to laugh and then started to curse them. Everyone on the plane was shaken up! Had not the pilot challenged that voice, he would have done what previous planes had done.

This is how a minister of Satan works. He takes you a couple of degrees off – a little false grace, a little leaven, and a little tolerance of sin. He teaches a little distortion that will over the miles widen out to major tolerance of sin and promiscuity. And if he can't damn us, he at least wants us to crash so that our life accomplishes nothing for the kingdom!

Whose end shall be according to their works. The false minister will fit into the scenario of Matthew 7:15-23.

*The false apostles were inflicting their toll upon
the gullible Pentecostals of Corinth!*

Paul's turn to boast

11:16-19 *I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. v.17 That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. v.18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. v.19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.*

Paul: "Don't think that I am a fool, yet receive me as one (Since that you gladly receive fools). And, since you are so spiritually discerning, and since you delight in those who brag of their wondrous deeds, allow me to do the same. I, too, can be quite confident in the things I shall brag about!"

Again, Paul is toying with the Corinthian mentality; he is (in effect) trying to show them the folly of those whom they so warmly embraced and listened to.

Again, Paul is toying with the Corinthian mentality; he is (in effect) trying to show them the folly of those whom they so warmly embraced and listened to.

11:20 *For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. (In this verse the word suffer means to allow.)*

Don't you know you are allowing these false ministers to devour you, to bring you into bondage, and even to humiliate you?

11:21 *I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.*

Paul: "Well, as far as reproaching you, and exploiting you goes, we are a bit weak on that score! We couldn't quite live up to the (super) apostles on that one. However, on any other subject, I too can boldly brag!"

* Please suffer the “Caram Commentary” on some of these verses.

11:22 *Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.*

Verse 22 certainly identifies some of the false ministers that Paul was contending with. These are the same ministers that had crippled the churches of Galatia – the Judaisers. These false apostles of Christ (the Judaisers) were boasting of all their attainments and qualifications, and at the same time they were discrediting Paul. This certainly is one of the tactics of the enemy; if the leader can be discredited, then the credibility of his doctrine can also be challenged. Many of the Corinthians were very impressed with these Hebrew teachers, even as they were bringing them into bondage.

If the leader can be discredited, then the credibility of his doctrine can also be challenged.

Paul says, Are they Hebrews – Israelites – the seed of Abraham? So am I. We are even on that score. (See Phil. 3:4-5.)

Top this

11:23 *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

How many ministers could claim the heavenly calling that Paul could (Acts 26:12-19). How many ministers would work to support themselves when they had a church that comprised 70,000 converts? How many ministers could claim the stripes Paul had on his back? How many ministers have been locked in the inner prison? How many ministers have been left for dead after a beating – more than once?

11:24-27 *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. v.25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; v.26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; v.27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

St Paul had about 200 stripes on his back, and his career was far from over; nor was it over for all of the rest of the things mentioned here. Sometimes people think that if they are in the will of God none of these things can happen. However, when we are on the battlefield, there are going to be casualties. We don't have a guarantee of anything, unless God has made us a specific promise. In Deuteronomy 20:5-7, when they went out to war, there was no promise that they would come back, because some of them would not come back.

We know people who have been robbed, involved in severe accidents, and thrown in jail. A missionary friend of ours spent time in a Mexican jail, and it was a miracle that he was released. Other friends in the Philippines had their house stoned every night. People would gather together and throw stones at their house and threaten them. This does not mean you have missed God. People have lost loved ones, been robbed, labored and had very little fruit. God was just working out a greater crown of glory for them.

Beside, the concern for the churches

11:28-29 *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. v.29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?*

Perhaps the greatest burden and suffering of them all was Paul's vicarious sufferings for the churches. Paul later told the Colossians: *"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church"* (Col. 1:24). Paul literally suffered pain to stabilize the churches – as a mother giving birth.

This is not to mention the other forms of intercession that Paul suffered vicariously: *"For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh"* (Col. 2:1). Paul fought great battles in the spirit for the churches.

St Paul could even identify with the weak: *Who is weak, and I am not weak?* Paul shared the infirmities of the weaker brethren that their load might be lightened. *"Who is offended, and I burn not?"* Who falls into sin and error, and I am not grieved? How many of the (super) ministers can claim this?

If I must boast I will boast of my debility

11:30-31 *If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. v.32 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.*

While the super-apostles were boasting of all their great ability and achievement and their claims that "We have anything that Paul has," Paul says, "Well, top this! If I make any claims, it's of my debility and *"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not."*

It is amazing how we always boast of our success. At times it may be good to let people know the other side: "We had seminars and two thirds of the chairs were empty." "We prayed for people to receive the Spirit and nobody seemed to come through..."

Paul's escape from Damascus

11:32-33 *In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: v.33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.*

Not long after Saul's conversion, he narrowly escaped with his life at Damascus (Acts 9:22-25). This was only a foretaste of what his life would be henceforth. He had to depend upon God every day to be preserved; and this dependence produced tremendous humility in the life of the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:19).

In summary of this chapter, Paul said that he would only boast in those things which make him dependent upon God. Humility could be defined as "holy dependence." If God has allowed circumstances in your life that make you dependent upon Him and others, this is His gift to you; for when you are weak (and dependent on God) then you are truly strong. Men and women who are strong in themselves and "confident in the flesh" are susceptible to falling, and they will fall. Dependent men and women are strengthened by God, and succeed.

*Dependent
men and
woman are
strengthened
by God, and
succeed.*



Chapter Twelve

My strength is perfected in weakness

In chapter 12, St. Paul continues with his “abnormal” mode of boasting. Since the Corinthians reveled in the boasts of their super-apostles (who were deluding them), Paul boasts of the things that the false minister cannot possibly boast of, such as suffering for the cause of Christ, enduring hardships and giving out without receiving back. The false minister is there (ultimately) to take – not give!

