

THE KEY TO SOLVING CHURCH PROBLEMS: EXALT GOD RATHER THAN MAN

Commentary on the Book of 1 Corinthians

by Paul G. Apple, April 2009

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE OF CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION BRINGS GOD'S WISDOM TO BEAR ON THE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS THAT ARE ROOTED IN MAN'S PRIDE AND SELFISHNESS

“Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord . . .” (1:31)
“So then, let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you . . .
And you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.” (3:21,23)

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Preaching Christ ... to center attention on Jesus Christ
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

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Paul Apple, 304 N. Beechwood Ave., Baltimore MD 21228.

webmaster@bibleoutlines.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul majored in English at Princeton University and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, IN in 1979. He lives in the Baltimore area with his wife Karen.



BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

Malick:

Message Statement: Out of a heart of love, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to cease exalting themselves in accordance with natural wisdom, and to limit themselves in accordance with the wisdom of God – the Crucifixion.

Dr. Daniel Wallace:

I think that Dr. Daniel Wallace does an excellent of providing a background study so I am going to refer you to his work.

http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=1203

Leake:

Book of 1 Corinthians filled with the tension in the Christian life between our new life in Christ and ongoing sin in the church. (cf. list of problems in the church vs. list of positive blessings; cf list of familiar quotes – many taken out of context).

Hampton Keathley IV:

Introduction:

Corinth was a strategically located Roman city on the main land route between East and West and was the crossroads for several sea routes. Corinth was famous for its intellectual and material prosperity and was honored with being the capitol of Achaia. It also became famous for its corruption. As Guthrie says, “Its name became a byword for profligacy.”

Paul began his ministry in Corinth on his second missionary journey under much opposition (Acts 18:6-17), but he was able to convert several influential people and consequently remained for about one and a half years in Corinth.

He left Corinth and traveled to Ephesus. The city’s corruption had its influence on the church and Paul heard of the problems and divisions in the church. It is from Ephesus that he wrote and sent this letter to Corinth in about 53 A.D.

Purpose:

Paul’s purposes for writing the Corinthians were several. His first purpose was to deal with several moral problems and the divisions that had formed as people had divided into fan-clubs and were proclaiming themselves followers of Paul, Apollos, Peter or Christ (1:10). His second reason was to deal with several questions that had been asked in a letter the Corinthians had sent to him (7:1). A third purpose that appears throughout the book is Paul’s defense of his apostolic authority.

All of these issues can be related to a problem with pride, and thus in 1:27-29 we have what may be the thesis statement of the book:

. . . but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base

things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

Paul will develop this idea in several different ways to deal with their root problem of pride. They had their eyes on external things like eloquence, social status, ascetic practices, etc. and Paul explains that those things mean nothing in God's kingdom.

Outline:

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
- II. Reproof of Their Sin (1:10-6:20)
 - A. Divisions in the Church 1:10-4:21
 - B. Lack of Discipline in the Church 5:1-13
 - C. Litigation in the Body 6:1-8
 - D. Lack of Purity 6:9-20
- III. Reply to Their Questions (7:1-15:58)
 - A. Concerning Marriage 7:1-40
 - B. Concerning Meat Sacrificed to Idols 8:1-11:1
 - C. Concerning Public Worship 11:2-14:40
 - D. Concerning the Resurrection 15:1-58
- IV. Conclusion (16:1-24)
 - A. Giving 16:1-4
 - B. Paul's Visit 16:5-9
 - C. Treatment of Timothy and Apollos 16:10-12
 - D. Greetings and Benediction 16:13-24

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1199

American Baptist University:

6.1.1. What does Paul's pointed comment in 1 Cor 4:18-19 "*Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power*" indicate about his general attitude towards the Corinthians and the Corinthians' attitude towards him at the time of writing? Based on this how would you interpret Paul's general purpose in writing his letter?

Paul's comment indicates that he believes that the Corinthians or at least some of them are resistant to him and for this reason are not likely to be open to what he has to say in his letter. One should interpret what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians on the assumption that he believes that his readership is hostile to him personally. For this reason, Paul would see his general purpose as overcoming the hostility that has developed since he was last in Corinth.

<http://www.abu.nb.ca/Courses/NTIntro/1Cor.htm>

John Gregson:

The city of Corinth, Greece, was the chief city of Achaia proper; it was located on an isthmus between Aegean and Ionian Seas fifty miles west of Athens. Corinth was a thriving commercial city and a very wealthy one. It was notorious for its luxury and

moral corruption, particularly in the worship of Aphrodite. In the classical Greek *to corinthiazesthai* (to act or behave like a Corinthian) meant to practice fornication which was polite Greek for "go to the Devil." The Temple of Aphrodite on the Acrocorinthus (a mountain 1,500 feet in elevation above the city) had a thousand consecrated prostitutes (*hetroduli*). Its citizens were interested in literature and the arts, especially rhetoric and philosophy. Paul lists some of the city's characteristic sins--fornication, adultery, effeminacy, homosexuality, stealing, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling (abusive speech) and swindling (6:9, 10). . .

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in response to an inquiry that they had made earlier. In fact, Paul's first letter to the church was apparently lost, and it was necessary to write I Corinthians to answer some questions the members wanted answered. Apparently a committee of three, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (16:17), had arrived from the church with questions and problems within the church. The problems addressed in the letter were as follows: partisan factions (1:10 - 4:17); incest (5:1 - 13); seeking justice in law-suits before pagan judges; (Chapter 6); marriage and celibacy (Chapter 7); food offered to idols (Chapter 8); the veiling of women (11:1 - 16); the Lord's Supper, (11:17 - 34); spiritual gifts (Chapters 12 - 14); the resurrection (Chapter 15), and personal greetings and concluding exhortations (Chapter 16). Some "of the household of Chloe," had brought an alarming report about some factions and strife in the church as well as the prevalence of fornication heading up in an outstanding case of incest. Morris quotes Moffat who wrote, "The Church was in the world, as it had to be, but the world was in the Church, as it ought not to be" (p. 25).

<http://www.geocities.com/jwgregson/cor/1corint.htm>

Baxter: Jesus Christ Made Unto Us Wisdom

I. REPROOF – CONCERNING SCHISMS (i. – vi)

(The Corinthians were factiously glorying in men – i.12.)

- Ch. i. Man-exalting schisms (verses 10-17) wrong because salvation by the Cross sets aside man's wisdom altogether (verse 18-31).
 - ii. Man-exalting schisms wrong because the true wisdom imparted by the Spirit, not by man (verses 5-13).
 - iii.-iv. Man-exalting schisms wrong because human teachers only stewards: power is of God (iii. 5, 6, 21, iv. 1).

II. REPLIES – CONCERNING PROBLEMS (vii – xv.)

(The Corinthians had written Paul about problems – vii.1)

- Ch. vii. Reply concerning marriage and celibacy.
- viii.-x. Reply re meats. The principle (viii); Paul's example (ix); Scripture warning (x.); issue (x.23-xi. 1).
 - xi. Reply on sex propriety in the assembly (verses 2-16) and general behaviour at the Lord's Table (verses 17-34).
- xii.-xiv. Reply re spiritual gifts. Dispensed by the Spirit (xii.); poor without love (xiii.); prophecy the best (xiv.).
- xv. Reply concerning resurrection of Saints. Relation to Christ's (verses 1-19); the prospect (verses 20-34); the body (verses 35-49); the "mystery" (verses 50-58).

Baxter: Paul as an Example

It is a superb apologetic when a Christian leader lives so close to His Lord that he can counsel his hearers not only to “Do as I say” but “Do as I do.”

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Loyalty I message, method and motive, | ii. 1-5. |
| 2. Soundness in founding and building, | iii. 10-23. |
| 3. Fidelity as a trustee of saving truth, | iv. 1-6. |
| 4. Endurance of tribulations for Christ, | iv. 9-16. |
| 5. Considerateness of weaker brethren, | vi. 12, viii.13. |
| 6. Foregoing of proper rights and dues, | ix. 12-18. |
| 7. Self-denial for the saving of souls, | ix. 19-23. |
| 8. Self-discipline in body and behaviour, | ix. 27, x. 33. |
| 9. Self-restraint in public assemblies, | xiv. 18-20. |
| 10. Self-abnegation and active gratitude, | xv. 9-10. |

MacArthur: Brief Outline

Calling and benefits of sainthood (1:1-9)

Errors and problems in the church (1:10-16:4) regarding:

Unity (1:10-3:23)

Servanthood (4:1-21)

Morality (5:1-6:20)

Marriage (7:1-40)

Liberty (8:1-11:1)

Men and women in the church (11:2-16)

The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)

Spiritual Gifts (12-14)

The resurrection (15)

Stewardship (16:1-4)

Personal plans and greetings (16:5-24)

Boyer: If Paul were to write a letter to the evangelical, Bible-believing churches of late twentieth century America, I believe it would be much like I Corinthians. Their world was like our world: the same thirst for intellectualism, the same permissiveness toward moral standards, the same fascination for the spectacular. And their church was like our churches: proud, affluent, materialistic, fiercely eager for intellectual and social acceptance by the world, doctrinally orthodox but morally and practically conforming to the world.

Morris: Paul's purpose, then, in writing this Epistle, is principally to set right disorders which the Corinthians took lightly, but which he regarded as grave sins. Secondly, he wrote to answer some questions put to him. Thirdly, he wrote to give some doctrinal teaching, particularly on the resurrection.

Hodge: Paul's relation to the church in Corinth was in some respects peculiar. He was not only the founder of the congregation, but he continued in the closest relation to it. It excited his solicitude, called for the wisest management, tried his patience and

forbearance, rewarded him at times by signal evidence of affection and obedience, and filled him with hopes of its extended and healthful influence. His love for that church was therefore of special intensity. It was analogous to that of a father for a promising son beset with temptations, whose character combined great excellencies with great defects. The epistles to the Corinthians, therefore, reveal to us more of the personal character of the apostle than any of his other letters. They show him to us as a man, as a pastor, as a counsellor, as in conflict not only with heretics, but with personal enemies. They reveal his wisdom, his zeal, his forbearance, his liberality of principle and practice in all matters of indifference, his strictness in all matters of right and wrong, his humility, and perhaps above all, his unwearied activity and wonderful endurance.

OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

THE KEY TO SOLVING CHURCH PROBLEMS: EXALT GOD RATHER MAN

“Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord . . .” (1:31)
“So then, let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you . . . and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.” (3:21,23)

BIG IDEA:

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE OF CHRIST’S CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION BRINGS GOD’S WISDOM TO BEAR ON THE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS THAT ARE ROOTED IN MAN’S PRIDE AND SELFISHNESS

(1:1-9) INTRODUCTION: HOLINESS AND GIFTEDNESS SHOULD CHARACTERIZE THE LOCAL BODY OF CHRIST

(1:1-3) Holiness should characterize the local body of Christ --

- The entire church has been called to be holy (“*saints*”)
- And granted the necessary spiritual resources of grace and peace

(1:4-9) Giftedness should characterize the local body of Christ --

- All that we enjoy comes to us from God’s grace (no room for arrogant pride)
- We should be characterized by thanksgiving that is rooted in God’s faithfulness
- We have been enriched in Christ Jesus

I. (1:10 – 6:20) ADDRESSING PROBLEMS UNDERMINING THE UNITY AND HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH -- THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST REINFORCES THE WISDOM OF GOD WHICH PROTECTS THE CHURCH FROM PRIDEFUL DIVISIONS AND DISORDERS

Church Unity: Paul’s response to the verbal reports of problems in the church at Corinth

A. (1:10 – 4:21) DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH -- EXALT GOD RATHER THAN MAN

1. (1:10-17) Problem of Divisions: Loyalty to Christ cements a church together -- Churches need to be unified around the simplicity and power of the gospel message

(the cross of Christ) rather than loyalty to one particular preacher

2. (1:18 – 4:5) Two Protections Against Divisions in the Church

a. (1:18 – 2:16) The effective communication of the wisdom of God by powerfully preaching the crucified Christ = Exalting God rather than Man

(1:18-25) Wisdom of God: The word of the cross is true power and wisdom --
Only the message of Christ crucified impacts man with the power and wisdom of God

(1:26-31) Nullifying man's pride: Divine election leaves no room for man's pride --
The divine initiative in election nullifies man's pride so that God gets all the credit

(2:1-5) Powerfully preaching Christ --
The effectiveness of preaching derives from its focus on the crucified Christ and its dynamic of the power of God rather than from the eloquence or personality or popularity of the particular preacher

(2:6-8) The mystery aspect of the wisdom of God --
The message of the cross is only foolishness to those who don't understand the coming glory

(2:9-16) Spirit taught truth -- Spirit reveals . . . Spirit inspires . . . Spirit illumines --
The Holy Spirit directs the communication and understanding of divine wisdom through three fundamental processes

b. (2:17 – 4:5) Ego-less construction of the church of God by following the blueprint of the wise master builder = Exalting God rather than Man

(3:1-4) The danger of sectarianism --
Fleshly sectarianism is an unnatural state for the believer and stunts spiritual growth

(3:5-9) Sectarianism defeated by giving all glory to God --
All of the accolades for spiritual ministry should go to God who causes the growth -- not to the particular servants laboring together on God's behalf

(3:10-15) Divine blueprint for spiritual construction --
The hard work of spiritual ministry can reap eternal rewards when we build wisely on the proper foundation

(3:16-17) The sanctity of the local church as the temple of God --
Because the local church is God's holy sanctuary, anyone who damages (destroys / corrupts) it will be punished accordingly

(3:18-23) God's wisdom always trumps man's wisdom --
Two foolish mistakes that undermine God's wisdom and cause division within the local church:
- Thinking too highly of self

- Thinking too highly of any prominent men (notable teachers, spiritual leaders)

(4:1-5) Performance review for Christian ministers --

The judgment of the Lord is all that matters when it comes to ultimate accountability for Christian ministry

3. (4:6-21) Power to Discipline those Causing Divisions in the church

(4:6-13) Exposing arrogant pride and self sufficiency --

Boasting in particular prominent preachers demonstrates arrogant pride and self sufficiency

(4:14-21) Tough love --

Effective spiritual leadership aggressively confronts sin and provides just the right balance of nurture and discipline for the need of the moment to achieve the desired change in behavior

B. (5:1 – 6:20) DISORDERS IN THE CHURCH – REPLACE ARROGANCE WITH GOD’S WISDOM

1. (5:1-13) Immorality Undermines the Unity and Holiness of the Church

No tolerance for sexual sin --

Church discipline must be enforced against sexual immorality

2. (6:1-11) Civil Suits Undermine the Unity and Testimony of the Church

(6:1-8) Competent to judge civil disputes --

Believers should never sue fellow believers in civil court before unbelievers

(6:9-11) Clear distinction between believers and unbelievers -- no exceptions when it comes to qualifying for God’s kingdom --

Unconverted sinners have no part in God’s kingdom -- a transformed life should produce transformed living

3. (6:12-20) Glorifying God in your body supports the unity, holiness and testimony of the church

Eight guidelines to encourage believers to glorify God in their physical body

II. (7:1 – 14:40) ANSWERING QUESTIONS REGARDING PROPER PERSONAL AND CHURCH CONDUCT -- THE GLORY OF GOD REINFORCES SELF DENIAL AND LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN IN ALL AREAS OF CONDUCT

Christian Practice: Paul’s response to the specific questions contained in the letter he received from Corinth

“Now concerning” -- *peri de* -- marks the introduction of each new question or major topic

(7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1)

(also found in 16:1; 16:12)

A. (7:1-24) CONCERNING SEXUAL PRACTICE IN MARRIAGE AND THE APPROPRIATENESS OF DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

1. (7:1-7) Celibacy or sexual union in marriage?

Apart from the gift of celibacy, the consistent pattern of sexual relationships in the marriage union protects from temptation to immorality

2. (7:8-16) Singleness . . . Marriage . . . Divorce . . . Remarriage?