Chapter 12 also begins with another boast that the Hebrew teachers could not claim – being caught up to the third heaven. Paul claims this experience in the third person – “*I knew a man.*” This was one reason Paul was willing to endure such affliction. Paul knew that in this state of total helplessness and weakness, the power of God would sustain, the power of God would work, and he could experience things the ordinary believer could not. As the Lord said to Paul: “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...*”

St. Paul's boast of heavenly things

12:1 *It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.*

Paul: "This is not for my benefit, but I must boast." Paul later says: "You've compelled me to boast. I will continue to have revelations of the Lord." This was Paul's ministry, and this is what Paul meant (2 Cor. 10:13) about staying within the measure that God had assigned. From his initial call on the Damascus road, Paul was a visionary. Paul knew what "beyond the veil" meant. Paul's very theology came from heaven (Gal. 1:11-12). The false apostle could make no such claim!

The third heaven

12:2-4 *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. v.3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) v.4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

Paul is humbly alluding to himself – *I knew a man*. Often times, this is a legitimate way of sharing an experience wherein you do not wish to implicate yourself. "*Whether in the body, I cannot tell...*" One thing is certain, the experience was so real that Paul could not tell whether he was in the spirit, or whether he was literally transported there.

"Above fourteen years ago...." After Paul's conversion, he dropped out of the scene for about ten years (34-44 AD). This experience that Paul is referring to must have taken place about the end of those silent years. It is comforting to know that at the end of our wilderness there is always a greater revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Paul is writing this about the year 57 AD.)

I have often heard ministers explain away the true interpretation of the “third heaven.” The kingdom of God is always represented in three dimensions. Probably the best illustration is the tabernacle scenario because it is a shadow of heavenly truths. As there are three dimensions in the tabernacle, so there are three levels in heaven. There is (if I could say) an outer court, a holy place and the holiest place – the Mt. Zion of heaven.

The hidden manna

Paul experienced the Holy of Holies – the third heaven – where he ate the hidden manna. One of the promises to the overcomer is: *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna...”* (Rev. 2:17) The hidden manna was in the Holy of Holies, and it represents the hidden secrets that are only divulged to certain worthy ones. Paul said: *“and [I] heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”*

I will not glory in self

The reason Paul had alluded to himself in the third person was because he did not want to boast of “self.”

12:5-6 *Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. v.6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.*

The reason Paul had alluded to himself in the third person was because he did not want to boast of “self.” In a sense, Paul isolates himself from “this person” that was caught up – “I’ll boast of ‘this fellow’ – but of myself –

No!" (Let the other false apostles boast of the spiritual man.) The spiritual man only works when the natural man stands aside! Therefore, I will not be foolish enough to take any credit for such an experience, even though I would desire to, and it would be true. *"But now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."*

Paul could have done some real boasting on this score, and it would have been true. However, Paul, knowing the tendency of man to glorify man and to save himself from any further humbling declares: "But lest any think of me above what he should..." I will only take credit for my disabilities and weakness.

The messenger of Satan

12:7 *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

There is always a high price tag attached to any great ministry. Paul's extraordinary ministry required a thorn in the flesh. His "third heaven" revelations could have made him exceedingly proud and haughty: *"lest I should be exalted above measure."* Even though one has been crucified with Christ (as Paul had been), man still has the power to come down from that cross. The sin nature can be contained, but it is not eradicated.

The thorn in the flesh was not only for Paul's safety, but also for the sake of others. *"Lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."* God did not want others to worship Paul because of his exceptional ministry and understanding.

"The messenger of Satan" was a demon that was allowed to humble St. Paul! Allow me to share an experience that happened to a very dear minister friend. This man had an exceptional call upon his life. But he too, experienced (for a season) a powerful demon released against him, that repeatedly beat him over the head or buffeted him like a boxer. Today, he ministers an exceptional word that brings conviction, healing and revelation!

Many think that Paul's "*thorn in the flesh*" concerned his vision. Paul alludes to this eye infirmity a few times (e.g. Gal. 4:15).

My strength made perfect in weakness

12:8-10 *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. v.9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. v.10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Many non-Spirit-filled people are taught that healing is not for today. They often use Paul's "*thorn in the flesh*" as a reason not to be healed. Can any of us claim the need for a thorn in the flesh because of the abundance of revelation and because of the exceptional miracles that God works through our lives?

The famed Smith Wigglesworth suffered excruciating pain, even while he was performing tremendous miracles. (He was later healed himself.) Paul realized that there was a tremendous price tag upon his ministry, and he found the grace to accept it. O yes, he had besought the Lord on three separate occasions to be relieved of that infirmity. But the Lord's response was: "*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*"

Paul realized something through his experience of pain and weakness. It was at this moment that the power of God could be manifested through his life. So he responds: "I will gladly suffer... I will take pleasure in all of the humbling experiences of life to see God's power work through me, *"for when I am weak, then am I strong."*

Here is a lesson that the Corinthians surely needed to apply. Their high estimation of self and man's ability had limited God from doing the greater things!

Ye have compelled me to boast

12:11-12 *I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. v.12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*

In verse 11 the apostle Paul comes back to the statement he had made in 2 Corinthians 11:5: *"For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles."* If any church should have endorsed Paul, the Corinthians should have; yet Paul was compelled to compete with these false apostles that were being so highly lauded.

If Paul could eloquently boast of his nothingness, surely these (pseudo) apostles were far less than nothing! In the true perspective of things, Paul was not even inferior to the original apostles. In fact, he had to set one of them straight once.