Different situations call for different divine instruction regarding singleness, marriage and divorce (and remarriage)

3. (7:17-24) Bloom where you are planted --

Salvation doesn't mean you should change your physical circumstances

B. (7:25-40) CONCERNING ADVANTAGES OF REMAINING SINGLE

Staying single has much to commend itself . . . But marriage is still a good option

C. (8:1 – 11:34) CONCERNING QUESTIONABLE PRACTICES, THE VOLUNTARY RESTRICTING OF OUR LIBERTIES AND THE UNSELFISH NATURE OF THE MINISTRY

1. (8:1-13) Fundamental Principle: Love Trumps Liberty

Christian liberty must not violate Christian love --

The controlling factor in our decision making regarding debatable areas of Christian conduct must be love

2. (9:1-27) First Century Practice: the Apostle Paul set Aside Personal Rights for Loftier Goals

(9:1-4) Financial support in the ministry --

Spiritual ministers deserve to be adequately supported but also have the freedom to refrain from demanding such rights

(9:15-18) Preaching without pay --

Sometimes gospel ministry involves yielding one's right to financial support --
Four considerations of the Apostle Paul regarding preaching the gospel without demanding his right to financial support

(9:19-23) Identifying with the lost for the sake of the gospel --

The goal of winning souls drives us to restrict our freedom in ways that would serve others in love rather than offend them

(9:24-27) Two motivations for disciplined Christian living --

The value of the eternal prize and the danger of disqualification motivate disciplined Christian living in the warfare against sin

3. (10:1 – 11:1) Further Particulars: Christian Liberty does not Extend to Association with Idolatry

(10:1-13) OT Example from Israel in the wilderness -- Take heed lest you fall -- Persevere to the end --

Inclusion in spiritual privilege no guarantee of participation in spiritual salvation

(10:14-22) Don't mess with false religions --

Members of the one body of Christ can have no association with idolatry (false religion)

(10:23 – 11:1) Situational ethics -- When can I eat meat offered to idols? --

The exercise of Christian liberty must be governed by loving sensitivity and appropriate response to the specific situation

4. (11:2-34) Free-spirited Prohibitions: Correcting Abuses Where Proper Decorum Needs to be Maintained

(11:2-16) Correcting abuses regarding the veiling of women -- The woman is the glory of man --

Women must appropriately acknowledge the authority (headship) of men (by wearing the symbolic cloth head covering) and avoid denials of their God-appointed feminine role

(11:17-34) Correcting abuses regarding the Lord's Supper --

The proper practice of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper:

- promotes the unity of the body
- proclaims the significance of the crucifixion
- protects against divine discipline

D. (12:1 – 14:40) CONCERNING THE PROPER EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH

(could be considered as correcting a third abuse -- continuing the thread from chapter 11; but it seems prominent enough to break out in its own section)

1. (12:1-31) The diversity of spiritual gifts working together in the church

(12:1-11) Understanding spiritual gifts --

The variety of expression of genuine spiritual gifts will consistently exalt Jesus Christ and build up His body

(12:12-31) One body of Christ . . . many diverse members . . . all significant and essential --

The healthy functioning of the local church (the expression of the body of Christ) depends on every member fulfilling their God-appointed role

2. (13:1-13) The supremacy of love -- its permanence and value

Spiritual ministry must flow through the channel of love

3. (14:1-40) The proper regulation of spiritual gifts

(14:1-26) Considerations regarding prophesying and speaking in tongues in the church --

Gifts that edify the church (such as prophecy) must take priority over the gift of tongues

(14:26-40) Orderly church services --

The orderly pattern for worship leadership in the church involves multiple gifted men promoting the goal of edification

III. (15:1-58) ARGUING FOR THE NECESSITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD -- THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST REINFORCES THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE SAINTS WHICH MOTIVATES PERSEVERANCE IN FAITHFUL SERVICE

Core Doctrine: Paul's response to two mocking questions regarding the resurrection of the physical bodies of believers

A. (15:1 – 15:19) THE RESURRECTION: FACT VS FUTILITY

1. (15:1-11) The Fact of the Resurrection --

The core of the gospel message -- The historical fact of the resurrection established --

The faithful proclamation of the gospel -- Focused in the death and especially the historically attested resurrection of the person of Jesus Christ -- accomplishes salvation by the grace of God

2. (15:12-19) The Futility Apart from the Resurrection --

If no bodily resurrection of the dead . . .

6 futile ramifications of no bodily resurrection of the dead

B. (15:20 – 15:34) THE RESURRECTION: VICTORY VS FUTILITY

1. (15:20-28) The First Fruits Guarantee the Full Harvest --

Victory in Jesus --

The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees ultimate triumph

2. (15:29-34) The Futility Apart from the Resurrection --

Doctrine matters -- No resurrection . . . no Christian motivation --

Denial of the resurrection would kill all motivation for Christian baptism, spiritual service and holy living

C. (15:35 – 15:58) THE RESURRECTION: BELIEVABLE AND GLORIOUS

1. (15:35-49) The Future Resurrection Body Explained --

Characteristics of the resurrection body --

Understanding our future resurrection body -- Two areas of analogy and two areas of contrast

2. (15:50-58) The Final Victory over Mortality --
Transformation of the body equips all believers for glory

**(16:1-24) CONCLUSION: GIVING AND LOVING SHOULD
CONTINUE TO BIND THE BELIEVERS TOGETHER**

(16:1-4) Final instruction: Love collection for the saints in Jerusalem -- Consistent giving should be the pattern

(16:5-12) Final itinerary issues: Potential personal visits to Corinth -- Managing expectations

(16:13-18) Final exhortations: Taking care of business -- Combination of strength and love

(16:19-24) Final greetings and farewell

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1: 1-3

TITLE: SALUTATION: APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTION FOR THE SAINTS

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S CALLED SAINTS NEED TO HEED THE MESSAGE FROM GOD'S CALLED APOSTLE

BACKGROUND TO THE EPISTLE:

I. (:1) THE DIVINE CALLING OF THE AUTHOR -- DIVINE APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY LENDS CLOUT TO PAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO THE SAINTS

A. Author = Apostle Paul

"Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God"

1. His Identification

a. Paul's pre-Christian Roots

- Upbringing
- Persecution of the church

b. Paul's Conversion on Road to Damascus

c. Paul's Connection with the Church at Corinth

2. His Apostolic Calling

a. Concept of a "Calling"

- Implies Divine Initiative and Determination
- How does this relate to our spiritual giftedness and role in the church?
- How did this relate to Paul's tent-making role on different occasions?

b. Apostolic Function and Credentials

- Basic Mission of Apostle
- Foundational in the building of the church
- Nature of Apostolic Authority
- Credentials of Apostle

c. Representative of the Head of the Church = *"of Jesus Christ"*

d. Divine Initiative and Determination

"by the will of God"

Mare: Here he refers to it [his apostleship] because his authority has been challenged (cf. 1 Cor 1:12 and 9:1-27).

B. Companion – Accompanied/Assisted by Brother Sosthenes – Family Intimacy Also Lends Clout to These Instructions to the Saints

"and Sosthenes our brother"

Principle: Differing roles of authority in the church do not compromise equality of brotherhood in terms of personal relationships in the church of Jesus Christ.

Principle: Paul's ministry is always portrayed as part of a larger team effort, not as a one man crusade.

Probably the same individual identified in Acts 18:17 as ruler of the synagogue at Corinth during Paul's first visit there. Thus you would have two former Jewish leaders, former opponents of the church of Jesus Christ, who are not united as brothers in their concern for the saints at Corinth. (see Zondervan Pict. Ency of the Bible)

Lenski: In associating himself with this brother Paul conveys the idea that the voice of apostolic authority here unites with the voice of brotherly solicitude and that each is represented in a person who is known to the Corinthians.

II. (:2) THE DIVINE CALLING OF THE RECIPIENTS – HOLINESS SHOULD CHARACTERIZE THE CHURCH OF GOD BECAUSE OF THEIR INTIMATE CONNECTION TO THEIR LORD JESUS CHRIST

A. Application to the Local Church at Corinth

“To the church of God which is at Corinth”

- the church belongs to God . . . not to the Apostle Paul
- Significance of membership in local church
- Context of situation in Corinth

B. Identified as Saints

1. Historical misuse of this term by Roman Catholic Church

MacArthur: A saint, as the term is used in the New Testament, is not a specially pious or self-sacrificing Christian who has been canonized by an ecclesiastical council.

2. Sanctified by Virtue of Our Union with Jesus Christ

“to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus”

Perf passive participle

Grosheide: God has sanctified them. He has liberated them from the unclean world and has put them in a relationship to Himself whereby they might have intercourse with Him (Jn. 17:19; 1 Thess. 5:23).

3. Saints by Calling (and by Nature)

“saints by calling” (same root word)

C. Application to the Universal Church

1. Extends to All Believers Without Exception

“with all”

Ethnic Background -- Gentile vs Jew
Gender -- Male vs Female
Age -- Young vs Old
Social Class -- Rich vs Poor
Not limited by Time – back then or today

2. Not Limited by Physical Location (John 4:24)
“who in every place”

3. Common Faith = Distinguishing Characteristic of Believers
“call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”

- Background from earliest times – concept of Progressive Revelation
Gen. 4:26
- Background from days of Abraham
Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 21:33
- Background from Psalms of David
Ps. 116:4
- Characteristic of Believers in Church Age
Romans 10
- Characteristic of Believers in the day of the Lord
Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21

What do we call on Jesus for?

For Salvation, Deliverance, Provision, Guidance, Protection . . .

Connection to Prayer – the lifeline for believers

Significance of *“the name”* = the character

- need to get to know Jesus Christ better so we can better call on \
His name

Hodge: To call upon the name of any one is to invoke his aid.

4. Common Allegiance
“their Lord and ours”

[Alternative translation would connect these genitives to “their place of worship and ours”]

Cannot have a possessive or exclusivistic approach as if our particular local church or denomination has some special claim on the Lord

How can people take a stand against “Lordship salvation” and claim that calling on the name of Jesus bears no connection to a willingness to own Him as our Lord and God?

Call to Holiness and conformity to the divine will and character runs throughout the epistle.

III. (:3) THE CALLING FOR DIVINE PROVISION OF SPIRITUAL RESOURCES -- GRACE AND PEACE SUM UP THE UNIVERSAL NEED OF SAINTS

A. Two Essential Provisions

1. “Grace”
2. “Peace”

Morris: It is not simply the absence of strife, but the presence of positive blessings. It is the prosperity of the whole man, especially his spiritual prosperity.

B. Two Reliable Providers

1. “from God our Father” – our inclusion in the family of God
2. “and the Lord Jesus Christ” – our allegiance to the head of the Church

Hodge: These infinite blessings suppose an infinite source; and as they are sought no less from Christ than from God the Father, Christ must be a divine person.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What do we view to be our unique *calling* in promoting the kingdom of God?
- 2) How can believers with as many problems and conflicts as the Corinthian believers be viewed as *saints*? Does this diminish the import of that term?
- 3) In what ways do we actively *call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*? In what ways does this short passage support the deity of Jesus Christ?
- 4) Do we slide right over that familiar call for “*Grace and Peace*” or do we rest in the sufficiency of those divine provisions?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: Sometimes, however, it is important to establish one’s right to speak authoritatively on a subject. A person, for instance, who has no medical degree or training or experience would never get a hearing at a conference on medicine. A person’s credentials give some indication as to whether or not what he has to say should

be taken seriously. Paul did not mention his apostleship in order to gain honor as an individual but to gain respect as a teacher of God's Word. He was not an apostle by his own appointment, or even by the church's appointment, but by God's appointment – **by the will of God**. At the outset he wanted to establish that what he had to say was said with God's own authority. Since his message was so corrective, this was of great necessity.

Hodge: The companions of the apostles, whom he associated with himself in his salutations to the churches, are not thereby placed in the position of equality of office and authority with the apostle. On the contrary, they are uniformly distinguished in these respects from the writer of the epistles. . . . Very probably Sosthenes was the amanuensis of Paul in this instance, and Timothy in others.

Lenski: In these greetings the term *caris* or *grace* takes the place of the secular *caireiv*, "that ye rejoice," and denotes the undeserved *favor Dei* as it is in God's heart together with all the gifts of that favor, especially such as pertain to the persons involved. Thus "grace to you" means: May God and the Lord give you an abundance of his undeserved gifts!

And *eirene* is the Hebrew *shalom*, the German *Heil*, and denotes the condition that results when God is our friend, and all is well with us. The objective condition of "peace" is always the fundamental thing which, of course, also has accompanying it the subjective feeling of peace, namely rest, satisfaction, and happiness in the heart. The condition is constant and essential, the feeling may or may not always be present.

Leake: 3 Components of Letter (9/10/06)

I. (:1) The Writer – 4 Things About the Author

A. Name = Paul – not disputed as the author

B. Title = Apostle of Jesus Christ

One sent out on behalf of another person to speak for them; commissioned and gifted by Christ;

Strict Qualifications:

- personal eyewitness of resurrected Christ
- teach with the authority of Christ
- perform genuine miracles
- Preach the gospel and establish the church
- Foundational – so very rare; not present in church today – Eph 2:19-20

Greatness = in whom you represent; not in yourself

C. Appointment – not voted in; didn't pursue it (cf. Gal. 1)

D. His Companion = Sosthenes –

Corinthians knew for sure which brother this was; not a co-author; traveling companion of Paul

II. (:2) The Recipients – 3 Basic Descriptions

Background: City of Corinth

- Where was it
- What was it like?

- commercial port
- political importance
- religious importance
 - Aphrodite = goddess of love and beauty
- Where and When written? On Paul's third missionary journey about 55 AD
- Why Written?
 - Chloe's people gave a report (1:11); correct and re-orient them
 - answering various questions church had raised – starting in 7:1

A. They were a Local Church

- What is a church? – “called out” group; “assembly”

Acts 20:28 – owned by God; purchased with His own blood; cannot be owned or manipulated by the rich

B. Sanctified in Christ Jesus / Saints by Calling

“setting apart” something for God – Perfect Passive Participle – they didn't set themselves apart; happened in the past with abiding results for the present

Positional or Initial Sanctification (vs. Progressive Sanctification)

Based on this, how should they now act?

A Holiness that is not achieved but received as a gift of grace;

Located in Christ

All believers are saints – 6:1; 16:1

You don't get to be a saint by your behavior – these believers were worldly and immoral; yet Paul called them to live up to their Definitional description of saints;

All believers have a divine vocation = saints

C. Part of the Universal Church

We are connected to all believers; not intended as a circular letter; you're just one dot on the map; get in step with what God is doing throughout the world

We don't want to be just an “independent church” but be knit together with other like-minded churches

Importance of local church membership – no such thing as just attendees

Is Jesus your Lord and Master = key to whether or not you are really a Christian

III. (:3) Greeting

A. Grace to you

Wishing God's help to you; wants them to rely on Him

B. Peace

Not just the absence of war; inward prosperity;

Father and Son linked together – distinct, yet one

Note: “Christ” used 4 times in these 3 short verses – everything we have comes from our relationship to Christ

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1: 4-9

TITLE: THANKSGIVING: WE CAN COUNT ON GOD'S GRACE BECAUSE GOD IS FAITHFUL

BIG IDEA:

THANKSGIVING IS ROOTED IN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND FOCUSES ON THE GIFTS OF GOD'S GRACE IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

[THREE EXPRESSIONS OF PAUL'S THANKSGIVING FOR THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS – ALL ROOTED IN THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD]

INTRODUCTION:

Thankfulness for God's grace – in our own life and in the life of our fellow believers – should be the constant refrain on our lips. The Apostle Paul reminds these conflicted Corinthian saints of the blessings of God's grace (past, present and future) in association with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our assurance of continued participation in this privileged family relationship is based not on our own performance but on the faithfulness of God – the one who sovereignly and effectively called us into fellowship with His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. (:4) FIRST EXPRESSION OF PAUL'S THANKSGIVING: APPRECIATING PAST RECEPTION OF THE GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE – GIVEN IN CHRIST JESUS

A. Looking Upwards -- Consistent Emphasis on Thanksgiving

"I thank my God always"

Paul starts off almost every letter with this customary tone of thanksgiving. No one can perform this function of giving thanks for us. We are personally responsible to offer up thanksgiving on a continual basis to our God. This tone is not conditioned on our external circumstances but on the greatness and goodness of our gracious God.

B. Looking Outwards -- Conflicted Corinthians Still the Object of Thanksgiving

"concerning you"

Paul has much to say to them in the way of correction. But their genuine reception of the gospel and union with Jesus Christ makes them first and foremost objects of thanksgiving and participants in mutual fellowship.

C. Looking Inwards – Critical Spiritual Resource

"for the grace of God"

All of the fruit of changed lives flows from God's grace operating in our heart.

Herries: Grace is divine favor given by God to His children. In 1 Cor. Paul speaks of grace as a power given by God to the believer that enables him to live the Christian life.

Bill Gothard: Grace is a dynamic power or desire given by God to help you do things

His way.

D. Looking Backwards to Their Conversion

“which was given you”

No place for pride; no allowance for division; no personal merit or reliance on one's abilities or achievements

E. Focusing on Christ

“in Christ Jesus”

Every spiritual blessing we enjoy flows to us in association with Christ Jesus. He is both the Gift and the Giver. He is our Savior and our very life that we now share.

**II. (:5-7A) SECOND EXPRESSION OF PAUL'S THANKSGIVING:
APPLYING PRESENT SUFFICIENT RESOURCES OF THE GIFTS OF GOD'S
GRACE – HAVING BEEN ENRICHED IN CHRIST JESUS**

A. Overall Spiritual Enrichment in Association with Christ

“that in everything you were enriched in Him”

You lack nothing that you need for spiritual success and fellowship

Herries: One of the problems of the Christian life is an Inferiority Complex -- this is caused by one thing only = Comparison

B. Two Specific Areas of Spiritual Enrichment

1. *In All Speech*

Just as Christ came into this world as the pre-existent Word (*logos*) and fully revealed God, believers can both evangelize and edify with the various gifts of utterance in communicating spiritual truth

2. *In All Knowledge*

Believers are not looking for some new esoteric knowledge that would only puff up, but need to be reminded of the heart of the gospel message regarding our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This experiential knowledge that focuses on our relationship with Christ is mocked as foolishness by the Greeks, but is sufficient for our spiritual growth and vitality.

C. Changed Lives Confirm the Validity of the Gospel Proclamation

“even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you”

D. Application to Sphere of Spiritual Gifts – Assurance of Sufficiency

“so that you are not lacking in any gift”

Therefore, the Corinthians should not feel inadequate and be susceptible to grasping after other so-called impressive gifts that have nothing to do with their enrichment and edification associated with their conversion to Christianity.