*Patience
is a sign
of an
apostle
and a
father
virtue.*

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. Paul qualifies his apostleship by the undeniable miracles that he had done in their midst. Yet, let us observe another word that Paul uses to qualify his apostleship – “*in all patience.*” Patience is also a sign of an apostle and a father virtue. Patience is gained by enduring trouble (Rom. 5:3). Patience is a hallmark virtue. The false shepherd is not willing to endure tribulation. Jesus said, the hireling shepherd flees when the wolf comes!

St Paul still refuses to take from them

12:13-14 *For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. v.14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.* (See notes on 1 Cor. 16:7 for “*third time*”)

People generally do not realize the blessing that is incurred when they give. Paul said, “Forgive me for making you inferior in this respect; but I will still honor my personal oath (2 Cor. 11:9-12) that I will take nothing from you.” As you will recall, this was to keep his opponents from trying to compare themselves to Paul. They were takers – Paul was a giver.

For I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. Paul was a true parent, only seeking the benefit of his spiritual children. This is what separates the true fathers and mothers from the false!

12:15 *And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*

The true father loves to give good gifts to his children. The sad truth is, that it is often the ones that we pour the most into that disappoint us the most! As I am writing this, I have just experienced such a disappointment. She was like a daughter to me – she never had a real father. For many years we loved her and poured into her, but then she suddenly turned onto the path of the rebellious. You experience the heart of the Father when it happens. O yes, there is grace but it still grieves you!

Paul is accused of trickery

12:16 *But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with [by] guile.*

In the King James, verse 16 seems to give the reverse sense of its true interpretation. What this verse is actually saying is: (“Even though I did not take anything from you, *some say* that I was being crafty and took you by deceit.”) The implication was that Paul had tricked money from them. (Read this in the Amplified Bible.) The following verses help us to get the continuing sense.

12:17-19 *Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? v.18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? Walked we not in the same steps? v.19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.*

“Did any of us try to trick you or make a gain of you? Are not the brethren that I sent unto you of the same spirit as myself? Are we not here to build you up and edify you?” (Undoubtedly, the pseudo-apostles had implanted the notion that Paul was trying to exploit them.) “Do you imagine again that I am trying to defend myself before you? No, it is in the sight of God that we are speaking, and everything we speak is to build you up.”

This reminds us of the godly Nehemiah who came to build up Jerusalem. He took nothing from them, but he conducted much of his business at his own expense. He fed many people at his table! (See Neh. 5:14-19).

Paul fears for the remnant that had not changed

12:20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

There was still a group in the Corinthian church that had not changed their carnal ways; and Paul knew that when he did come, they would see a Paul that they hadn't seen before!

12:21 And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

Let us observe the attitude of the one who must come with the rod. He does not come with a great haughtiness, saying “I warned you!” No parent delights in chastising his children. But St. Paul promised that there would be a wailing by those who

had not repented! There were judgments executed in the early church and the fear of God fell!

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Paul had the authority to release such judgments against them. The Lord promised tribulation to one church if they did not repent (Rev. 2:20-24). Judgment shall again be executed in the last day church, and it will be a clean church!



Chapter Thirteen

The final chapter

In this final chapter, Paul reiterates the fact that he is coming to Corinth, and that he will not spare those who have continued to practice sin. St. Paul was hoping that there would be a turnaround in some of their lives (as he had previously stated), that he might come in love and in the spirit of meekness. Paul only wanted to use his power for edification. He urges them to examine themselves, prove themselves, and indeed, to be perfect (complete).

Out of the mouth of two or three

13:1 *This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.*

The apostle declares again that he was preparing to come for a third visit. It was probably early autumn at the time, and he came several months later in early winter, perhaps December.

"In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." Jesus himself quoted this precept from the law (Mat. 18:16; See also Deut. 19:15). The idea of this precept was that one could not be judged unless there were two or three to witness against the offender. Jesus used this precept as

a standard for church judgment. There had to be two or three witnesses present when the offender was charged.

This could apply in several ways to the offending Corinthians. The letter was to be read to the church (this was the second inspired letter). Also, this letter was being delivered by three witnesses – Titus and two other brethren. They would bear witness that the charges were read!

13:2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

It is not quite clear what Paul means here: “[I] foretell you, as if I were present, the second time...” Was this letter *in proxy* of Paul? Did Paul consider this letter a substitute for his being there the second time? Did Paul consider the three witness a verification that he had spoken these things?

Regardless of how you look at this, the Corinthians would be warned twice and it was witnessed! When Paul came again, the chronic offenders would be dealt with!

The witness within

13:3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

As Jesus once said, it shall be My Spirit within you that bears witness to the truth: *“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”* (John 14:17). St. Paul said, since ye seek a proof of

Christ speaking – listen to the mighty witness within you! The word of the Lord through Paul was not weak. It worked effectually and mightily in the listeners who opened their hearts to him (cf. 1 Thes. 2:13).

The power of the crucified life

13:4 *For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.*

The key to the real power is the 'death to self' message.

As we have been examining these epistles, we can't help but observe that "the cross" is the underlying theme. The shadow of the cross seems to fall upon every page. The key to the real power is the "death to self" message. This is the irony of the crucifixion, not only in the life of Christ but in all those who are crucified with him.

When our natural strength is weakened and we refuse to rely on ourselves, then the true power can be manifested. Paul was a living testimony of this message.

Examine yourselves

13:5 *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

As this letter is slowly coming to an end; and though much of this letter has focused on the defense of St. Paul's credibility, Paul now puts his finger upon the real issue: *Examine yourselves*. I think I can safely say this: When our focus shifts to

examining our own character, proving our own testimony, and seeking to know our own selves in the light of the Holy Spirit, our criticism of others will end! Let us, as King David, cry out for the Spirit of God to search us and to know us, and to see if there is any wicked way in me! (Psa. 139:23-24).