**III. (:7B-8) THIRD EXPRESSION OF PAUL’S THANKSGIVING:
ANTICIPATING FUTURE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST –
THE CHANNEL OF GOD’S GRACE AND THE GOAL OF OUR CHARACTER
TRANSFORMATION**

- A. Keep Your Eyes on the Goal
“awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ”

- B. Keep Your Confidence in Ultimate Christlikeness
“who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”

**IV. (:9) ANCHORING ONE’S CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S FAITHFULNESS –
UNITED WITH JESUS CHRIST**

- A. Our Guarantee of Perseverance in the Faith
“God is faithful”

- B. Our Family Fellowship
“through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son”

- C. Our Lord and Savior
“Jesus Christ our Lord”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Does our approach to God and our intercession for other believers reflect a consistent tone of thanksgiving?

- 2) Do we suffer from an inferiority complex or are we fully assured that God’s grace has enriched us in all the ways sufficient for us to live in fellowship with His Son?

- 3) Do we have an eager anticipation for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ?

- 4) Are we confident in the faithfulness of God to confirm us unto the end and ultimately transform us into the likeness of His Son?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Lenski: Paul loves to begin his letters to congregations with a statement of his gratitude for their spiritual well-being. This is an entirely natural way of beginning a letter and resembles many of our letters to friends when we hear that they are doing well. The introduction to the present letter is certainly marked with praise. But the passives show

that this is praise for what God has wrought and not for anything the Corinthians have done. This fact is quite significant for an understanding of the body of the letter, which has much to criticize in regard to the Corinthians.

Hodge: When we remember on the one hand how great is our guilt, and on the other, how great is our danger from without and from within, we feel that nothing but the righteousness of Christ and the power of God can secure our being preserved and presented blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus.

MacArthur: We are saved because God wanted us saved, and we stay saved because God does not change His mind about that desire. We had no part in God's original desire to call us, and we can do nothing to change it. If He called us when we were lost and wretched, He surely will not cease to be faithful to that call now that we have come into fellowship with His Son. The work *koinonia* (**fellowship**) also means partnership, oneness. We are secured to glory by being one with God's beloved Son. We entered the kingdom by grace and we will be kept in the kingdom by grace.

Piper: Do you see the connection between the call of God and the faithfulness of God? The point of the connection is this: if God has called you, then his faithfulness obliges him to keep you -- to keep you persevering in faith. (Same in 1 Thess. 5:23f.) But why? Why is the faithfulness of God at stake in the perseverance of those whom he has called?

If the call of God is just an invitation to come and enjoy the fellowship of his Son, then God's faithfulness doesn't oblige him to keep us there if we try to leave. No, the reason his faithfulness is at stake in our perseverance -- the reason he is committed to keeping us in the faith -- is because his call is the outworking of his choice that we should be brought to glory. "Those whom he predestined he called and those whom he called he justified, and those whom he justified he glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).

What is at stake in our perseverance is God's purpose of election (Romans 9:11). That's why his faithfulness is at stake. If God has chosen us for himself (Eph. 1:4), if he has destined us for glory (1 Cor. 2:7), then his faithfulness commits him to keep us in the faith. For outside the faith there is no fellowship with God and no glory.

Stedman: The word for "enriched" is the word from which we get our word "plutocrat." They were rendered plutocrats, spiritually. They had a wealth of enrichment, and Paul points out that it was in two particular areas, in the word and in knowledge. The word for "speech" here is really the word *logos*, the word of God. This is his first admission to them -- that they were recognized, avid Bible students. They understood the Bible. They did not have the New Testament as we have it -- it was not written yet -- but they had among them New Testament prophets who were preaching and teaching the same truth that we have in the New Testament. Therefore, they had all the truth available to them that is available to us. They were knowledgeable in it, Paul says . . . Yet . . .

They were suffering divisions because they had lost sight of the Lordship of Jesus.

They were immoral because they had forgotten that the members of their bodies were the members of Christ.

They were in lawsuits with one another because they had failed to see that Jesus was judge of the innermost motives of the heart.

They were quarreling because they had forgotten that others were members of Christ's body and, therefore, they were members one of another.

All that the apostle does to heal the hurts at Corinth is to call them back to an awareness of fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jeffries: [despite the failures of the Corinthian believers, Paul recognized that] he or she remains a "work in progress." God will continue the transforming process in the lives of all those who have been called by Him to be saints, even when our stubborn disobedience -- the old Fundamentalists called it "back-sliding" -- seems to be "undoing" His work of grace. Why was Paul still thankful for this heretical, stubborn, ungrateful, materialistic, rebellious group of weak Christians? Because he knew that the work God had begun in each of them would not be abandoned by their heavenly Father.

Goins: Verse 7 begins by affirming the tremendous spiritual potential that God had given the Corinthian Christians. Later in the letter Paul is going to devote three whole chapters to the understanding of spiritual gifts and their place in the life of the church, because the Corinthian Christians lacked proportion and balance in estimating and using these gifts. It was the most exciting, dynamic, gift-filled church you can imagine, but it was a church out of control. But here in this early thanksgiving section, I am convinced that he is rejoicing that they are not lacking in any gift. He is trying to encourage them with the realization that God has held back no resource that would help them to do his work and to be his church in the city of Corinth. . .

Knowing how our story ends means we can live in the present with confidence. Paul wanted to assure his Corinthian brothers and sisters in Christ, right from the beginning of the letter, that their future was as secure as the promises of God. We can be guilty of a kind of spiritual hand-wringing, acting as if we're engaged in a lost cause at times. We can act as if some of the spiritual reversals in our lives are permanent. But our hope is based on the activity of God, and that allows us to believe that whatever our circumstances, we truly are born to eternal life.

Leake: Protection Against Identity Theft:

Introduction: Christians must be alert to a certain form of identity theft. Satan is against us and wants to steal our identity in Christ. He tries to convince Christians they are not truly who God has said we are – casting doubts in our minds about who God says we are. We must anchor our identity in divine revelation. Who are we? Let God our Creator answer that question.

Review from vv 1-3.

Our identity is not tied in with the world. We are a called out assembly. We are connected to Christ. We are saints.

Paul's Opening Thanksgiving (:4-9) - still part of the Introduction to the letter
Background: How the church at Corinth got started – 2nd missionary journey; cf. Macedonia Call; Acts 18:1-11; 18 month ministry there in Corinth starting in about 50 AD;

Strength and continuity of Paul's prayer life – “*always*”

God's grace and the work in Christ that God is doing here saturates this section;
Don't get overbalanced in dwelling too much on the failures of the Corinthians; God was at work here; Paul trying to build the church up; not just blasting them; reminding them that there is power for godly change;

7 IDENTIFYING TRUTHS FOR ALL CHRISTIANS:

I. (:4) Identifying Truth #1 – We were Given Grace by God

Grace that comes from God; they received it; salvation grace emphasis here;

Favor with God which we don't deserve;

only given in Christ Jesus = the location = our identity = united to Christ; we are only branches in the vine

Corinthians struggled with self-sufficiency and pride and boasting = why they needed this emphasis on grace and Christ; Christ = our address = where we live

II. (:5) Identifying Truth #2 -- We Were Enriched by God

God's riches at Christ's expense

God has plenty of riches to bestow on whom He wants

Rom. 11:33; Phil. 4:19

In every category of life; in every way – specifically brings out 2 areas

- Speech – teaching, preaching, prophecy, tongues, evangelism, exhortation – the speaking forth of the truth; outward expression

- Knowledge – broader than a specific spiritual gift of knowledge; every kind of insight and understanding; inward conviction

They did not always use their knowledge and speech in the proper way; not always with love;

III. (:6) Identifying Truth #3 -- We Were Confirmed

A little harder to understand

A testimony that Paul had borne about Jesus Christ among them = the gospel about Christ; seen to be true; substantiated; confirmed

Confirmed in two ways:

- their changed lives = walking in the same way Christ walks

- existence of spiritual gifts among them – all of the evidence of Christ at work in them; all spiritual ministry among them; spiritual dynamic at work

IV. (:7A) Identifying Truth #4 -- We Were Given Sufficiency

“Gifts” – refers to broader reference than just spiritual gifts

Cf. Ephes 1:3

Don't keep asking God for what He has already given us

Our problem is not lack of resources, but weakness of faith;

Speaking of our collective sufficiency – not lone ranger sufficiency;

Our church has been fully equipped to do what God wants to do through us.

V. (:7B) Identifying Truth #5 -- We All As Christians Await Jesus

Present Tense – continual attitude of expectation

Participle connected to main verb = “Enriched” with God's grace with the result that we

should have a longing to see Him and give Him thanks; earnestness, eagerness – not just passively waiting; Our citizenship is in heaven;

Anticipating full salvation including the redemption of our bodies;

Unsaved person only has God's wrath in his future – 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20-21; Our focus should be on the coming of Christ

How much do I really want to see Christ?

(cf. illustration of little dog freaking out over his desire to chase squirrels . . .)

We have a Certain Hope – Titus 2:11-13; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:13 – you can't wait for something if you are not confident it is going to happen; this doctrine of bodily second coming of Christ is essential for orthodoxy

VI. (:8) Identifying Truth #6 -- We Will Be Preserved to the End

God the Father is the one Preserving us;

Same word “confirm” used above; this is a confirmation in the future – unto the end;

Doctrine of the Perseverance of the saints; doesn't mean that believers won't have struggles; cf. Peter whom the Lord prayed for regarding his faith; Christ interceding for us (Rom. 8);

God will sustain my faith in Christ – Matt. 24:13; he who endures to the end . . .; 1 Cor. 15:2; some people have only a superficial type of faith

Heb. 10:38 – those who shrink back to destruction – Rev. 321; John 17:11; 1 Pet. 1:5;

Jude 24; 1 Thess 3:11-13; God is preserving us

That day of the Lord is coming – not Satan's day; not our day; not man's day;

Amos 5:18-20 – crushing of God's enemies = religious hypocrites in this context;

1 Thess 5 – as a thief in the night

Rom. 2:5 – His righteous judgments will be revealed; but we will be preserved blameless

VII. (:9) Identifying Truth #7 -- We Have Fellowship With Jesus

“Faithful” = certain to do all that He has said He will do;

Our Rock; we are saved because God wants us saved; He continues to ensure that salvation;

Deut. 7:9 – the Faithful God; 2 Tim. 2:12-13; God can't deny who He is; can't break His promises – He has chosen to be faithful; 1 Thess 5:24; Rom. 3:3; God will complete the job He began in us

“fellowship” = the whole common life we share with Christ – commonality, partnership, communion – we pray together, worship together, witness, learn, minister together, etc.

Gal. 2:9; 2 Cor. 6:14-15 – we can't have fellowship with unbelievers

Conclusion:

These identifying characteristics should have an impact on how we live

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

TITLE: *PROBLEM OF DIVISIONS: LOYALTY TO CHRIST CEMENTS A CHURCH TOGETHER*

BIG IDEA:

CHURCHES NEED TO BE UNIFIED AROUND THE SIMPLICITY AND POWER OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (THE CROSS OF CHRIST) RATHER THAN LOYALTY TO ONE PARTICULAR PREACHER

INTRODUCTION:

Divisions in the church undermine our testimony and replace submission to Christ with prideful agendas. The ministry gifts have been given to the church for the glorification of Christ – not for the formation of preacher fan clubs. The temptation is to divert our dependence upon our invisible Lord to some visible impressive figure. But we all need to focus our attention on the substance of the gospel message – especially on the cross of Christ which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Too often churches strive for unity by trying to galvanize loyalty around the leadership of one strong leader personality instead of focusing dependence upon the true Head of the Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified for all of the elect to bring us spiritual life and gift all of us all with the privilege of mutual ministry that can bring great glory to God. We need strong preachers and dynamic leadership – but that leadership must always be channeling our devotion and dependence to Christ in a unified focus. That is why the proper functioning of the plurality of elders is such an essential cornerstone to the health and vitality of the local church.

I. (:10) UNITY IN CHRIST IS THE GOAL FOR HIS CHURCH

A. Appeal to Church Unity (viewed as Family Unity)

“Now I exhort you, brethren”

Making an urgent appeal to them as a family member

B. Authority for Church Unity = the Head of the Body

“by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”

C. Affirmation of Church Unity – Requires a certain mindset

1. Positive: Stay on the Same Page

“that you all agree”

Goins: The first positive appeal is that they agree, or literally, that they all speak the same thing. This term is an idiom from classical Greek. It was always used to describe political parties or communities that were free from factions; all agreed on what the party platform was, and there was no competition. We commonly hear the same kind of language today from Democrats and Republicans who call for party unity, because disunity undermines their effectiveness. So Paul is calling the Corinthian Christians to make up their differences and let go of their party slogans.

MacArthur: For a local church to be spiritually healthy, harmonious, and effective, there must, above all, be doctrinal unity. The teaching of the church should not be a smorgasbord from which members can pick and choose. Nor should there be various groups, each with its own distinctives and leaders.

2. Negative: Avoid Choosing Up Sides

“and that there be no divisions among you”

3. Positive: Exercise Common Discernment

“but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

MacArthur: The basic idea is that of putting back together something that was broken or separated so it is no longer divided. The term is used in both the NT and in classical Gr. to speak of mending such things as nets, broken bones or utensils, torn garments, and dislocated joints. Cf. Ro 16:17; Php 1:27.

II. (:11-13) UNITY IS COMPROMISED BY FOCUSING LOYALTY ON A PARTICULAR PREACHER RATHER THAN ON CHRIST

A. (:11) Report of Divisions in the Church at Corinth

“For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you.”

B. (:12) Repetition of Misdirected Allegiance

1. Widespread Problem

“Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying,”

Points out to us today the natural human tendency of all of us to want to align our dependence with some visible, appealing figure. This was not some isolated problem affecting just pockets of people in the church. Everyone was at fault regarding this issue (or at least it was widespread enough that Paul was not just singling out some isolated groups).

2. Loyalty to Paul

“I am of Paul,”

This must have been especially distasteful to the Apostle Paul who found that his preaching of Christ had not produced the desired affect of dependence upon Christ.

3. Loyalty to Apollos

“and ‘I of Apollos,’”

4. Loyalty to Cephas

“and ‘I of Cephas,’

5. False Spirituality “and ‘I of Christ.’”

This problem presupposes that the believers at Corinth were exposed to large doses of ministry from multiple preachers.

Goins: The fourth party named was the Christ party. These were the purists, those who sounded the most spiritual. It was probably the worst of the four parties. There was a self-righteous smugness about these folks. They basically said, "We don't need human leaders at all. Jesus is the head of the body, and we'll just listen to him. We're not going to listen to Paul or Apollos or Peter." This group would have been religiously intimidating in the life of that fellowship, claiming superiority in Bible study and prayer and worship. These were folks you would have heard saying, "The Lord spoke to me on this matter...." They were spiritual elitists who were unwilling to submit themselves even to the apostolic authority that Jesus Christ had defined and put in place for the church. They were just as divisive as the other three groups.

Another Option:

Jeffries: There may or may not have been a "Christ" faction at Corinth.

"There was absolutely no punctuation in Greek manuscripts and no space whatever between words. [1 Corinthians 1:12] may well not describe a party at all. It may be the comment of Paul himself. Perhaps we ought to punctuate like this: ‘I am of Paul; I am of Apollos; I am of Cephas -- but I belong to Christ!’ It may well be that this is Paul’s own comment on the whole wretched situation. "If that is not so and this does describe a party, they must have been a small and rigid sect who claimed that they were the only true Christians in Corinth. Their real fault was not in saying that they belonged to Christ, but in acting as if Christ belonged to them. It may well describe a little, intolerant, self-righteous group."

- **William Barclay:** The Letters to the Corinthians

But **Morris** says the Greek structure makes this alternative interpretation unlikely.

C. (:13) Response to the Problem Focuses on Centrality of Jesus Christ

1. Unity of Christ – Proper Focus on the Person of Jesus Christ

“*Has Christ been divided?*”

2. Cross of Christ – Proper Focus on the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ

“*Paul was not crucified for you, was he?*”

3. Baptism in the Name of Christ – Proper Focus on the Meaning of the Symbolism of the Sacraments of the Church Commanded by Christ

“*Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*”

Sad that this area of baptism has developed into one of the most divisive areas in the church.

III. (:14-17) UNITY IS PROMOTED BY FOCUSING ON THE CENTRAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH = THE PROCLAMATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL IN ALL OF ITS SIMPLICITY AND POWER

A. (:14-16) The Central Mission Is Not: Trying to Compete For Disciples

“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.”

B. (:17) The Central Mission Is: the Proclamation of the Gospel = the Cross of Christ

1. The Apostolic Priority = Preaching the Gospel

“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel”

The church can so easily be diverted from its fundamental mission.

This section is not to minimize the proper importance of baptism. Paul is not saying that the believers did not need to be baptized – only that he did not need to be the one administering it.

Ryrie: Though Paul did baptize some, it is clear from this statement that he did not consider baptism necessary for salvation.

2. The Apostolic Methodology = The Foolishness of Preaching – Simplicity of Spiritual Wisdom

“not in cleverness of speech”

Contrast this with present day marketing emphasis in evangelicalism;

The wisdom of the world accomplishes nothing for the sake of Christ.

3. The Power of the Cross

“so that the cross of Christ would not be made void”

Tragic when believers do not apply the message of the gospel with its freedom from the bondage of sin to their own everyday lives; a divided church is a weak and powerless church

Hodge: During the apostolic age, and in the apostolic form of religion, truth stood immeasurably above external rites. The apostasy of the church consisted in making rites more important than truth.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are Christians called in this passage to *agree* on everything? What is the sphere of agreement that is in view? (I like the famous quote: “If two people think exactly alike on everything . . . then one of them isn’t thinking!”)