Except Christ be in us we are reprobate. The word *reprobate* has the connotation of a castoff, a degenerate, one who is totally worthless and incapable of making a sound choice. Jeremiah said concerning Israel: "*Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them*" (Jer. 6:30). In other words, the only thing that makes the difference in our life is Christ.

I want you to shine no matter what they say of me

13:6-7 *But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. v.7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.*

"But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates." Though our opponents have made us appear to be castoff or reprobate, I trust that because you have that inner witness and because you are not reprobate you shall know that we are true.

Paul prays that they would continue to be honest and to shun evil. It was not so much for his own reputation (since the sheep reflect the shepherd) as for the honor of God and for their own well being. He wanted what was best for them, even if he himself was accounted as a reprobate (or as one rejected). Paul was a true father in every sense of the word.

13:8 *For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.*

The true minister is valiant for the truth. The true minister only seeks to exalt the One who is Truth. As Jesus said: *“He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.”* (John 7:18)

Paul’s desire - their perfection

13:9 *For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.*

St. Paul said in another place: *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation...”* I think this verse (2 Tim. 2:10) gives us the sense of what Paul is saying here. Paul was willing to bear and to suffer many things for the edification of the Corinthian church.

And this also we wish, even your perfection. The word that Paul is using for perfection means a “thorough equipping.” Paul wanted his spiritual children to be thoroughly endowed with all of heaven’s virtues. This is also a message relevant to the last day church. The church that comprises the “bride of Christ” must be thoroughly endowed with every virtue – complete!

May this letter accomplish its purpose

13:10 *Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.*

Paul was hoping that this letter would save him from using sharpness when he came in person. The apostle did not want

to use his power to administer judgment, but for edification. Faithful ministers must not fear offending the guilty by sharp reproofs as they are needful, in private or in public if necessary.

On this thought of judgment: I think that people should be made to realize that much of the blessing they enjoy, and even the beauty they possess, is by virtue of the covering of the authority that God has placed in His church (Ezek. 16). I have seen people rebel against that covering. Then I have seen the covering removed and all hell broke loose upon the offender. Paul had said: "this time I will not spare..."

Closing remarks

13:11 *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

Paul's closing wishes:	
<i>Be <u>perfect</u></i>	This particular word means restored, or repaired – adjusted.
<i>Be of good comfort</i>	Paul wanted them to be cheerful and hopeful.
<i>Be of one mind</i>	Paul encourages unity.
<i>Live in <u>peace</u></i>	This word implies being a peacemaker.

"And the God of love and peace shall be with you." If we want to have the God of love and peace abiding upon our tabernacle,

we must allow these things to become a reality in our lives! The word love means “dear love” (agape). The word peace relates to the Hebrew word shalom, which also includes oneness and prosperity. If we seek peace and reconciliation then we shall know the God of peace!

13:12 *Greet one another with an holy kiss.*

This is still the custom in the East. This was brethren with brethren (Not men with women).

13:13 *All the saints salute you.*

This was written from Macedonia (province to the north). It is wonderful as you travel the earth and find the love of God expressed everywhere through his saints!

The tie that binds

13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.*

This is what binds all of the saints together: The divine influence of our Savior’s grace, the love (agape) of God that is shed abroad in our hearts; and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost which knits us together. This is a good picture of the Trinity and also a good benediction. Amen! Isn’t it wonderful to be a Christian?

Author’s closing comments

St. Paul was hoping that the second letter would bring about the same kind of repentance that the first letter had brought. As pastors or parents, we always hope that our children will be corrected

by words. No parent enjoys inflicting pain upon his children, but when children refuse the loving chastisement of those who watch for their souls, then God lets their own ways correct them!

They will then begin to experience failure and rejection. They will experience heartbreak and heartache – maybe financial ruin, maybe even a literal prison. The Lord mercifully gives opportunity to the offender to see his way and repent. If they are going to be restored, they will accept the judgment with contrition.

Our Heavenly Father prunes the branches that He desires to be fruitful – and He continues to prune them, that they might bring forth “much fruit”! Let us always choose the more excellent way; by taking heed to His loving word and admonishment. Not only to be spared from the bitter path, but that our lives might yield the beautiful fruit of the Spirit, the fruit “Our Father” desires to see. Amen!

*Let us
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Appendix

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I. The Seven Feasts of the Lord

A. The seven feasts revealed in the Corinthian epistles

Paul taught the seven feasts of the Lord and the journey of Israel to all his churches. In fact, Paul made the statement that he taught *the same things everywhere in every church* (1 Cor. 4:17). The feasts are especially evident in the Corinthian epistles. We will find all seven of the feasts either by name or by description in these epistles. The seven feasts give us an overview and a plan for our Christian pilgrimage. These feasts are experiences that will ultimately bring us to completion or perfection!

Israel celebrated the seven Old Testament feasts. These seven feasts are a pattern for spiritual Israel—the Church. The feasts were to be kept in the order laid out in Leviticus chapter 23. They began with the Passover on the 14th day of the first month and concluded with the Feast of Tabernacles at the year's end, or in the seventh month.

The seven feasts not only have a corporate fulfillment (a season to be declared) but also must be experienced in the personal life of the believer in order for him to be complete. The fact that there are seven speaks of perfection. (The number *seven* in the Word means perfection or completion.) This was Paul's desire for the Corinthians, "*even their perfection.*"

B. The believer must experience the 7 feasts of Leviticus 23

1. *Passover* (Lev. 23:5) - speaks of our salvation experience. Our Lamb has been slain for us. His blood has been applied, and it begins our Christian journey. Peter tells us that we are

pilgrims on a journey. Israel had to leave Egypt immediately (to separate from the world). In 1 Cor. 5:7 Paul identifies Christ as our Passover.

2. *Unleavened Bread* (Lev. 23:6-8) - speaks of Christ the living Bread, the pure Word that we must feed upon. In Rev. 19:13 His name is called: "The Word of God." Paul identifies this feast in 1 Cor. 5:7.

3. *Sheaf of the Firstfruits* (Lev. 23:9-14) - speaks of our water baptism experience. Christ arose on this particular feast day as the firstfruits from the dead (1 Cor. 15:23). Paul said, we are buried with Him through baptism and we are risen with Him by the same (See Rom. 6:5).

4. *Pentecost* (Lev. 23:15-22) - this feast is celebrated exactly 50 days after the sheaf offering. Fifty days after Christ's resurrection, the Spirit was poured out upon the Church (Acts 2:1). In the law, there were two loaves presented to the Lord, baked with leaven, showing us that God pours His Spirit out (even) upon the carnal Corinthians! The word Pentecost is used in 1 Cor. 16:8. However, the phenomenon of Pentecost is mentioned throughout the epistle, including the many abuses of that experience. (See the notes on 1 Cor. 16:8.)

Feasts of the seventh month

Seven speaks of fulfillment and completion. It seems as though the last three feasts have their greatest realization at the end of the Church Age! The church has basically had an understanding of the first four feasts until the 1948 generation. There must be a corporate fulfillment of these last three feasts in these days. The last three feasts will bring the Church to completeness!

- ◆ In 1948 there was a spiritual trumpet blown to awaken (both natural and spiritual) Israel. Israel became a nation once again and God began to move afresh in His church.
- ◆ In 1973 the War of Atonement took place in Israel, (on the Day of Atonement) announcing to the world that God would begin to deal with sin in His church. Even in the natural, the following year was filled major government upheavals, such as our own Watergate. More than sixty world governments had major house cleanings, all bearing witness to the fact that God would cleanse His church!
- ◆ Spiritually, the Day of Atonement is the preparation for the last great feast, the feast of ingathering – the Feast of Tabernacles. It was during the Feast of Tabernacles that Solomon's Temple was filled with glory. (Solomon's Temple was a figure of the church finale).

The last three feasts

5. *Feast of Trumpets* (Lev. 23:23-26) - essentially speaks of an awakening to the higher call: "*The first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter*" (Rev. 4:1). Israel experienced their Pentecost (in type) at Mt. Sinai, but then there was the trumpet call to go on to the Mt. Zion. Although the word trumpet is never used, Paul gives a good description of this experience as he describes "the treasure in earthen vessels." (See the comments on 2 Cor. 4:7.)

6. *The Day of Atonement* (Lev. 23:26-32) - was the day the high priest dealt with the sins of the nation. Christ fulfilled this feast when He offered up Himself for the sins of the world – We fulfill this as we experience Romans 6:6. Paul also declared

in Galatians 2:20: *"I am crucified with Christ..."* Christ showed us the way into the holiest through the crucified life! Although the "death to self" message can be found throughout the Corinthian epistles, we have noted 2 Corinthians 7:1 as St. Paul's exhortation to cleanse themselves from the defilement of the flesh. (See comments on the atonement message in 2 Cor. 7:1).

7. The Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23: 33-43) - one of the keys to interpreting this feast is to be found on the occasions in which it was celebrated. There are only a few places that record the keeping of this feast, and they are all associated with revival or with some move of God! For example, it was celebrated when Joshua brought the people into their inheritance... when Solomon dedicated the temple and it was filled with glory. It was also celebrated during the restoration revival of Ezra. Christ appeared in the temple in the midst of this feast as the Teaching Prophet. This is the last day feast that will herald in the next age! St. Paul gives a good description of this feast in 2 Cor. 3:8-11, concerning the glory that excels, and remains! (See comments on 2 Cor. 3:8-9).

C. The seven feasts equate with the seven kingdom parables

The Church generally recognizes the first four feasts. The last three are more obscured. This truth can also be realized in the seven parables of Matthew chapter 13. The seven parables are analogous to the seven feasts. Jesus spoke the first four to the multitude. The last three were only explained to his twelve disciples.

In the corporate sense, the last three feasts have their fulfillment in the 1948 generation. In the Corinthian letters the first four are mentioned by name, while the last three are only mentioned in substance. The last feast, which represents revival, is

the feast of ingathering (or Feast of Tabernacles). It is like the seventh parable, "The net cast into the sea" (Matt. 13:47-50). The net brought in a multitude both good and bad. The Corinthian church is like the last day revival—multitudes come in with the best and the worst.

1. *The sower* (Matt. 13:3) – equates with the Passover, which speaks of salvation. This parable speaks of the seed of salvation (1 Pet. 1:23) "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*"
2. *The tares* (Matt. 13:25) – equates with the Unleavened bread. This speaks of purging out leaven, separating the tares (leaven) in our life by feeding upon the pure Word.
3. *Mustard seed* (Matt. 13:31) – equates with the Sheaf of first fruits. A tiny seed falling into the earth – coming forth with much fruit. This speaks of water baptism, being planted with Him and then rising in the newness of life to witness to many. Christ arose on this feast day!
4. *Leaven hidden* (Matt. 13:33) – equates with Pentecost. This speaks of being totally filled with the Spirit.
5. *Treasure hid* (Matt. 13:44) – equates with Trumpets. This speaks of a fresh vision or a wakeup call to go on to the fullness. (See notes on 2 Cor. 4:7.)
6. *Pearl of great price* (Matt. 13:45) – equates with the Day of Atonement. The pearl is formed through suffering. The trial of our faith produces holiness.
7. *The net* (Matt. 13:47) – equates with Tabernacles. This speaks of great revival, a great ingathering at end of the age!