2) What has been the cause of church *quarrels* and divisions that you have witnessed in your experience? How could the different sides have moved towards agreement in Christ? Does this passage have anything to say in favor or against the existence of specific denominations?

3) How can Paul say that Christ *did not send him to baptize . . .* when that was clearly part of the Great Commission?

4) What examples do we see today of preachers relying on *cleverness of speech* rather than on the simplicity and power of the message of the cross?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Now, church unity is a very important matter, and, because of its significance, Paul puts it first in the list of problems he has to deal with here at Corinth. Many of the other problems were flowing out of this division within the congregation. Here in Verse 10 he briefly shows us the ground of unity, and the nature of unity in a church. The ground, of course, is the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. "I appeal to you," he says, "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Their relationship to Christ was the unifying factor of the church. There is no other name big enough, great enough, glorious enough, and powerful enough to gather everybody together, despite the diversity of viewpoint and the differences of background or status in life, than the name of Jesus. That is why the apostle appeals to it. He recognizes that we share a common life if we have come to Christ; we are brothers and sisters because we have his life in us. He is the ground, always, of unity. And more than that, we have a responsibility to obey him, to follow his Lordship. Therefore, the only basis upon which you can get Christians to agree is by setting before them the Person of the Lord Jesus, and calling them back to that fundamental base. This is what Paul does here. . .

But yet the apostle says they are to be of the same mind. Now, how could that be? I think the letter to the Philippians helps us here, because in that passage I just quoted from, Paul goes on to say, "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*" {cf, Phil 2:5}. He then goes on to describe for us the mind of Christ, which is a willingness to give up rights and personal privileges and give in and take a lower place. . .

There were, first of all, the loyalists who said, "We are of Paul. He started this church. We came to life in Christ by Paul, and Paul is the one we're going to listen to above all others." So undoubtedly there was a big group that followed Paul.

Then there were the stylists, those who were attracted by the different kinds of preaching, and they had especially been drawn to Apollos. From the book of Acts we learn that Apollos was an outstanding orator in a world that loved and appreciated oratory. He was a rhetorician who was especially capable in the allegorical style of teaching of the Old Testament. I am sure there were many in Corinth who were saying,

"Oh, I love to hear Apollos! He's a great preacher, a warm, capable, eloquent man, who can make the Old Testament come alive!"

Then there were the traditionalists (there always are), those that say, "Well, I don't know about Paul or Apollos. Let's get back to the beginnings. Let's go back to Jerusalem. We are of Peter." (Peter, evidently, had been through Corinth and had preached there.) So they said, "When Peter came, we really felt that we were on solid ground. After all, he was one of the first apostles that Jesus himself called." So they were splitting and arguing and quarreling over the relative merit and authority of these various teachers.

There was still a fourth group, and in some ways I think they were probably the worst. They were drawing themselves up and saying, "Well, you may be of Paul or of Peter or of Apollos, but we are of Christ! We go back to the Lord alone. What he says we'll listen to, not Paul or Peter or anyone else -- it makes no difference to us." With that spirit of self-righteous smugness, they were separating from the rest, dividing up the congregation and quarreling with one another over these things. . .

The first thing Paul says is that it tends to chop up Christ and parcel him out as though his person and his work came in various packages, thus you lose perspective of the whole of Christian theology. When you follow one man you are getting a view of Christ, but there is no teacher in the church who has ever come along -- including the Apostle Paul himself -- who has ever had a totally complete view of Christ. That is why we have four gospels, because not even one of the disciples who was with the Lord was capable of giving us a complete enough view of Christ. It took four viewpoints to report his earthly life and ministry accurately enough to us. God, therefore, has designed that there be many teachers, many preachers, many viewpoints, in a church. In the body of Christ at large there are many who can make a contribution to the understanding of Christ. If you limit yourself to one speaker or one teacher and feed only on him, you are getting a distorted view of Jesus Christ; you are chopping Christ up, dividing him and taking one little portion as one man reports it and ignoring the rest, thus your view of Christ is deficient and unable to satisfy you as it was intended to do.

Now, the second thing Paul says is, "Was Paul crucified for you?" There he indicates that the problem with cliquishness is that it tends to overemphasize the significance of the human leader. It builds him up too much; it makes him a rival, to some degree, of the Lord himself. People begin to think things about him that are not true, and expect things from him that he is unable to deliver. You only have to listen around you today and you find outstanding leaders being held up by their congregations as almost the equal of the Lord himself in their value to the church. We tend to deify men, and people look at them as if they can do no wrong, can make no errors, that they know everything and can settle all questions. I have had to do some degree of battle with this myself. I have had people say to me, "Oh, Mr. Stedman, when you speak I see so clearly! I hang on every word you say. Whatever you say, I believe." (I have been trying for a long time to get my wife to accept that!) But that is a very dangerous attitude, and yet we tend to think of people as being the channel by which deliverance can come to our

heart.

Piper: The burden of the message this morning concerns the goal of Christian unity and its relationship to the cross. The text is 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. What I would like to do is 1) describe the nature of the disunity that Paul is dealing with here; then 2) examine how he undermines the basis of that disunity and attempts to build a foundation for unity; and 3) look at the goal of unity and see what the nature of it is. . .

So evidently what is happening in the church at Corinth is that the people were beginning to polarize behind their favorite teacher. They isolated particular qualifications or strengths of their favorite teacher and began to brag about them. They elevated these characteristics to the point where they derived some sense of superiority from claiming this particular teacher as their own. . .

And the other effect that this truth should have on us is to remind us that our sin is so great that we needed to be saved by nothing less than the horrid execution of the Son of God, and so did our teachers! To boast in a man, to puff him up and to puff ourselves up on his coattail, means that we have forgotten the dreadful condition we are all in without a crucified Savior. The cross breaks the back of all boasting. And so the cross undermines the deepest basis of disunity and lays a new foundation for unity. . .

In other words, it's no big deal who baptizes you. The issue is, what name was solemnly and prayerfully pronounced over you as you were baptized. Did you identify with Christ at that moment or did you identify with a preacher? You contradict the meaning of your baptism when you brag about the man who put you under the water. He is nothing compared to Christ. And not only that, but the very meaning of baptism was death to self and life to God! What a travesty then to make baptism a means of asserting that old self of pride and boasting!

The way Paul attacked this problem was to teach Christian doctrine -- Christian truths -- and to apply them to the Corinthian situation. Namely,

-- Christ is not divided; he is one.

-- Believers possess all things in him, not just the little distinctives of their favorite teacher.

-- No teacher was not crucified for you; Christ was.

-- You were not baptized into a preacher's name; you were baptized into Christ's name.

-- True teachers of the gospel don't try to win converts or party members by preaching with self-enhancing flourishes of eloquence; they die to themselves in preaching Christ crucified.

-- God is the one who produces all spiritual fruit and should get the glory for the results, not man.

MacArthur: It is not that believers are to be carbon copies of each other. God has made us individual and unique. But we are to be of the same opinion in regard to Christian doctrine, standards, and basic life-style. The apostles themselves were different from one another in personality, temperament, ability, and gifts; but they were of one mind in doctrine and church policy. When differences of understanding and interpretation arose, the first order of business was to reconcile those differences. Ego had no place, only the will of God. . .

The inevitable result of such party spirit is contentions, quarrels, wrangling, and disputes – a divided church. It is natural to have special affection for the person who led us to Christ, for a pastor who has fed us from the Word for many years, for a capable Sunday school teacher, or for an elder or deacon who has counseled and consoled us. But such affection becomes misguided and carnal when it is allowed to segregate us from others in the church or to decrease our loyalty to the other leaders. It then becomes a self-centered, self-willed exclusiveness that is the antithesis of unity.

Spirituality produces humility and unity; carnality produces pride and division. The only cure for quarreling and division is renewed spirituality.

Morris: Some at least of the Corinthians were setting too high a value on human wisdom and human eloquence in line with the typical Greek admiration for rhetoric and philosophical studies. In the face of this Paul insists that preaching with wisdom of words was no part of his commission. That kind of preaching would draw men to the preacher. It would nullify the cross of Christ. The faithful preaching of the cross results in men ceasing to put their trust in any human device, and relying rather on God's work in Christ. A reliance on rhetoric would cause men to trust in men, the very antithesis of what the preaching of the cross is meant to effect.

Lenski: The combination of human wisdom with the gospel makes the gospel itself of none effect, kenos, "empty," without inner reality or substance. The gospel would not only lose some quality or some part of itself; it would evaporate entirely and leave only a hollow show of gospel terms and phrases. Instead of saying that the gospel would be made void and empty, Paul writes "the cross of Christ," because this is the very heart of the gospel. If the cross is cancelled or lost, the entire gospel is gone. On the cross Christ died for our sins, and this is in brief what "the cross" signifies: atonement for sin and guilt, reconciliation with God, forgiveness and peace blood-bought. Everything else contained in the gospel radiates from this vital center. If this center is blotted out, all the rays emanating from it are dissipated in everlasting night.

Leake: 4 Strategies to Deal With Disunity

Introduction: 1:10-4:21 – section dealing with sin of Disunity = one of the main weapons Satan uses to derail the local church; sin rooted in spiritual pride

Context: Remember our common bond in Christ from 1:9

I. (:10) Exhort Unity – 3 Exhortations for the brethren (family context):

A. All Agree = “say the same thing”

Get on the same side; emphasize common identity in Christ

B. No Divisions = a pulling away, ripping, tearing between people

Not physically separated, but cliques, sharp disagreements; not theological in nature but identifying with different elite leaders; personality groupings; not supported or promoted by the leaders themselves, but by the flock; Greeks valued skill in oratory; Corinthians gave that too much weight

C. Be Made Complete = mend, fix, bring back together

Genuine unity, not organizational conformity; allows for diversity of giftedness; Philippians 2 type of unity;

Application: No group in the local church should form around one leader or ethnic group; Each person responsible to take initiative to cross through diversity

II. (:11-12) Expose Disunity (when it comes); 4 Sets of People

A. Paul Group – founder and original builder of church at Corinth

Quiets his cheering section first; very wise to address this group the hardest

B. Apollos – powerful speaker; attractive personality

C. Cephas/Peter – a more weighty apostle

D. Christ Characters – some were actually saying this; Paul does not commend them; essentially they were putting down all the other groups; acting pridefully like the others; might have been claiming no need for spiritual teachers

Transition: Disunity cannot be ignored; must be dealt with strongly;

Difficult letter for the church to receive

III. (:13-16) Expel Errors – 3 Simple Questions

A. Has Christ been divided?

Gets at the heart of the matter; only one body of Christ;

The error of carnal divisions expelled by the unity of Christ

Matt. 12:25; Teaching doctrine does not divide . . . it actually unifies

B. Paul was not crucified for you was he?

Allegiance cannot be to Paul; there is only one Mediator

C. You were not baptized in the name of Paul were you?

Launches him into discussion of baptism; what better shows your allegiance?

(Not a defense verse for infant baptism; Question: Can a non elder perform baptism?)

IV. (:17) Express Priorities – transition verse to next section

Baptism = Secondary to the Preaching of the Gospel;

You were saved before you hit the waters of baptism

Gal. 6:14 – boast only in the cross;

Preach the Word that focuses on Christ;
A United Church brings a United Witness and a United Praise to Christ

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1: 18-25

TITLE: *THE WORD OF THE CROSS -- TRUE POWER AND WISDOM*

BIG IDEA:

ONLY THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED IMPACTS MAN WITH THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Man pridefully asserts his own supposed strength and exalts his own worldly wisdom. He tries to formulate a religion where he can call the shots and approach God on his own terms. He imagines that he can control his own destiny and he relies on sophisticated rhetoric to conceal the lack of substance in his philosophic argumentations. But the message of the cross – the simple historical truth of Christ crucified – is the only message that can deliver sinful man from his lost condition of alienation from a Holy God. The unsaved will continue to mock at the humiliation of the cross as symbolizing only weakness and foolishness. But to those who believe the message of Christ crucified speaks of the power and wisdom of God.

I. (:18) THE RESPONSE TO THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED DIVIDES ALL MEN INTO TWO OPPOSING CAMPS

A. Same Message = Christ Crucified

“For the word of the cross”

B. Two Opposing Responses – Only 2 Groups of People in the World

1. Those Who are Perishing Mock the Message

“is foolishness to those who are perishing”

2. Those Who are Being Saved Experience the Power of God

“but to those who are being saved it is the power of God”

Note Pres. Tense – ongoing process, pathway that these 2 groups are on

II. (:19-21) GOD STANDS OPPOSED TO THE WISDOM OF MEN

A. (:19) God Will Ultimately Destroy Human Wisdom – Prophecy from Isaiah

“For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’”

B. (:20A) Human Wisdom Cannot Refute the Wisdom of God

“Where is the wise man?

Where is the scribe?

Where is the debater of this age?”

MacArthur: Paul paraphrased Is 19:12 where the prophet was referring to the wise men of Egypt who promised, but never produced wisdom. Human wisdom always proves to

be unreliable and impermanent (cf. v. 17; Pr 14:12; Is 29:14; Jer 8:9; Ro 1:18-23).

C. (:20B) God Has Exposed the Foolishness of Human Wisdom

“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

III. (:21-25) ONLY THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

A. (:21) Only the Mocked Message of the Cross Can Bring Salvation

1. Method Ordained by the Wisdom of God

“For since in the wisdom of God”

2. Failed Method of Human Wisdom

“the world through its wisdom did not come to know God”

3. Method Pleasing to God = The Mocked Message of the Cross

“God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

B. (:22-24) Christ Crucified Is the Power of God and Wisdom of God – Despite What Mockers Might Say

1. (:22) The World Seeks Different Solutions

a. Jews Seek Power in Signs

“For indeed Jews ask for signs”

b. Gentiles Seek Wisdom in Powerful Oratory and Argumentation

“and Greeks search for wisdom”

MacArthur: Gentiles wanted proof by means of human reason, through ideas they could set forth, discuss, and debate. Like the Athenian philosophers, they were not sincere, with no interest in divine truth, but merely wanting to argue intellectual novelty (Ac 17:21).

2. (:23a) We Preach Christ Crucified – There is only one solution

“but we preach Christ crucified”

3. (:23b) The World Mocks the Message of the Cross

a. Mocked by the Jews

“to Jews a stumbling block”

b. Mocked by the Gentiles

“and to Gentiles foolishness”

4. (:24) The Elect Experience Christ as Both the Power and Wisdom of God

“but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”

C. (:25) The Mocked Message of the Cross Far Exceeds Any Human Wisdom and Power

1. The Wisdom of God – mocked as Foolishness
“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men,”
2. The Power of God – mocked as Weakness
“and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do preachers lose confidence in the effectiveness of preaching the gospel message and resort to other tactics to try to win people to Jesus Christ?
- 2) How is this passage an encouragement to witness to other regardless of their response?
- 3) How have we experienced Christ to be the power and wisdom of God in our own lives?
- 4) What are the implications on our philosophy of education?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: But the cross was particularly needed in Corinth, as it is needed in our American churches, because the word of the cross is the cure for all human division. . .

First, the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing. The word "folly" here literally means "silly." It is silliness, absurdity, nonsense, to those who are perishing. If you have ever tried to witness to somebody who has a sense of sufficiency about himself, who feels that he is a self-made man -- and he worships his creator -- you have discovered the folly of the cross. To come and tell such a man that all his efforts and all his impressive record of achievement is worth nothing in God's sight, that it does not make him one degree more acceptable, that it is nothing but wasted effort, you will immediately run into the offense of the cross. He will call that doctrine silly, absurd: "You mean to tell me that all this impressive array of human knowledge and wisdom that has been accumulated for centuries, with all the great achievements of mankind in the realm of relief of human misery and the technological advances of our day, that all that is absolutely worthless? Nonsense!" That is what they said in the 1st century and that is what they say today. . .

How much should we trust the wisdom of men? How much reliance should we put

upon the ability of men to solve their own problems in whatever realm or dimension of life we care to investigate? (This is a particularly helpful passage to students at school.)

Scripture says there is something faulted about human wisdom -- it does not know how to use truth. All truth discovered through human knowledge is misused, abused, twisted, distorted, and, therefore, we end up worse off than we were before. Now, I think this needs to be said today in a university community such as we have right here. It needs to be especially emphasized because so many Christians begin to worship human wisdom and to feel that secular writers know more about some of these matters applying to the use of knowledge than Christians do. And there is no question that many secular writers do know a great deal more about the discovery of truth than do many Christians. But what we must clearly understand, and what this great passage will help us understand, is that when it comes to the application of truth, secular minds are juvenile, for the most part. They are twisted; they do not know what to do with their knowledge, and so are a lot of Christians who follow along these same paths and who have not approached the use of truth from the revelation and the wisdom of the Word of God.

Zeisler: The Corinth of Paul's day, as we have already seen, was a fiercely competitive, immoral, high-energy place. The church which had been established in Corinth, unfortunately, began to take on many of the negative characteristics that were true of the culture around. That is so often the case with many churches today: they don't look or act very different than the society in which they are planted. The Corinthian Christians, as a result, were often competitive, immoral, and sensually-minded. Paul's corrective letter to the church at Corinth therefore is very valuable for Christians today.

..
What produces the divergence, the break in the road that sends people on different ways, is the preaching of the message of the cross, the message of God's love for mankind in Christ, the dastardliness of sin, the certainty of death and judgment, and then, miraculously and mercifully, God's substitution of himself to atone for our wickedness. That is the "word of the cross," and that is what produces the responses Paul has outlined: eternal death or eternal life. . .

The problem with the wisdom of the world, as verse 21 so clearly declares, is that it does not lead to a knowledge of God. It does not have power to direct one who is perishing from the path leading to death to the path that leads to righteousness and life. And the reason it fails to do so is that it ignores God, the source of all life, wisdom and truth. No matter how knowledgeable are the sages and opinion-makers, failure to deal with the source of all knowledge is a recipe for failure.

Goins: This phrase, "the word of the cross," means a couple of things in the New Testament. First, it refers to the historical fact of the crucifixion of Jesus. That event teaches us that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died a death wherein the penalty of our sin was placed on him, making it possible for salvation to be extended to those who believe in him. But in our passage, "the word of the cross" suggests the judgment the cross makes on human efforts to be righteous and wise. Paul will later refer to this as

the offense of the cross. The cross is offensive because our highest aspirations, our tremendous human potential, our best motivations, our human wisdom, our good intentions, all pale in comparison to the beautiful life of sinless perfection of Jesus Christ. Christ was the wisest man who ever lived. Yet he was placed under the judgment of God and suffered a horrible, shameful death. And that is judgment on every one of us, from the brightest and best to the dullest and worst. As Christians we can never forget the judgment of the cross on our loyalty to human leaders, our pride, our false wisdom. The cross has to be a powerfully controlling image for the life and health of the Christian community. We all stand on level ground at the foot of the cross.

In verse 19 Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14 to prove that this contrast between choosing to trust God and choosing to trust human wisdom is nothing new. Indeed, human-centered wisdom will be overthrown by God, it's always the way he works. God is never dependent on human ingenuity. The historical context for Isaiah 29 is the time when Judah was under siege by the Assyrian armies under Sennacherib. King Hezekiah called in the political and military leaders to discuss the crisis. Human wisdom said that the only way the nation was going to survive was to enter into a mutual defense treaty with the pagan superpower to the south, Egypt. Hezekiah listened to the counselors. The problem with that strategy was that it left God, their defender and protector, out of the picture. The people of the nation were not wholehearted in their confidence in godly wisdom, either, and so they too trusted the advice of the military-political alliance.

Isaiah 29:14 was God's response through the prophet Isaiah to this political-military brain trust and to the people who believed in it: He would deliver the nation on his own terms without any help from the so-called intellectuals. Second Kings 17 tells us that God did exactly what he said he would do. He needed no human help. He set aside the cleverness of the wise. Paul illustrates the word of the cross with this story from the history of the Hebrew people of how God works, especially in terms of human redemption.

**Leake: THE HIDDEN GREATNESS OF THE CROSS –
THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS IS ANTITHETICAL TO WORLDLY
WISDOM**

Introduction: Dangers of secular education; but not opposed to education; tension between true and false wisdom

Context: Section dealing with factions in the church at Corinth;

Verse 17 is transitional and hits on two main points developed in next sections:

- Preaching of the Cross is incompatible with human wisdom (1:18 – 2:16)
- (3:1 ff) Role of Church Leaders

Examine a number of Upside-Down statements:

I. WISE SPEECH VOIDS THE CROSS (:17B)

Forms of word “wisdom” used 16 times in chapters 1-2;

How can the cross be voided? = to make empty, to deprive of substance, not

accomplish anything – refers both to content and style;
We must keep the message of the cross clear, and pure and simple

II. A FOOLISH CROSS DELIVERS MANKIND (:18)

The power is in the gospel message – not in the preacher

III. A GOD WHO ACTIVELY OPPOSES THE WISE (:19-20)

God has always been opposed to human wisdom;

Def. of Philosophy: “A blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there.”

Unbelievers accuse us of being narrow-minded; but they are certainly not open to the truth

God has made foolish all the wisdom of this world – Why? So he gets all the glory.

IV. THE EDUCATED NEVER LEARN (:21A)

The world and its wisdom is controlled by forces of evil (Eph. 2:2);

The limits of their understanding and the folly of their system = they are educated but left ignorant about what is really important;

Unable to teach any subject from the correct foundation of the fear and knowledge of God;

All of their accomplishments will perish – like sand castles that will be wiped out by the waves of God’s wrath;

God has designed to trap men in their pride and knowledge and lock them into destruction even while they are boasting;

God has made human wisdom useless and worthless – Rom. 1:22; man is judicially blinded by God

Education is not our Messiah

V. GOD IS PLEASED TO BLESS A FOOLISH MESSAGE (:21B)

Not a sophisticated message, but simple, direct and clear;

Authoritative announcement to the world that there is salvation only in Christ;

Believing = hearing + understanding + accepting as true + personally trusting and casting oneself on the mercy of God

VI. GOD PROCLAIMS A MESSAGE HE KNOWS PEOPLE DON’T WANT TO HEAR (:22-23)

They will think that it is foolishness – but preach it anyway;

Don’t adapt or change the message;

- Jews demand a sign – great sign = resurrection and still they don’t believe; God is under no obligation to cater to the doubts of man;

Cf. signs of an apostle performed by Paul as well

- Greeks diligently search after wisdom

- Why was this message so offensive? A stone in the way; an insult to the Jews; did not want to think that their Deliverer hung on the shameful cross; offensive because that’s what God thinks of our lives and our sin – Gal. 3:13 – made a curse for us;

God will reject man if he clings to his sin

Where's the preaching of the cross today? Cf. message of accommodation
The Cross is a radical thing – Where is the pain and the shame of the cross?

VII. A REJECTED MAN IS THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD (:24)

So there is no reason to change the message;

Who are “*the called*”? = “*believers*” in v. 21; = “*us who are being saved*” in v.18; God does the calling and saving; we do the believing; Not the same as God's general call to all mankind to repent and believe the gospel; this is His effectual calling;

He chooses some; He does not choose all; Very simple – why do people have an issue with it??

Only the cross brings true wisdom and power – works for whoever believes

VIII. A WEAK AND FOOLISH GOD IS GREATER THAN MAN (:25)

The worst that God could be imagined to be is way better than the best man could ever be

Rom. 11:33-34; Rev. 7:12

You can mock God's wisdom all you want; it still beats you

(#IX and X in next lesson)

Boyer: To the Jews who want a “*sign*” (i.e., a demonstration, a proof of power) the cross is a stumbling block, an offense. A crucified Messiah is a mark of weakness, not of power. To the Greeks, who want wisdom and philosophy (i.e. something sensible, something rational), the cross is foolishness. It doesn't make sense, it is stupid. It is like offering to a university group today some executed criminal as savior of the world. But to us, who are called from among both Jews and Gentiles, the crucified Christ is both. He is the power of God and the wisdom of God; wisdom because this message makes sense, and power because it works.

Gromacki: Paul did not honor their requests (1:23). The connective “*but*” shows the contrast. He *preached*; he did not perform sign miracles for the Jews in the synagogue, nor did he discuss rational proofs with the Greeks. His message contained what men needed, not what they wanted. He preached “*Christ crucified.*” The double reaction to the message was similar, yet different. The Jews regarded it as a “*stumbling block*” (literally, a “scandal,” *skandalon*) because they thought that the Messiah would bring political victory and live forever (Matt. 27:42; John 12:34). The same word is used for “trap” or “snare” in the papyri. The Gentiles regarded the message as foolishness. They viewed a crucified criminal – which Christ was under Roman law – as morally offensive and as an evidence of physical weakness. How could the blood of such a person remove sin, give righteousness, and guarantee hope beyond the grave? To them, it was absurd.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31

TITLE: *DIVINE ELECTION LEAVES NO ROOM FOR MAN'S PRIDE*

BIG IDEA:

THE DIVINE INITIATIVE IN ELECTION NULLIFIES MAN'S PRIDE SO THAT GOD GETS ALL THE CREDIT

INTRODUCTION:

How does the world evaluate people? On the basis of intelligence, strength, power, economic standing, accomplishment, etc. None of these matter when it comes to salvation. In fact they tend to be a hindrance rather than a help because man needs to come to grips with his spiritual bankruptcy before he can embrace the free gift of salvation offered by God's grace. The Corinthians had been aligning themselves with various preachers based on their personalities and styles. The Apostle Paul exposes the foolishness of these prideful distinctions by showing that the ground is level at the foot of the cross and there is no room for any boasting in man.

Goins: What Paul is saying to these people is, "You know what sort of people you were when God called you out of sinful darkness into the light of salvation. You know that he didn't accept you as his child because you were brilliant or wealthy or powerful, because most of you weren't at all. And those of you whose lives were defined that way were saved in spite of those positions, not because of them. If anything, they were obstacles between you and God's grace." The reality is that position and wealth and influence really can be hindrances, keeping people from the sense of need that leads to salvation.

I. (:26-29) THE DIVINE INITIATIVE IN ELECTION TURNS UPSIDE DOWN THE SCALE OF HUMAN MEASUREMENT – SO THAT MAN GETS NO CREDIT FOR SALVATION

A. (:26-28) Whom Did God Choose?

1. (:26) God's Election Not Based on Man's Scale of Measurement

a. Call to Reflection

"For consider your calling, brethren,"

Boyer: In this section Paul shows that the gospel is foolish when judged on the basis of the type of people who receive it.

b. Count By Category

1) Not Many Wise

"that there were not many wise according to the flesh,"

2) Not Many Strong

"not many mighty,"

3) Not Many Significant
“not many noble.”

2. (:27-28) God’s Election Turns Things Upside Down

a. Nullifying Human Wisdom

“but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise,”

Morris: “put to shame”, i.e. by the contrast between the estimate the wise form of themselves and that which God’s choice reveals.

b. Nullifying Human Strength

“and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong”

c. Nullifying Human Significance

“and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are”

Morris: *Katargeo*, bring to nought, is not easy to translate. It occurs twenty-seven times in the New Testament and is translated in seventeen different ways in AV. . . Basically it means something like “to render idle” or “inoperative”, and all its usages derive from this. Here the meaning is that the *things which are not* render completely ineffective the *things that are*.

B. (:29) Why Did He Choose in That Way?

“so that no man may boast before God.”

II. (:30-31) THE DIVINE INITIATIVE IN ELECTION HIGHLIGHTS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT WORK OF GOD – SO THAT GOD GETS ALL THE CREDIT FOR SALVATION

A. (:30) How Did God Accomplish Our Salvation?

1. Summary: Salvation is God’s Work – Not Man’s

“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus,”

2. List of God’s Spiritual Provisions in Christ Jesus

a. Wisdom– this has been the focus of this passage

“who became to us wisdom from God,”

S. Lewis Johnson: Due to the construction of the Greek sentence, it is clear that **wisdom** is the dominant word, and that the nouns **righteousness**, **sanctification**, and **redemption** amplify and explain wisdom. Wisdom here, then, is not practical wisdom, but positional wisdom, God’s wise plan for our complete salvation. Righteousness is forensic, the righteousness given in justification, or that which Paul expounds in Rom

1:1-5:21.

- b. Righteousness
- c. Sanctification
- d. Redemption – emphasis on future glorification

Stedman: Redemption is the restoration to usefulness of something that has been rendered totally useless. Have you ever pawned anything? I have. You put something in hock and you get some money (never anywhere near what it is worth) from a pawnbroker. That object of value is useless while it is in pawn. It sits there gathering dust on the shelf, or in the shop window, absolutely useless until it is redeemed. But when you go back and pay the redemption price, you restore it to usefulness. Now, that is what redemption is all about, and that is what God is doing with us; he is restoring us to usefulness. We, who in the process of sin have been rendered virtually useless, are gradually being restored. The day will come when it will be complete, body, soul and spirit, and God will open up to us an avenue of service such as we have never dreamed of because at last we have been made useful once more.

B. (:31) Why Did He Save us in That Way? (Jer. 9:23-24 quote)

“so that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of people are in your local church? Are they largely the elite of this world?
- 2) In what areas do we struggle with pride? How can we rely entirely on God’s resources and realize the futility of our own resources?
- 3) Have we not only **put off** boasting in self, but actively replaced that demonstration of pride with **putting on** aggressive boasting in the God of our salvation?
- 4) List as many privileges as you can come up with from Scripture that are associated with our position *“in Christ Jesus.”*

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: God deliberately chooses the weak and the obscure and uses them in great power to remind us that it is not status, prestige, bigness or money that makes ministry

for God effective.

I remember in my early Christian life reading of the life and ministry of Dr. George Washington Carver, the outstanding Negro scientist, who in the early part of this century was used of God in great ways among the black people of the South. Dr. Carver, a great believer and a choice servant of God, said that one day he prayed, "Lord, teach me the secrets of the universe." He said God said to him, "George, that is too big a subject for you. I want you to take a peanut, that is more your size, and work on that." So he began to explore what was in the peanut, and now it is a matter of record that he found over 325 different uses for it. He revolutionized the technology of the South. That is why our present President of the United States made his living by peanuts and the technology that followed the discoveries of George Washington Carver. God used that simple, humble believer to open secrets of the universe that he hid from everyone else. . .

Now, why is God against human boasting? We are all experts at it, but God does not like it. Why? Well, surely the reason is not that he is jealous of us; he is not simply trying to put anyone down. No, the answer is that human boasting is always based on an illusion, but God is a realist. Those who boast in themselves or in their abilities are always thinking they have some power in themselves that will make them succeed, and God knows that that is a lie. They are deceiving themselves; they are living in a fantasy world.

Therefore, the kindest thing God can do is to find a way to puncture that sinful pride, collapse that platform of prestige, and shatter that illusion of self-sufficiency. That is what he does, and he does it by using the obscure and the weak and the things that are regarded oftentimes as foolish. . .

Paul then sets forth for us in another beautiful passage the secret of true wisdom. What is it? It is the ability to recognize that though you may have little of what the world thinks it takes, if you have Jesus, and have learned to count on his power moment by moment, you have the secret of true success. Now, many Christians know that in their minds, but they do not act on it when the moment for action comes, and, therefore, they act like anybody else. The whole purpose of the Scriptures is to teach us to walk in a different way, to live by a different power, and to do so with respect to everything we do. The simplest tasks are to be done in the power of Christ.

Piper: More than anything else in the world, God hates human pride.

Proverbs 6:16-17 says "*There are six things which the Lord hates, seven which are an abomination to him. . .*" and the first one mentioned is "*haughty eyes.*"

In Psalm 101:5 David speaks for God and says, "*The man of haughty looks and arrogant heart I will not endure.*"

Proverbs 16:5, "*Every one who is arrogant is an abomination to the*

Lord."

Isaiah 2:11, *"The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the pride of men shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day."*

Jeremiah 50:31, *"Behold, I am against you, O proud one, says the Lord God of hosts; for your day has come, the time when I will punish you."*

Jesus said in Luke 16:15, *"What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."*

And in Acts 12:23 it says that an angel of the Lord struck Herod so that he was eaten with worms and died because when he received applause from the people he did not give God the glory but took it for himself.

God hates human pride. And this is the root problem in the church at Corinth. Let's take a quick survey of the letters to Corinth to see if this is so, and also to see just what pride is. Ask these two questions as we go: is pride the root problem at Corinth, and what actually is pride?

1 Cor. 1:29 - *"so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. . ."*

1 Cor. 1:31 - *"Therefore, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'"*

1 Cor. 3:7 - *"So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."*

1 Cor. 3:21 - *"So let no one boast of men."*

1 Cor. 4:6 (at the end) - *". . .that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another."* (The end of verse 7 -) *"If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?"*

1 Cor. 4:18 - *"Some are arrogant as though I were not coming to you."*

1 Cor. 5:2 - *"And you are arrogant!"*

1 Cor. 8:1 - *"Knowledge puffs up, love builds up."*

1 Cor. 13:4 - *"Love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude."*

2 Cor. 1:9 - (Hardship comes even up to the brink of death) *"but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead."*

2 Cor. 3:5 - *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God."*

2 Cor. 4:7 - *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us."*

2 Cor. 12:9 - *"I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ might rest upon me."*

It is not hard to see that the root problem in the church at Corinth is pride. And it is not hard to see either what that pride is.

-- It is boasting in self and not the Lord.

-- It is taking credit ourselves for what God alone can do.

-- It is relying on self and not God.

-- It is feeling sufficiency in our own strength and not in God's.

-- It is the disinclination to admit that we are mere earthen vessels so that another gets the glory.

-- It is the unwillingness to admit weaknesses that may accent the power of Christ.

Goins: In 1:1-25 Paul was challenging the Corinthian Christians that behind their struggle to get along was an overconfidence in human resources and human wisdom. In this respect, we're really no different from the Corinthians. We live in a place of culture, wealth, power, and beauty, just like Corinth. We're much too impressed with human accomplishment. And beneath a veneer of intellectual sophistication, our culture is in a state of moral decay. Paul reminded the church in Corinth that unlike the surrounding Corinthian culture, they were to live on the basis of the wisdom of God rather than the wisdom of men. These are the two themes that are contrasted throughout the first four chapters of this letter.

Verse 25 ended with a ringing proclamation: *"...The weakness of God is stronger than men."* God on his worst day is far greater than we are on our best days. All the human resources we can muster are no match for his power and greatness.

Now Paul goes on to prove that God does indeed work through weakness. First, in 1:26-31 he asks the Corinthians to take a hard look at themselves and remember who they are and where they've come from as Christians. Then in 2:1-5 he asks them to look at him and remember what the year and a half was like when he ministered among them. He points out that they as a people were not very clever or bright, and that his ministry of

teaching and preaching among them was not very persuasive. So the fact that they're Christians at all proves that God works through weakness-how else could the church of Christ in Corinth be explained? . . .