II. Corinthian judgment of Paul

These verses concern the Corinthian's prideful judgment of St. Paul. May these verses challenge the integrity of our own heart.

1 Cor. 4:3 *"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self."* In essence, Paul was saying, "It does not really matter what you think of me; it is how God sees me."

1 Cor. 9:3 *"Mine answer to them that do examine me is this..."* The Corinthians were sizing up Paul. I have experienced this with newly Spirit-filled believers and those who have only been saved a short time. We had one fellow who was only filled with the Spirit a couple of weeks and he was reading a verse from Psalm 119:99, which says: "I have more understanding than all my teachers." He took that verse very literally. He was always examining me and thought he knew more than his pastor did – and he was dead serious!

1 Cor. 14:36 *"What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?"* Are you the only ones that speak the Word of God? The Corinthians oozed with spiritual pride. After they had experienced some of the gifts of the Spirit, some of them thought they were God's oracles on earth.

2 Cor. 10:7 *"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's."* Some were saying, "Paul is not of Christ." They were judging Paul strictly from the outward appearance – thinking that Paul was not charismatic enough.

2 Cor. 10:2 *"But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh."* Some were saying that Paul was in the flesh, that his teaching was just theoretical, that he had no power, etc.

2 Cor. 10:10 *"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."* Others were saying, "Paul is nothing! He speaks with authority in his letters, but in person he's nothing!" The great apostle was dealing with some very ungrateful children, and this required much patience.

2 Cor. 10:18 *"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."* They were patting themselves on the back, and accepting preachers who boasted of themselves.

2 Cor. 12:11 *"I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing."* Paul was forced into a mode of boasting in order to counteract the false apostles who were claiming they had what Paul had (or more). Paul boasted of all things the false apostle wouldn't dare to claim: stripes, imprisonment, reproaches and working without pay!

2 Cor. 13:3 *"Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you."* What Paul had imparted to these believers should have been proof enough of his apostolic authority. Those things which Christ spoke through him became mighty in them.

III. The Need of Conversion

(Dr. Paul G. Caram)

Peter and the apostles walked with Christ for three and a half years. They heard the finest teachings ever uttered by man. Not only did they hear the finest teachings, they interacted with the greatest role model and example of all times. Yet, all of them had a major problem! The truths that they understood logically in their minds had not infiltrated the inward parts of their being. Christ told Peter: *“When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”* (Luke 22:32b). All of the truths Peter had heard from the lips of the Master had to be converted into reality and life.

After three and a half years of unleavened teaching, and exercising the ministry gifts of Christ, what was in the hearts of the apostles? Luke 22:24 tells us that *“there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.”* Competition, ambition, comparing, and envy still resided in the bosom of the disciples. Peter tried to murder a man when he swung a sword at the head of the servant of the high priest. Simon asserted that if all men were offended, he would never be offended. He boasted of his superior dedication to Christ above his brethren, and his natural ability to withstand pressure. Yet he ended up cursing and swearing and denying the Lord.

What was the matter with Peter and the apostles and the young Corinthian believers? What is wrong with you? What is wrong with me? We need a major conversion! The truths we know so well have to get into our hearts, even as the prophets had to “eat the book” and it made their belly bitter before they could prophesy (Ezek. 3:1-3,14, Rev. 10:8-11; Job 3:20).

IV. The Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount deals with the most critical issues in man. It addresses the greatest problems man has – problems of the heart. Christ brought in a New Covenant, which would enable the believer to have the laws of God written in his heart. These precepts of the Sermon on the Mount do not become an immediate reality at our new birth. It requires time, growth, experience, wisdom, and many other factors.

Although the Corinthians were not ready at that time to rule and reign with Christ, Paul did not despair of them. He believed they could become “blameless” as they continued to yield their lives to the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 1:8). The Sermon on the Mount is a series of lectures on heart issues. It deals with the “real me”. To the extent that we have this Sermon worked out in our lives, we will reign with Christ. Our eternal rewards will depend on how much of this Sermon has become a reality in us. How we measure up to the precepts of this Sermon will determine our position in the eternal kingdom of heaven. (See Matthew 5:19.)

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:19).

This Sermon is not a reality when we first meet Christ as our Savior, or even after we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. We should view this Sermon as something God desires us to become. To reign with Christ we must be holy (Rev. 20:6). The Corinthians were “sanctified” or set apart for God, but

certainly they were not holy. Paul calls them carnal. The perfecting of true holiness takes time, as the apostle later mentions in Second Corinthians 7:1:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

In actual fact, the Corinthians were in violation of all thirty-three precepts of the Sermon on the Mount presented in Matthew chapters 5 - 7. At this stage of their spiritual growth, they were not yet ready to rule and reign with Christ. The throne of authority is not given to the carnal, and it is not for undeveloped infants. The Corinthians had all of the gifts of the Spirit in operation. They danced and rejoiced, and there were numerous “movings” of the Spirit in their services. Yet, with all of their giftings, Paul tells them that they were still carnal, and “babes.”

The sermon summary:

1. It is a revelation of the new covenant standards.
2. It brings the law into our hearts.
3. It deals with the greatest problems in the heart of man.
4. Our response to it will determine our position in heaven.
5. It is not an immediate reality; it takes time and growth.
6. It is “the more excellent way” – it is the love of God perfected in men.
7. The Corinthian believers were violating it in all of its 33 precepts.

The Sermon on the Mount Mat. 5 – 7

The Corinthians were violating all 33 of its precepts. They were not made perfect in love.

<i>Precept of the Sermon</i>	<i>Violation of the Precept</i>
<p>1. <i>A Grateful Heart (Mat. 5:3)</i> “Blessed are the poor in spirit” <i>(Someone bankrupt, a beggar, thankful for the smallest kindness, opposite of a demanding spirit).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 – They were reigning as kings. 1 Cor. 4:18 – Were puffed up. 1 Cor. 8:2 – Thought they knew it all. 1 Cor. 10:10 – Guilty of murmuring.</p>
<p>2. <i>A Tender Heart (Mat. 5:4)</i> “Blessed are they that mourn” <i>(Not critical of those who are straying; a sadness for the sin and shame in the Church).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:2 – They had not mourned. 1 Cor. 5:6 – No godly sorrow. 1 Cor. 8:12 – Wounding the conscience of immature believers; insensitivity.</p>
<p>3. <i>A Tamed Heart (Mat. 5:5)</i> “Blessed are the meek” <i>(Does not seek revenge or retaliate for wrongs; accepting of circumstances, opposite of wrath).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:1-8 – Taking one another to court. 2 Cor. 12:20 – Wraths, swellings, tumults, backbitings, debates, whisperings.</p>
<p>4. <i>A Disciplined, Hungry Heart (Mat. 5:6)</i> “Hunger and thirst for righteousness” <i>(Abstaining from other fleshly “appetites”).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:2 – Had to be fed with milk because they were not hungry for meat. 1 Cor. 4:8 – They were “full” and satisfied.</p>

<p>5. <i>A Merciful Heart (Mat. 5:7)</i> “Blessed are the merciful” <i>(Kindness in thought life and actions).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 1:10 – Had to put away divisions. 1 Cor. 16:10-11 – Timothy’s ministry was “despised”, making him anxious.</p>
<p>6. <i>A Clean Heart (Mat. 5:8)</i> “Blessed are the pure in heart: <i>(No mixture, perfect in motives and desires).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:7 – Had to remove old leaven. 1 Cor. 5:8 – Mixture. 1 Cor. 10:14 – Warned to flee idolatry. 2 Cor. 7:1 – And be cleansed from filthiness.</p>
<p>7. <i>A Peaceful Heart (Mat. 5:9)</i> “Blessed are the peacemakers” <i>(Peacemakers must first have all conflict removed from their own life; unity begins in me).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 1:10 – Divisions among them (3:3). 1 Cor. 1:11 – Contentions among them. 1 Cor. 5:8 – Malice mixed in them. 1 Cor. 6:5 – No one able to judge rightly. 1 Cor. 14:33 – Confusion among them, of which God was not the author.</p>
<p>8. <i>An Unoffended Heart (Mat. 5:10-12)</i> “Blessed...persecuted for righteousness sake” <i>(Realizing that offenses and injustices are ordained of God to bring us to the throne).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 – They had not suffered enough. They thought they were reigning as kings already. 1 Cor. 4:10, 12 – They were distinguished while Paul was dishonored and persecuted.</p>

<p>9. A Sincere Heart (Mat. 5:13) <i>"Ye are the salt of the earth"</i> <i>(Salt that remains salty, representing sincerity and genuineness that maintains the respect of men).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:1-3 – Carnal, acting like the unredeemed. 1 Cor. 5:1 – Allow immorality that even made the unsaved blush. 1 Cor. 6:1-8 – Quarreled before unbelievers. The world did not respect them.</p>
<p>10. Enlightened, Consistent Heart (Mat. 5:14-16) <i>"Ye are the light of the world"</i> <i>(Letting our light shine without shame or embarrassment; having a life that backs up our words; being a star on course so that others can find their way).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:2, 6 – They were unworthy to judge the smallest matters. They would preach Christ, then make a denial of Him by their inconsistent lives. They were no example to the world.</p>
<p>11. Whole-hearted (Mat. 5:17-19) <i>"Keeping all the commandments, teaching men so"</i> <i>(Rejecting no part of the Word of God; despising no part of God).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 11:19 – There were heresies among them. 1 Cor. 15:12 – Some denied the resurrection and had their own ideas and agendas. 2 Cor. 11:3-4 – They were willing to receive false teachers and reject Paul (2 Cor. 13:3).</p>
<p>12. A Transparent Heart (Mat. 5:20) <i>"Righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees"</i> <i>(No outward show or externalism to impress others as the Scribes and Pharisees).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 1:31 – They gloried in the flesh, in men. 2 Cor. 5:12 – And loved those who gloried in appearance, not in heart.</p>

<p>13. A Harmless Heart (Mat. 5:21-22) "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca" (No slander or contemptuous name calling. This leads to murder. Mercy begins in thoughts, words).</p>	<p>2 Cor. 12:20 – They had to repent of debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults.</p>
<p>14. A Heart Without Ought (Mat. 5:23-24) "First be reconciled to thy brother" (Putting all things right with others where there is an offense or debt).</p>	<p>1 Cor. 13:1-7 – Having all the ministry gifts but treating people abrasively makes a man nothing. God does not accept one's service or offering.</p>
<p>15. A Yielding Heart (Mat. 5:25-26) "Agree with thine adversary" (A belligerent attitude toward our enemy brings hardness into our heart and stirs up our enemy).</p>	<p>1 Cor. 10:32 – Give no offense to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. They had not yet learned the blessings of meekness (6:7).</p>
<p>16. A Morally Clean Heart (Mat. 5:27-30) "Whoever looketh on a woman to lust after her" (Refusing to desire what does not belong to us; adultery begins in the thoughts).</p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:1 – There was fornication among them. 1 Cor. 10:6 – They lusted after evil things. 2 Cor. 12:21 – Had to repent of lasciviousness.</p>
<p>17. A Faithful Heart (Matthew 5:31-32) "Whoso putteth away his wife...committeth adultery" (Will not divorce, but keep vows and covenants. God Himself is a covenant keeping God).</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:2 – Stewards must be found faithful. 1 Cor. 5:1 – One had his father's wife. 1 Cor. 7:10 – Let not the wife depart from her husband (1 Cor. 7:39).</p>