What Paul is saying in these two verses is that God's wisdom is paradoxical. In human thinking, strength is strength, weakness is weakness, intelligence is intelligence. But in God's economy some of the things that seem the strongest are the weakest, and some of the things that seem the weakest are the strongest. Some of the things that seem the wisest are the most foolish. As I said before, the paradox isn't an accident; God designed it that way. The most simple, uneducated, untalented, clumsy believer who has trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior, who faithfully and humbly follows his or her Lord, is immeasurably wiser than the brilliant Ph.D. who scoffs at the gospel. The simple believer knows forgiveness, love, grace, life, hope, the word of God, and God himself. That simple believer sees into eternity. The unbelieving Ph.D., on the other hand, knows nothing beyond his books, his own mind, his own resources, his own experience. And from God's perspective, he is the one who can't be considered anything but foolish. The world measures greatness by many standards-intelligence, wealth, prestige, position, power-things that God has determined to put at the bottom, according to the apostle Paul. God reveals the greatness of his power by demonstrating that it's the world's nobodies that are his somebodies. . .

In verses 30-31 Paul states this positive reason why he's chosen folks like us. He addresses two issues that our culture is obsessed with, identity and self-worth. Verse 30 talks about the identity that is a gift from God in Jesus Christ: "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption...." What God wants is for us to find our identity completely in Jesus Christ. In fact, we've been given every resource we need to live lives of purpose, influence, wholeness, and effectiveness in him. In Ephesians 1:3 the apostle Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...." We can substitute the word "resources" for the word "blessings." Since every believer is in Jesus Christ, we have all been given resources in the person of Christ. There are four words that describe the resources that we have in him: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Let me expand those for you briefly.

Lowery: For Christ alone personified the wisdom from God (v. 30) and in Him the Corinthians experienced righteousness, that is, justification (Rom. 4:24-25), holiness, that is, sanctification (2 Thes. 2:13-15), and redemption, that is, glorification (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30). In the wisdom of God the plan of salvation was accomplished by a crucified Christ hidden from the wise and learned but revealed to simple believers (cf. Matt. 11:25-26).

MacArthur: We are often tempted to think that it would be wonderful if such-and-such a great athlete – or brilliant scientist, popular entertainer, or world leader – would become a Christian. But Jesus did not think this way when He chose His disciples. Some were probably well known in their local circles and perhaps a few of them were

well off financially. But He did not choose them for their wealth or influence, and in His training of them He did not try to capitalize on any such things. None of them had anything so great that he was not ready to leave it to follow Christ. . .

According to God, the greatest man who ever lived, apart from Jesus Himself, was John the Baptist. He had no formal education, no training in a trade or profession, no money, no military rank, no political position, no social pedigree, no prestige, no impressive appearance or oratory. Yet Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist” (Matt. 11:11). This man fit none of the world’s standards but all of God’s. And what he became was all to the credit of God’s power.

**Leake: THE HIDDEN GREATNESS OF THE CROSS –
THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS IS ANTITHETICAL TO WORLDLY
WISDOM**

(continued from last lesson)

IX. GOD CHOOSES THE LESSER THINGS, NOT THE GREATER (:26-28)

Look back to the time when you were called into Christianity – the group at Corinth was not very impressive by the world’s standards – 3 types of people:

- foolish = the average Joe
- weak = not very impressive
- the base (bottom of the barrel) and the despised – like slaves, prisoners, etc.

God must have had a bad church growth strategy – He picked all the rejects!

How should this impact our evangelism strategy? We spend too much time going after the wrong groups of people

Beware of the church that makes sports heroes and entertainment stars its spokesmen

Is. 41:11

X. TRUE RELIGION IS NOT ABOUT US BUT ABOUT CHRIST (:29-31)

God will not allow a little created bit of dust to stand before Him and boast; Ps. 94:2-4; All of our blessings come to us by our connection to Christ; and it is all God’s work and not man’s that puts us into connection with Christ;

Cf. Hannah’s example of bold boasting in the Lord – 1 Sam. 2

Ps. 5:11; Ps. 34

The humble believer looks at the cross and sees the wisdom and power of God and boasts in that

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

TITLE: *POWERFULLY PREACHING CHRIST*

BIG IDEA:

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PREACHING DERIVES FROM ITS FOCUS ON THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST AND ITS DYNAMIC OF THE POWER OF GOD RATHER THAN FROM THE ELOQUENCE OR PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER

INTRODUCTION:

What makes for an effective sermon or for a powerful preacher? What makes one sermon fall flat while another has tremendous impact in the lives of people? What are the criteria we should use in evaluating preachers? The Apostle Paul has been criticizing the Corinthians for placing too much stock in the personality of individual preachers. He has already stripped aside all reliance upon human wisdom to get to the core of the fundamental message of the gospel – the cross of Christ. Now he points to his own example of what constitutes powerful preaching.

I. (:1-2) THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PREACHING DERIVES FROM ITS FOCUS

A. (:1) Not on Human Wisdom or Eloquence

“And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.”

Hodge: *The testimony of God* may mean either the testimony which Paul bore concerning God, or God’s own testimony, i.e. what God had revealed and testified to be true. *“The testimony of God”* is, in this sense, the gospel, as in 2 Tim. 1, 8. The latter interpretation best suits the connection, as throughout these chapters Paul contrasts what reason teaches with what God teaches. He did not appear as a teacher of human wisdom, but as announcing what God had revealed.

Contrast the approach of Madison Avenue advertising via the media
Contrast much of the approach of TV evangelists

B. (:2) But on the Crucified Christ

“For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

II. (:3-4) THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PREACHING DERIVES FROM ITS DYNAMIC

A. (:3-4a) Not of Human Personality or Charisma or Powerful Oratory

1. Not Humanly Impressive in Charisma of Appearance

“I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling”

2 Possibilities:

- sense of human inadequacy coupled with overwhelming sense of awe in being used by God; tremendous responsibility on his shoulders
- inner fears, some form of human frailty referred to elsewhere as his thorn in the flesh, etc.

In either case Paul needed divine encouragement and faith in the power of God and the enabling work of the Holy Spirit to carry out his mission to the Gentiles

Hodge: here the whole context shows he refers to his state of mind. It was not in the consciousness of strength, self-confident and self-relying, that he appeared among them, but as oppressed with a sense of his weakness and insufficiency. He had a work to do which he felt to be entirely above his powers.

2. Not Humanly Impressive in Sophistication of Utterance

“and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom”

B. (:4b) But of Divine Power and the Working of the Holy Spirit

1. Spirit Energized

“but in demonstration of the Spirit”

2. Power Packed

“and of power”

Robertson: The demonstration is that which is wrought by God’s power, especially His power to save man and give a new direction to his life. As it is all from God, why make a party-hero of the human instrument?

III. (:5) THE GOAL OF PREACHING SHOULD BE TO ESTABLISH THE PROPER FOUNDATION FOR VITAL FAITH

The proper focus and dynamic are critical in establishing this proper foundation for faith.

A. Not a Foundation of Human Wisdom

“so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men”

B. But a Foundation of Divine Power

“but on the power of God.”

Gromacki: Paul was not after superficial decisions; rather, he desired genuine, God-produced experiences in the lives of his listeners.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why are people attracted to different preachers? What criteria do people use to evaluate preachers?
- 2) What makes for a Christ focused message? Must every sermon contain explicit testimony to the essentials of the gospel message – including the significance of the crucifixion of Christ?
- 3) Do we tend to be more impressed by the style of the preacher or the content of the message and its impact in terms of changing our heart and conforming our will to the will of God?
- 4) What types of emotional manipulation can tend to yield superficial decisions rather than genuine faith commitments to the message of the gospel?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: In the book of Acts we are told that after he had been in Corinth for a few months the Lord Jesus appeared to him in a vision and strengthened him and said to him, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, ... and no man shall attack you to harm you," {cf. Acts 18:9-10}. That is a revelation of why Paul was afraid. He was afraid he was going to be beaten up as he had been in other cities. He was afraid because of personal pride. He was afraid of being branded as a religious fanatic. He did not like those feelings, nevertheless he faithfully began to talk about what God had said in Jesus Christ.

Soon there was a second visible result. Paul calls it the "demonstration of the Spirit and [of] power." As Paul in this great sense of weakness told the facts and the story out of the simple earnestness of his heart, God's spirit began to work and people started coming to Christ. You read the account in Acts. First, the rulers of the synagogue turned to Christ, and then hundreds of the common, ordinary, plain, vanilla people of Corinth began to become Christians. Soon there was a great spiritual awakening, and before the city of Corinth knew what had happened, a church had been planted in its midst and a ferment was running throughout the city.

Piper: We know from Paul's letters that he was a profound thinker and that he could use language powerfully. But the point he is making here is that he did not preach the gospel with the hope of appealing to the worldly, unspiritual admiration of those things. He did not want people to respond because of his oratory or his intellect. . .

Now what does all this have to do with the cross of Christ? That Paul is trembling and fearful, that he is weak and unimpressive, that he avoids flourishes of oratory and intellectual ostentation -- what's all that got to do with the cross? . . .

I think what it means is that whatever else he knew, whatever else he spoke about, and whatever else he did, he would know it and say it and do it in relation to Christ crucified. This brings us back to where we started. He will not let the cross become a historical relic. He puts it at the center of his everyday work and relationships.

Jeffries: So, then, Paul has made his case for the vital importance of the pure essence of the gospel – the cross of Christ -- being preached. But three critical elements in the proclaiming of and the receiving of the Good News must come together in order for the message to be manifested in the power of God:

- a. the message of the gospel - the cross of Christ;
- b. the faithful proclamation of the unadulterated gospel by those called by God to do so; and
- c. the anointing power of the Holy Spirit.

Goins: First of all, Paul said he was not trusting in sophisticated rhetorical devices. Paul's teaching and preaching while he was in Corinth were not patterned after the styles of communication that the Corinthians loved so much, "superiority of speech" and "wisdom." The New International Version translates the phrase "eloquence and superior wisdom." C. K. Barrett writes: "The two nouns are close together in meaning, for 'eloquence' literally means 'rational talk.' And 'superior wisdom' literally means 'worldly cleverness.' They represent the outward and inward means by which men may commend a case, effectiveness of language, and skill of argumentation." Paul refused to give the people what they wanted in terms of communication style.

Second, in the first clause of verse 2, he refused to show off his theological knowledge, philosophize, or psychologize. He didn't encumber the message with Paul Tillich vocabulary. He himself was a gifted rabbi, one of the greatest minds of his age. He probably knew four or five languages. And yet he refused to compete with the articulate philosophers of Corinth or show off his credentials. . .

Third, in the beginning clause of verse 4, Paul didn't try to persuade with a powerful, compelling delivery. Paul's plain way of speaking was not compelling. In 2 Corinthians 10 Paul admits that he wasn't a very impressive public speaker. I thought of the way modern-day athletes say, "Show me what you've got!" If the itinerant philosophers and teachers of Corinth had said to Paul, "Show us what you've got!" he would have said, "I don't have much, actually. I choose not to compete with you." They depended on their powers of persuasion to gain followers. But Paul says, "I am not a salesman. I will not use emotional manipulation or theatrics. I am an ambassador. I proclaim truth."

Proclaiming the cross by the power of the Spirit

In the second half of verse 1 Paul tells us the first of the four things he did do among them. He uses two important words: "proclaiming" and "testimony." Proclaiming was a

simple announcement of fact, not the modern usage in which proclamation is a big, showy thing. And the word "testimony" takes us into the courtroom. It's a clear summary of the facts. When he chose to proclaim a testimony of the gospel of God, he was just making an objective statement of what was true as he taught the word.

The second thing he says he did, in verse 2, is center exclusively on the person and work of Jesus Christ. "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Remember the concern he expressed earlier in 1:17,18 that the message not be diluted: "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void. For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Paul's message was the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ the divine Savior and his accomplished work of the cross. "Christ plus nothing" was Paul's consistent message in all of his preaching, teaching, and writing.

The third positive statement is in verse 3. This is wonderful, gutsy, amazing transparency for somebody in public leadership: "And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." What Paul is doing is summarizing the feelings that he struggled with when he first arrived in Corinth. He had known about the reputation of the city before he got there: how intellectual it was, how depraved the culture was, how licentious the lifestyle. He had just come from a disappointing time in Athens. Earlier he had been driven out of Thessalonica and beaten in Philippi. He was tired and fearful and lonely. Even after a period of immediate fruitful ministry, with some people coming to faith in Christ, the book of Acts tells us that Paul was still very discouraged. .

Finally, Paul describes that result in verse 4: "And my message and my preaching were...[a] demonstration of the Spirit and of power...." Paul understood that he had to depend on the Holy Spirit for results, not his own skills or sensitivities. In spite of Paul's weakness and fear and trembling, he shared the message of the power of the cross, the gospel. The Holy Spirit took that message, delivered in weakness and humility, and began to change lives. Paul was not the persuader. That was the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul was the proclaimer of what was true. It was straightforward and simple: He just told the truth and trusted God for results.

Faith in God's power

Paul explains in verse 5 why he did it this way: "...That your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." Paul is saying, "I didn't come to you Corinthians with human wisdom, because I knew that if I came that way, that's what you would trust, and that's useless. You would invite me into your heart as Savior instead of Jesus. I came to you in my own weakness, but in God's power. And what happened? You trusted God's power, and it changed your life."

Gromacki: Before he had preached his first message in Corinth, Paul had determined that his content would be a simple, clear, and frank presentation of both the person of Christ, including His deity, humanity, and messiahship ("*save Jesus Christ*"), and His

redemptive work, involving the death and resurrection (“*and Him crucified*”). To do this, Paul “*reasoned*” (*dielegeto*, Acts 18:4), “*persuaded*” (*epeithen*, Acts 18:4), and “*testified*” (*diamartyromenos*, Acts 18:5). This was no mere statement of facts; his message conveyed spiritual, Biblical, and logical arguments. Logic, divine not human, can and must saturate our sermons and witness.

Hodge: In these verses, therefore, we are taught:

1. That, the proper method to convert men in any community, Christian or Pagan, is to preach or set forth the truth concerning the person and work of Christ. Whatever other means are used must be subordinate and auxiliary, designed to remove obstacles, and to gain access for the truth to the mind, just as the ground is cleared of weeds and brambles in order to prepare it for the precious seed.
2. The proper state of mind in which to preach the gospel is the opposite of self-confidence or carelessness. The gospel should be preached with a sense of weakness and with great anxiety and solicitude.
3. The success of the gospel does not depend on the skill of the preacher, but on the demonstration of the Spirit.
4. The foundation of saving faith is not reason, i.e. not arguments addressed to the understanding, but the power of God as exerted with and by the truth upon the heart.

MacArthur: Human words of wisdom, no matter how impressive and persuasive, would have robbed the gospel of its power. He saw no place for calculated theatrics and techniques to manipulate response. Many have responded to an emotional appeal, without a true knowledge and conviction of God. Paul did not do that kind of preaching. He surely would have gotten a wider and more receptive hearing, but his hearers would have been left in their sins and without a Savior. . .

Paul had great natural abilities, but he did not rely on them. Even the human words and wisdom of an apostle could not save a person. He did not want his hearers to identify with his own wisdom, which could give them only another philosophy, but with God’s wisdom in Jesus Christ, which could give them eternal life. . .

Charles Spurgeon said:

The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls, nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul.

Leake: 3 POWERFUL AREAS OF PAUL’S EXAMPLE

INTRODUCTION:

Def. of Expository Preaching: let’s God speak to us from the text rather than the preacher inserting his ideas; exposes the meaning of the text; covers all of Scripture;

Def. of Powerful Preaching: unleashes the power of the Holy Spirit to impact lives through the Word of God;

Context: Paul continuing the same themes from Chapter 1
Explaining 1:20 here in more detail from his own example of how he brought the gospel to Corinth
If Christ is the wisdom of God, why would we preach anything else?
Weak, worldly preaching looks impressive but has no power

I. PAUL'S POWERFUL MESSAGE (:1-2)

A. How He Did Not Come

1. *Superiority of speech*
2. *Superiority of wisdom*

Concept of elevation; lofty, high (1 Tim. 2:2); grand speech

Not against excellent articulation

But his demeanor was humble and his speech plain

Rejecting the type of pompous speech that elevates the preacher rather than the message;

Not trying to distinguish himself philosophically or rhetorically

B. How He Came – Preaching “*Christ Crucified*”

What does Paul not mean here:

- not that every message must just focus on the particulars of death of Christ
- not that every message must be strictly an evangelistic focus to non-believers
- not a statement of anti-intellectualism
- not saying he did a lousy job in Athens and this is the way to preach

Uses this phrase as a summation of focusing on Who Christ is and What He accomplished; Paul preached the whole counsel of God; this was not a new strategy but his ongoing strategy reflected in all of his preaching

II. PAUL'S POWERFUL METHOD (:3-4)

2 Options:

- fearful
- sense of inadequacy

Maybe a combination of both; certainly Paul depended on God for fruit and success in the ministry; involved a reverence for God; sense of overwhelming task to evangelize the Gentiles in such a wicked city; aware of his own flesh

Paul acted as a witness in a courtroom

We don't enjoy our weakness; but God works through weak and trembling instruments; This is not a message saying we cannot persuade men

Paul depended on the Spirit of God to bring about powerful impact in lives of others;

Context is not one of miracles, but the changed lives (1 Thess 2:13)

“demonstration” = legal term – proving something – power of God was working at Corinth

III. PAUL'S POWERFUL MOTIVE (:5)

“so that” = purpose statement

All people have faith in something

Divine persuasion must be at work; not human

Not trying to utilize some type of grand Crusade type of event with its emotional

appeals
Persuading with God's truth

CONCLUSION:

This expository preaching is not just another style of preaching; we must develop a conviction that we will only support this type of preaching

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 2: 6-8

TITLE: THE MYSTERY ASPECT OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS IS ONLY FOOLISHNESS TO THOSE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND THE COMING GLORY

INTRODUCTION:

Even though God is in the business of revealing truth to His chosen ones; never forget that the unsaved have no capacity to understand spiritual truth. This should actually be a tremendous encouragement to believers. We appreciate our privileged position of having been predestined to be blessed with an understanding of God's program for salvation. We also have a better perspective on the blindness and opposition of the rulers of this age.