<p>18. A Reverent Heart <i>(Mat. 5:33-37)</i> "Swear not at all" <i>(Will not swear by the Lord's name, assuming to have His backing and blessing).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 10:9 - They were warned not to tempt Christ as others.</p>
<p>19 An Unvengeful Heart "Whoso compels you to go a mile, go twain" <i>(Going the extra mile and not being bitter toward those who take advantage; not demanding justice for ourselves).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:7-8 - "There is utterly a fault among you because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"</p>
<p>20. A Praying Heart <i>(Mat. 5:43-45)</i> "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you" <i>(Hating no one; praying for those who persecute and abuse us. Loving our enemies).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 13:4-8 - The Corinthians were exhorted to bear all things and endure all things. This is perfected love, and they did not yet possess it. Thus, Paul exhorted them.</p>
<p>21. An Accepting Heart <i>Mat. 5:46-47)</i> "If you love those who love you, what reward have ye?" <i>(A heart that is not exclusive or cliquish. Even sinners can love those who love them).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:4 - "One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos." They had broken into camps, into cliques. Each had their favorites and excluded others from their inner circles. 1 Cor. 12:21 - An "I have no need of thee" attitude.</p>
<p>22. A Perfect Heart (Mat. 5:48) "Be ye perfect as your heavenly father is perfect" <i>(Perfection means being "entirely fit").</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 1:10 - Be perfectly joined together. 2 Cor. 7:1 - Perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Cor. 13:9,11 - We wish, even your perfection.</p>

<p>23. A Heart Seeking God's Glory Only (Mat. 6:1-11) "When you do alms or pray do not sound a trumpet" <i>(Our works must be out of right motives to glorify God alone, and not bring attention to ourselves).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 13:4-5 – Love does not vaunt itself and is not puffed up. Perfected love does not draw attention to itself. Love "seeks not her own." Many of the Corinthians had ulterior motives regarding the gifts of the Spirit.</p>
<p>24. A Forgiving Heart (Mat. 6:12-15) "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses" <i>(Forgiveness is the foundation stone of Christianity).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 1:10-11 – Divisions, contentions. 1 Cor. 3:3 – Divisions, envy, strife. 1 Cor. 11:18 – Divisions are rooted in unforgiveness.</p>
<p>25. An Undivided Heart (Mat. 6:19-24) "No man can serve two masters" <i>(Our heart must be set on the right things; we must invest in eternal treasures, not the earthly; we need to have an eternal vision).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 – Thought they were rich, but were poor. 1 Cor. 10:14, 20 – Idolatry, inordinate affections. 1 Cor. 15:12 – Some said there was no resurrection. They were not living for the eternal, but temporal. 2 Cor. 6:15-18 – Exhorted to be "separate".</p>
<p>26. A Believing Heart (Mat. 6:25-34) "Take no thought for tomorrow" <i>(Seeking the kingdom of God first and not worrying about what we will eat, drink or wear).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 10:5 – Warned that Israel was overthrown in the wilderness because of unbelief. 1 Cor. 10:10 – Again warned that Israel was destroyed for murmuring about God's provision.</p>

<p>27. An Unhypocritical Heart (<i>Mat. 7:1-5</i>)</p> <p>“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (<i>Do not be severe with others, judge your own heart. Harshness with others reveals that we are worse.</i>)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:3-5 – Judge nothing before the time.</p> <p>1 Cor. 11:28 – Let a man examine himself.</p> <p>1 Cor. 11:31 – Judge yourself, you won’t be judged.</p> <p>2 Cor. 10:12 – Not to compare one’s self with others.</p>
<p>28. A Wise Heart (<i>Mat. 7:6</i>)</p> <p>“Neither cast ye your pearls before swine” (<i>Do not share sacred things with mockers.</i>)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 2:6-8 – Hidden wisdom is spoken to those who are perfect (or living up to the light they have).</p> <p>1 Cor. 1:18-25 – Wisdom of the world is foolishness.</p>
<p>29. A Seeking Heart (<i>Mat. 7:7-11</i>)</p> <p>“Ask, seek and knock” (<i>God will grant nothing to the passive.</i>)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 9:24 – Run, that ye may obtain.</p> <p>1 Cor. 12:31 – Covet earnestly the best gifts.</p> <p>2 Cor. 6:2 – Today is the day – do not put it off.</p> <p>1 Cor. 4:8 – They thought they had it all (8:2).</p>
<p>30. A Loving Heart (<i>Mat. 7:12</i>)</p> <p>“All things ye would that men do to you, do to them” (<i>This is the “golden rule”.</i>)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 13 – The need for unselfish love that bears, hopes, and endures all things, and does not rejoice at the calamity of other.</p>

<p>31. A Sold Out Heart <i>(Mat. 7:13-14)</i> "Enter ye in at the strait gate" <i>(One who goes God's way, not the popular way).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:19-20 – We are not our own, but another's. 2 Cor. 6:14-18 – We cannot compromise or be friends of evil people or be yoked with unbelievers.</p>
<p>32. A Discerning Heart <i>(Mat. 7:15-23)</i> "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" <i>(By wisdom we know people by the fruit of their life).</i></p>	<p>2 Cor. 11:13 – Such are false apostles - they needed to be told that! 2 Cor. 13:5 – Examine yourselves.</p>
<p>33. An Obedient Heart <i>(Mat. 7:24-29)</i> "Whoso heareth these saying and doeth them" <i>(Building one's life on the foundation of obedience).</i></p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:10 – Let every man take heed how he builds. 1 Cor. 11:2 – Keep the ordinances I delivered to you. 1 Cor. 6:9-10 – Unrighteous build on bad foundations.</p>