This section is part of the overall emphasis on the need for Christian unity. The Corinthian believers had been aligning themselves with different preachers on the basis of human wisdom criteria (who sounds most impressive, who speaks most eloquently, etc.) rather than focusing on the message of the gospel and the person of Christ. They needed insight into the true wisdom of God and how it operates.

Boyer: The contentious spirit which was being manifested in the church at Corinth was due to a wrong conception of the gospel. Evidently, they were thinking of the gospel as another of the philosophical movements of the day and were comparing it and its advocates with others as a type of rival philosophy. Paul has made clear that the gospel is far from being another philosophy. It is, in fact, foolishness. Now, however, he changes his approach. Actually, the gospel is not foolish at all. It is wisdom, but an entirely different kind of wisdom. He goes on to show in what sense the gospel is wisdom.

SIX INSIGHTS INTO THE WISDOM OF GOD AND ITS MYSTERY ASPECT

I. (:6A) GOD'S WISDOM IS ONLY APPRECIATED BY THOSE WHO ARE RECEPTIVE TO THE TEACHING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature"

Wisdom – emphasized by position in the text (direct object of the verb placed first in the Greek sentence); this is what we speak – not the type of human wisdom that has no power (described in 2:1-5), but God's Wisdom.

Telios – the perfected ones; having reached their end; Not perfect people;
Difficult issue to precisely pin down who comprises this group – obviously the unsaved Jews and Gentiles who regard the wisdom of God as foolishness are excluded;
Options:

1) are all the elect included here (since the context of the message preached is the cross of Christ – not some esoteric doctrines) cf. Charles Hodge, MacArthur, etc. or
2) some subset of *telios* believers (in contrast with those spoken of at the beginning of chap 3 -- cf. 1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15) = those who are submitted to the Spirit of God and thus able to receive the spiritual teaching which the Spirit of God seeks to communicate; in this context it would include all who are actively growing – even if they are fairly young in the faith – it has more to do with their heart attitude of allowing God’s Word to accomplish its intended goal in transforming their lives – I would favor this view in light of the direct context of Chap. 3. It should include all believers – but Paul is making the point that some believers are not responding to the Spirit like they should and therefore do not recognize the wisdom of God for what it is

* * * * *

Piper: I think verse 13 gives the answer, but there is a translation problem here. The Revised Standard Version says, "We impart this (divine wisdom) in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit," or more literally "to those who are spiritual." If this is correct then the "mature" of verse 6 are explained as the "spiritual" of verse 13. We speak a wisdom among the mature, that is, we interpret the wisdom revealed by the Spirit to spiritual people. . .

A second reason I think v13 refers to spiritual people who are the same as the mature in v6 who receive God's wisdom, is that in 3:1 "spiritual people" are contrasted with babes in Christ. "And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as to fleshly (or carnal), as to babes in Christ." It is clear that being a babe is the opposite of being "mature." But in 3:1 the opposite of being a babe is being "spiritual." Therefore being mature and being spiritual are probably the same. So one answer to the question, Who can receive the wisdom of God which we speak? is the mature, that is, the spiritual. . .

He means a person who is led by the Spirit of God and bears the fruit of the Spirit. We know this from Galatians 5:16-6:1 . . .

This was a surprising discovery for me, namely, that the prerequisite for grasping the wisdom of God is not a certain level of intelligence, or education, or experience. The prerequisite is moral, not intellectual. It has as much to do with what you love as with what you think. Not education but sanctification is what makes one receptive to the wisdom we speak. Not natural ability but spiritual humility opens a person to the wisdom of God.

* * * * *

The Apostle Paul proclaimed the exact same message of God’s Wisdom to everyone – the unsaved, the saved; the immature believer, the mature believer. He might have had a different emphasis – but it was always God’s Wisdom. But only the spiritually receptive believers could appreciate God’s wisdom. The same message can have different levels of meaning to different levels of maturity: a milk level and a solid food

level.

There are many obstacles to receiving the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit:

- Pride
- Sectarianism
- Fleshly and rebellious living
- Attraction to the things of this world which are enmity to God
- Failure to confess and turn away from sin
- Being hearers only of the Word of God and not doers

II. (:6B) GOD'S ETERNAL WISDOM BEARS NO CONNECTION TO THE TRANSITORY HUMAN WISDOM OF THIS TEMPORARY AGE

“a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away”

God's Wisdom did not originate or develop from human wisdom; in fact it is not compatible at all with this age or world system. Therefore, you cannot expect to study philosophy or psychology or religion from the best intellectual thinkers of this age and thereby come to an understanding of God's wisdom.

Goins: In verses 6-10a Paul lists four aspects of this wisdom of God. First, verses 6-7 say that the wisdom of God is eternal, not transitory. It doesn't originate in this passing world, with the rulers of this age. It originated before time began in the mind of God. Human wisdom is transitory because, Paul says, its creators are passing away. One of the consistent characteristics of worldly wisdom is that it has a very short shelf life. The current thinking in psychology and sociology will soon be set aside for newer theories

Zeisler: To begin, what is the nature of the wisdom that is from God? God's wisdom, says Paul in verse 6, is distinct in that it is unlike the wisdom of the "rulers of this age who are passing away." The wisdom of the world is short-lived; it does not have any staying power. God's wisdom, on the other hand, will never pass away, is the inference here. It is eternal; its truth will never fade but will grow more and more impressive with time.

III. (:7A) GOD'S WISDOM IS SOURCED ONLY IN GOD (AND MUST BE REVEALED BY HIM – as we will see later)

“but we speak God's wisdom”

A. Preachers are a Channel for the Ongoing Communication of God's Eternal Wisdom

B. But it is God's Wisdom . . . not the Preacher's
Emphatic placement of “God” before “wisdom” in the Greek here

IV. (:7B) GOD'S WISDOM HAS A BUILT-IN, TIME-DELAY MYSTERY COMPONENT

A. Mystery Aspect of God's Wisdom

"in a mystery"

MacArthur: This term does not refer to something puzzling, but to truth known to God before time, that He has kept secret until the appropriate time for Him to reveal it.

Hodge: The word always means something into which men must be initiated; something undiscoverable by human reason. Whether its being undiscoverable arises from its lying in the future, or because hid in the unrevealed purposes of God, or from its own nature as beyond our comprehension, is not determined by the signification of the word, but is to be learned from the context.

B. Hidden Aspect of God's Wisdom

"the hidden wisdom"

No longer hidden to God's elect, but still hidden to those under the dominion of Satan for the god of this age has blinded their minds and hearts.

C. Eternal and Sovereign Aspect of God's Wisdom

"which God predestined before the ages"

How can someone say they don't believe in predestination?

This word stresses the plan of God and the sovereignty of God.

D. Glorification Aspect of God's Wisdom

"to our glory"

Ellicott: "The Lord, whose essential attribute is glory"

God's wisdom will ultimately conform us completely to the image of His Son – in love, in purity, in holiness.

Goins: The wisdom of God is for our glorification, our personal benefit. Glorification means to make us just like Jesus, to completely finish the process of sanctification. God's wisdom was given to define for us who we were created to be. No matter what we feel like right now, finally, by the end of our lives, we will be the kind of people we want to be. We'll be just as loving, merciful, patient, kind, strong, and self-controlled as Jesus. We'll become glorified men and women, filled with the grace and beauty of Jesus Christ. That is the ultimate goal of salvation.

Grosheide: The glory of the believers is an essential part of God's decree. Not only did God fix His wisdom, He also ordained that this wisdom would bring glory to us who are Christians. The rulers of the world, on the contrary, will perish.

V. (:8A) GOD’S WISDOM CANNOT BE COMPREHENDED BY HUMAN WISDOM (OR POWER OR WEALTH)

“the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood”

VI. (:8B) GOD’S WISDOM WILL BE VINDICATED BY THE RETURN OF THE LORD OF GLORY

“for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”

Zeisler: The wisdom of this world does not make good judgments about life. The wisdom of God, on the other hand, attributes worth to that which is truly worthy.

Johnson: Paul linked glory with the crucified Lord, an utter paradox to both Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23) who nonetheless unwittingly (Luke 23:34) took part in that central act of God’s plan of salvation.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Does wisdom characterize my speech?
- 2) How receptive am I to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit?
- 3) What role does secular education play in providing us insight into the mind of God?
- 4) Why does Paul use here the title for Christ of “*Lord of Glory*”?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Gromacki: The title for Christ, “the Lord of glory,” is a proof of His deity. God is depicted as “the God of glory” (Acts 7:2) and “the Father of Glory” (Eph. 1:17). The “King of glory” (Ps. 24) is none other than Christ. The fact that He was crucified demonstrates His human nature. Thus, the perception of divine wisdom involves the recognition of the hypostatic union, the union of two natures (divine and human) within the single person of Christ.

Robertson: The “*wisdom of God*,” therefore, comprises primarily Christ and Him crucified; the preparation for Christ as regards Jew and Gentile; the great mystery of the call of the Gentiles and the apparent rejection of the Jews; the justification of man and the principles of the Christian life; and (the thought dominant in the immediate context) the consummation of Christ’s work in the “*glory of us*.” The Epistle to the Romans, which is an unfolding of the thought of 1 Cor. i. 24-31, is St Paul’s completest utterance

of this wisdom.

Piper: (:6-13) Paul was answering at least four questions about "*the wisdom we speak*," which I would like to answer with him. I think it would be helpful to answer them in this order:

- 1) Who cannot receive or know this wisdom?
- 2) Who can receive and know it?
- 3) How is it imparted from God to this group?
- 4) What is it?

To these I add my own at the end: So what? What difference does it make to me or you if we know this wisdom or not? . . .

In answer to our first question then (Who cannot receive or know the wisdom of God which Paul speaks?) our answer would be: people who are so enamoured by the wisdom that leads to power and acclaim that they do not recognize Jesus as the Lord of glory - these cannot receive God's wisdom. It is not simply being in a position of power that closes one off to this wisdom - God has chosen to save powerful people and to give some of his people earthly power. It is not having power but hunger for power that blinds a person to the glory of God in the suffering Messiah. It is not having acclaim among men but hungering for that acclaim that makes Jesus as He is unbelievable.

Stedman: Here he is declaring the sinfulness of man's wisdom. He says there is a wisdom which is hidden from the eyes of a proud, self-sufficient world, a secret wisdom which they know nothing about. It has been in existence since the foundation of the world, but man in his pride cannot reach it or understand it. And, because he lacks this, the knowledge that he does have actually leads him astray and he ends up committing the most tragic and atrocious blunders. When Paul speaks of the rulers of this age he does not mean only those who are of noble birth. He means the leaders, the philosophers, the great thinkers, these clever men who pride themselves on being able to recognize greatness when they see it. They would certainly know another philosopher, they would recognize a great thinker, or a great leader.

And yet, so blinded are they with their own conceit, that when truth incarnate stood before them, when the Son of God himself, the Lord of glory, stood in front of them all they could shout in their blindness was, "Away with this fellow, this agitator, this trouble-maker! Crucify him! That is all he is worth." From this fatal flaw in human knowledge stems all the strife and cruelty and violence of all the ages

Leake: 4 TRUTHS ABOUT TEACHING THE BIBLE IN ANY AGE

Introduction:

No need to adapt our bible teaching to postmodernism or pluralism or any otherism – despite the nature of today's culture (limited attention span, visually oriented, entertainment focused, etc.) We still can be authoritative and preach with confidence because our message is the timeless Word of God. No conformity to the spirit of the age; we reject the world's wisdom as foolishness

Context:

1:20 – “*God has made foolish the wisdom of the world*”

2 Illustrations of this main point:

- 1) God chose the non impressive people rather than the impressive
- 2) Personal example of how the Apostle Paul originally brought the gospel message to Corinth
 - Paul was not personally prominent
 - The focus was on the message of the Cross

Natural man does not have the capacity to understand spiritual truth

I. (:6A) Bible Teaching Imparts God’s Wisdom

The Apostles and NT prophets are the ones doing the speaking here; recorded in the NT so that we can proclaim the same message today

II. (:6B) Bible Teaching Is Desperately Needed

We have a message that contradicts the age; the upper echelon of society does not get the message; this age is being abolished, coming to nothing; God is bringing an end to it; If we start sounding like the world, we no longer have a message to proclaim

III. (:7) Bible Teaching Reveals a Mystery

Def. of *Mystery*: not riddles; not something vague or mysterious; but a secret that only God can know – but He has chosen now to reveal; this was a secret that God had held on to for a very long time; but now it is openly proclaimed

- Rom. 16:25-26
- Eph. 3:8-9
- Col. 1:26
- 1 Cor. 15:51-52

3 aspects of this Mystery:

- Hidden still to those who are perishing
- Predestined before the ages – so fixed that it can’t be changed
 - The Cross was not an afterthought but in God’s plan from the beginning
- For our glory – not for our shame; God has always had a plan for our glory –
Phil. 3:21 – Are you looking forward to glory?

IV. (:8) We Teach the Bible Even Though the World is Blind to its Message

How do we know they didn’t get it? They killed Wisdom and the Lord of Glory = unfathomable; you have the smartest people in the world doing the dumbest thing imaginable

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 2: 9-16

TITLE: SPIRIT TAUGHT TRUTH --
SPIRIT REVEALS . . . SPIRIT INSPIRES . . . SPIRIT ILLUMINES

BIG IDEA:
**THE HOLY SPIRIT DIRECTS THE COMMUNICATION AND
UNDERSTANDING OF DIVINE WISDOM THROUGH THREE
FUNDAMENTAL PROCESSES**

INTRODUCTION:

Remember the promise of the Lord to His disciples before he left them ;
“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. . . But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.” -- John 14:16-17; 16:13-14

Here Paul is explaining how all of that works by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Then he makes application to how people either understand and accept the God’s wisdom or reject it as foolishness.

**(:9) PRESUPPOSITION: DIVINE WISDOM CANNOT BE KNOWN APART
FROM THESE THREE VERY IMPORTANT PROCESSES**

A. God’s Wisdom Not Discoverable by Man

*“but just as it is written,
‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,’”*

Leake: Combination quote; not an exact quote – Is. 64:4; 65:17; 52:15 – clustering a number of OT ideas; an exact representation of OT teaching – man’s mind and heart cannot probe into the mind and heart of God; eliminating all of the 5 senses; all of the forms of philosophic empiricism as well as the recorded experiences of others

B. God’s Wisdom Designed to Impact the Heart of Man

“And which have not entered the heart of man,”

Leake: Heart = focus of rationalism and the mind; human intelligence or contemplation; can’t understand ultimate truth this way

C. God’s Wisdom Brings Unimaginable Blessing to His Children

“All that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Morris: The glories that come to believers are not haphazard, but are in accordance with God’s plan from of old.

I. (:10-11) PROCESS #1 – REVELATION TO THE WRITERS OF THE NT BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

- A. Revelation To Whom – Identification of the Recipients of Revelation
“For to us”

- B. Revelation By Whom – Identification of the Originator of Revelation
“God ”

- C. Revelation How – Explanation of the Process of Revelation
“revealed”

- D. Revelation of What – Content of Revelation
“them”

- C. Revelation Through Whom – Focus on the Crucial Role of the Holy Spirit
“through the Spirit”
3 Arguments Supporting the Role of the Spirit as the Agent of Revelation
 1. Argument from Function – Only the Spirit can plumb the depths of God
“for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God”

 2. Argument from Human Illustration – No one else knows our thoughts but us
“For who among men knows the thought of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?”

 3. Argument from Divine Application of the Illustration – Only the Spirit knows the thoughts of God
“Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”

II. (:12-13) PROCESS #2 -- INSPIRATION OF THE CANON OF THE NT HOLY SCRIPTURES BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

- A. NT Writers (Apostles and Prophets) Possess the Spirit of God
“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God”

- B. NT Writers Know the Body of Truth God Wants Communicated
“so that we may know the things freely given to us by God”

- C. NT Writers Were Inspired by the Holy Spirit to Communicate that Truth
“which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

Importance of verbal, plenary doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture

III. (:14-16) PROCESS #3 -- ILLUMINATION OF THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF BELIEVERS BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

A. (:14) Natural Man Does Not Understand or Appreciate God's Truth

(refers to all of the unsaved = those who do not possess the Spirit of God)

1. Cannot Appreciate God's Truth Because He Considers it Foolishness

"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him"

Piper: Paul implies that the natural man can construe the meaning of the gospel because when he does he calls it foolishness. The things of the Spirit are foolishness to the natural man not because he can't see their meaning but because he sees it and regards what he sees as a waste of time. The problem in verse 14 is not a lack of clear speech nor a lack of intellectual power to interpret. The problem is that when the word of the cross is clear and the intellect of the natural man has interpreted it adequately he regards it as foolishness. . . the problem is the moral inability to assign the right value to it.

2. Cannot Understand God's Truth Because He Lacks the Illuminating Work of the Holy Spirit

"and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."

B. (:15-16) Spiritual Man Understands and Appreciates God's Truth

(refers to all of the saved = those who do possess the Spirit of God)

1. (:15) Appreciates God's Truth Because He Has Discernment

"But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one."

2. (:16) Understands God's Truth Because He Possesses the Illuminating Work of the Holy Spirit = the Mind of Christ

"For who has known the mind of the Lord, that He will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Piper: The Spirit enables us to appraise things with their true value, but when natural men appraise us they will always go wrong. Why? Verse 16: Because apart from the Spirit no one thinks or appraises like the Lord, but we who possess the Spirit have the mind of Christ. We have begun to view and assess things the way Christ does. Therefore we do not reject but receive the things of the Spirit even when they mean death to self; because now we know what is really valuable.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does this passage encourage us in our witnessing?

- 2) What are some of the things that God has prepared for those who love Him?
- 3) What is our responsibility in this process of illumination?
- 4) How do we answer those who claim they need no teachers or time spent in study of the Word because the Holy Spirit can just speak spiritual truth to them directly?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Now here is this great Being of God in our universe, this fantastic Being of infinite wisdom and mighty power. How can we know anything about him? Paul's answer is that we cannot, except he discloses himself to us. You cannot find out God by searching. Man by wisdom does not know God. Man by investigation of all the natural forces of life will never find his way to the heart of God. Only God himself must disclose himself, must open himself to us. That he has done by means of the Spirit of God -- the Spirit has come to teach us about God. The Lord Jesus himself appeared as a man in order that we might have a visible demonstration of what God is like. The simplest answer to the question, "What is God like?" is to say he is like Jesus, under all circumstances. But it is the work of the Spirit to show us what Jesus is like. Jesus said, "He will take of the things of mine and show them unto you," {cf, John 16:14 KJV}. You can read the record of the Gospels, and read the historical record of Jesus, but the living Lord does not stand out from the pages merely by reading them. It is as the Spirit illuminates those pages and makes them vivid and real that you find yourself confronted with the living, breathing Christ himself. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. . .

As you know, one of the major arguments of our day is over the question of the inerrancy of scripture. People are asking afresh today, "Is everything in the Bible true? Does the Bible speak with authority in every realm of life? Is it true in what it says about scientific, geographic, and astronomic matters, etc? Or is it true only when it tells you how to get to heaven?" I think that question is answered by Paul's statement here. He says that when the apostles began to speak and to write the Scriptures, they did so by words taught by the Holy Spirit. I do not think he meant by that that the Spirit of God dictated the Bible to them. Oftentimes evangelicals are accused of believing in a dictation theory, but that is not what Paul is saying here. What he is really talking about is a process by which the Spirit of God awakened the minds of the apostles to understand truth, and they chose their own words to express it so that every apostle's personality comes through in the words that he uses. And yet, in a strange and wonderful way, those words which the apostles chose are words that God himself approved. Therefore, they come from him, not in a direct, but in an indirect sense.

Paul says to Timothy, "All scripture is breathed out from God," {cf, 2 Tim 3:16}. If that is true, then it comes from a God who cannot lie, a God who makes no mistakes, a God who sees the end from the beginning, so every word in Scripture is true. As the apostles wrote these things down, therefore, we can trust what they had to say. . .

There is the process. It begins with the indwelling of the apostles, then the illuminating of the apostles' minds, the preaching of the apostles in words chosen by the Spirit, the indwelling of every believer by belief in the word that the apostles preached, and the illuminating of the mind of each believer to understand truth as it fits his or her life directly.

Piper: What is this wisdom. We have seen two definitions. Now we need to put them together.

1. In past weeks we have seen the definition given in 1:23-24, "Over against the wisdom of the world that serves to stir up boasting, he says, "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God and the wisdom of God." So what is the wisdom of God? Christ crucified, and the preaching of Christ crucified.

2. The other definition of God's wisdom is given in 2:7-9. Verse 7: God decreed this wisdom for our glorification. And verse 9 says that it is something no eyes has seen nor ear heard nor man ever dreamed of, namely, what God has prepared for those who love him. So in both verses 7 and 9 the wisdom of God is the revelation of what is in store for believers in the age to come -- something unimaginably great!

Now how do these two aspects of God's wisdom fit together -- the preaching of Christ crucified and the hope of unimaginable glory? Verse 8 gives the clue: "None of the rulers of this age understood this (wisdom of God); for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Here the two things are brought together: the crucifixion and the Lord of glory. What the rulers of this age could not and cannot see is that the path to glory is through the cross. This is the wisdom of God that is foolishness to men -- the inheriting of an unimaginably glorious future in the presence of God, obtained by pride-abandoning faith in a scorned, weak, foolish-looking, crucified Jewish teacher who was the very Lord of glory.

The reason (v. 7) Paul calls this wisdom of God a "secret and hidden" wisdom is that the relationship between the age of glory and the humiliating execution of the Messiah was not fully revealed until the days when Christ and his apostles began to unfold it. But now it is being revealed by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and they are imparting it (v. 13) to others -- to us. . .

Not only is the wisdom of God a gift because it comes through revelation (that's the point of verses 9-13a); it is also a gift because the ability to recognize it as wisdom and receive it is a work of

the Holy Spirit.

Paul ends verse 13 by saying that he interprets spiritual truths (which I take to mean "the wisdom of God," the revelation he has received from the Holy Spirit -- which is why it is called spiritual) -- he interprets spiritual truths to "those who possess the Spirit," or literally, "spiritual people". It's the same words used at the beginning of verse 15, "the spiritual (man)."

In other words the last part of verse 13 seems to say that the only people who are willing and able to receive what Paul has to teach are spiritual people, that is people who have the Holy Spirit. . .

When it says at the end of verse 14 that the things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned it means that what a natural man needs is the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart to liberate him from his irrational pride and free him to own up to the wisdom and power of the cross of Christ. Without the Spirit, we are so rebellious against the cross and against the Lord of glory that we will not cannot recognize the truth and beauty of a crucified Christ.

Jeffries: "Inspiration is that mysterious process by which God worked through the human prophets without destroying their individual personalities and styles, to produce divinely authoritative writings."

- Norman Geisler and William Nix: A General Introduction to the Bible

Leake: (vv.9-14)

Introduction:

Sectarian spirit in Corinth was a real problem – based on worldly thinking and worldly wisdom; Paul dealing with that – Goal of unity in the church and maturity; Evangelical church today saturated with a man-centered style of ministry; We need a message to deal with that ugly beast; See the folly of the “Market Driven Church” of today – addressing the felt needs of people and marketing your church along those lines; Based on a misunderstanding of the power of God and how He works in the church today

Vs. 9 = controlling thought of passage = “*all that God has prepared for those that love Him*” (= Paul’s definition here of believers) – cf. Matt. 25:34

How does anyone know what these great and glorious things are?

Why is it set up that way?

I. (:9) Negatively: How you can’t know it

World’s knowledge of no help; man incapable of discovering God’s truth on their own; trying to discover truth apart from dependence on God would be a sinful process in itself;

II. (:10-11) Positively: How does God reveal these truths?

Through the Holy Spirit – not talking about the human spirit here, but the Spirit of God;
Only the Holy Spirit reveals ultimate truth;

Who does the Spirit tell? Believers in God

Spirit bridges that knowledge gap; makes that connection from God to man;

Matt. 11:27

Paul expounds the Spirit's qualifications – *the Spirit searches all things*

“to examine, investigate, probe” – present tense – constantly doing this

Spirit is omnipresent and all-knowing and searches out even *the depths of God*;

What does that include? All that God is and all that God knows and all that He determines and plans and prepares ... Rom. 11:33 – true for us, not for the Spirit; Dan. 2:22; Job 12:22; Ps. 92:5

Illustration – taking something we do understand and trying to give us understanding;
your thoughts are your thoughts; we might know the patterns of someone we know well
... but not their deepest thoughts

III. (:12-13) Why is it that some Understand? There are some who receive the Spirit Who Knows

How do I know what I know?

Who are the “we” here? True that all believers have received the Spirit of God – secondarily Paul has all believers in mind; but primarily here it is the apostles and prophets of the NT – they are the ones directly receiving revelation directly from Spirit of God and commissioned to pass it along to others; writing it down in Scripture;

We have not received the spirit of the world = attitude, prevailing thought of the day; not a direct reference to Satan (but he is behind such thinking); otherwise we would be just like everyone else in this world;

We did receive the Spirit from God; welcome; receive in – came to the NT apostles and prophets in a teaching sense; revealed his own thoughts to them

Purpose: so that we would know; knowledge is a gift to us from the Spirit of God;

Process of how the Spirit of God brought that wisdom to man – combining spiritual with spiritual – God's spiritual thoughts and plans are combined with carefully chosen spiritual words that we can then read and understand; Inspiration must extend to every word of Scriptures

3 Processes God uses to bring His truth to man:

1) Revelation = that which is revealed to a prophet or apostle; may come in form of dream or vision

2) Inspiration = the prophet would either speak or write down those words to communicate that truth to others; 1 Peter 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16

3) Illumination = we are constantly involved in this step; an insight from previous revelation that was inspired and available to you to study; Spirit of God teaches us inwardly – but not a new revelation; eyes to see the light of Scripture
These 3 processes work together

IV. (:14) Why don't some receive the truth? They have rejected spiritual truth *Natural man* = all unsaved; do not have the Spirit of God; only able to draw on normal, natural resources; a man of the flesh; no heavenly insight; no illumination; only natural sight; looking at life in a limited sense – that is putting it nicely – sees everything

upside down; devoid of the Spirit; not that they are uneducated – but shut out because of pride and unbelief; James 1:21

He has not the power or capability to receive spiritual truth; not just that he won't, but that he can't; emphasis is on his inability

Blind can only beg for sight! If you just don't get it – here is the reason; humble yourself; believe in Christ and cry out to Him for the grace gift of insight; If you cry out to God and repent He will forgive all your sins;

We don't know whom God has elected, so bring the message to all

Leake (2:15 – 3:4)

Introduction: How carnal can a Christian be? And for how long??

Refutation of the doctrine of the “carnal Christian” developed by Chafer and Dallas Seminary; a prominent teaching that someone can be a believer with no changed life; no fruit at all; therefore what is needed is some type of second blessing or dedication of the life or commitment to Christ as Lord when He has only been Savior = bad theology;

Need a proper understanding of 3:1-4 to refute this

3 DESCRIPTIONS OF MEN

I. The Natural Man (2:14) = without the Holy Spirit = all the unsaved

Unresponsive to God; needs the new birth; thinks God's wisdom is foolishness; no capacity to receive and understand God's wisdom; Only the Spirit can impart life (1 Pet. 1:3); new birth caused by God

Not a reform of your old life; 2 Cor. 5:17 = new creation

Holy Spirit imparts God's life into the human soul; unsaved has a soul already ... but it is unresponsive to God

II. The Spiritual Man (2:15-16) = indwelt by the Holy Spirit = all the saved

A. His Title / Designation

Not some special category or subset of believers; but describes all believers

B. His Activity – What does he do?

Discerns, investigates, evaluates all things; appraises them; then passes judgment; sees everything differently and clearly; the fog has been lifted; new life; new eyes; new understanding; Application: Don't go to unbelievers for our education

C. His Distinction

Unbeliever doesn't know what's going on in my life; we are appraised by no one (no unbeliever); world didn't know or understand Christ; ended up hating Him and will hate us as well

D. His Capabilities = We have the mind of Christ

Review of the process of revelation/inspiration/illumination = how God's thoughts become recorded in the Scriptures as words and come into our minds where we understand through the illumination of the Holy Spirit – thus we have the mind of Christ

Is. 40:13 quote

Speaks to the sufficiency of the Scriptures for Christian living

III. The Carnal/Spiritual Man (3:1-4 – next message)

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

TITLE: *THE DANGER OF SECTARIANISM*

BIG IDEA:

FLESHLY SECTARIANISM IS AN UNNATURAL STATE FOR THE BELIEVER AND STUNTS SPIRITUAL GROWTH

I. (:1) SOME BELIEVERS REMAIN SPIRITUAL INFANTS IN THE AREA OF DISCERNMENT FOR AN EXTENDED TIME

A. Context = Family of Christ – not talking about unbelievers here

“And I, brethren,”

B. Capacity for Discernment Not Consistent With Spirituality and Maturity

“could not speak to you as to spiritual men,”

C. Capacity for Discernment Limited by Carnality and Immaturity

“but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.”

II. (:2-3a) FLESHLY LIVING LIMITS ONE’S ABILITY TO PROCESS DEEPER SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

A. Restricted to a Diet Appropriate for an Infant

“I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not able to receive it.”

B. Problem is Fleshly Living

“Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly”

Piper: So what is it about a person that makes them unable to digest solid food? It's pride. Or to put it positively, the organ that properly digests solid food is humility. As long as a person is still largely influenced by a spirit of self-exaltation he is not able to digest solid food. The throat of pride is too narrow and unpliant to handle the solid food. . .

What then is solid food? Notice that it is not something that takes more intellect to grasp. What it takes is less jealousy and strife, less pride and self-assertion. The solid food is not for smart people. It's for humble people -- people who have stopped pursuing the pleasures of self-confidence and self-exaltation and self-determination -- people who now want only to boast in the Lord and give him all the glory for whatever good there is in the world and in their lives.

MacArthur: There is no difference at all between the truths of a spiritual milk diet and a spiritual solid food diet, except in detail and depth. All doctrine may have both milk and meat elements.

III. (:3b-4) SECTARIANISM DERIVES FROM JEALOUSY AND PRODUCES STRIFE IN THE CHURCH – DESTROYING UNITY AND STUNTING SPIRITUAL GROWTH – CHECK OUT WHETHER YOU HAVE THE SPIRIT

A. Signs of Carnality

1. Root Indicators: Jealousy

“For since there is jealousy”

2. Surface Indicators: Strife

“and strife among you,”

Signs of the Holy Spirit would be in contrast to these traits:

- the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, not the individual
- the Holy Spirit promotes peace and unity in the body

Stedman: Now the mark of spiritual babyhood, Paul says, is "jealousy and strife." Where you have Christians who are still baby Christians and who are all too long in that condition, you will always have divisions, factions, strife, and breaking into little cliques and groups in the Church. This arises out of a sense of competition.

B. Carnality Should Trigger an Examination of Whether You Possess the Spirit

1. Fleshly = Unnatural State for the Believer

“are you not fleshly,”

2. Not Manifesting the Spirit = Danger Zone

“and are you not walking like mere men?”

C. (:4) Sectarian Spirit Makes Us No Different Than the World of the Unsaved

“For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not mere men?”

Piper: But let's not treat continued immaturity as unimportant. It could be a sign that no true spiritual life was ever present and that the professing Christian is only a natural man after all. This is very rarely for us to decide. But it is our responsibility to warn the careless drifter, as Peter says to make his calling and election sure, by trusting in Christ TODAY and following him in the obedience of faith.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Where have you seen evidences of a spirit of sectarianism in your own life? In the church?

2) What affects your level of discernment of God's truth?

3) How would you characterize the milk of God's Word vs. the solid food?

4) What are some ways to guard against sectarianism creeping into our thinking or into the church?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: We live in a democracy, therefore, people think of the church as a democracy, as though the final authority rested with the people. You get congregational government instead of what the Scriptures describe as a body of which there is a Head who is a living Being, present among us, who is the final authority and has the right of planning and programming within the church. And because the government is turn like a hierarchy with a president at the top, or a business is run like a hierarchy with a chairman of the board and all the other people in varying varied ranks of insecurity and insignificance below them, so the church is run that way. The pastor is exalted to be the head and all the others fall in the varied ranks below him. This reflects the thinking of the world, natural thinking, which is destructive to the church. . .

He is careful, however, to indicate they were not unregenerate after he had brought them to Christ. He calls them "brethren," and he says they are "babes in Christ." They are "in Christ," but they are babies. That is the problem. Paul was in Corinth a year and a half and he preached to them and taught them, but in all that time they never advanced very far beyond babyhood. They were still governed by the thinking of the flesh. So, in the second part of this section, where he refers to the flesh again twice, he uses a slightly different word. It is not sarkinos here, but sarkikos, which comes from the same root but it means, "dominated by the flesh." The Latin word for flesh is carne and that is why in some versions this is called "carnal." "You are carnal; you are dominated by the flesh; your thinking is fleshly, not fleshy, but fleshly," . . .

In chapters five and six of the letter to the Hebrews (the section is unfortunately broken by the chapter division there), you have a very helpful explanation of what these terms mean, {cf, Heb 5:11-6:8}. This was the problem with the Hebrews too. They were spiritual babies; they had not grown up; they had a case of arrested development. That passage uses the word "milk" as well. It says, "You need milk," {Heb 5:12b RSV}. Well, what is milk? Hebrews 6 tells us that it is the elementary doctrines of Christ, and it goes on to list them for us:

The first one consists of evangelistic preaching, i.e., telling people how to become Christians. One of the most dangerous and, I think, deadly things in the church is the habit that thousands of churches have gotten into of preaching the gospel over and over every Sunday morning. People never grow up; they never get out of spiritual babyhood because all they hear is how to become a Christian. Now that is all right for babies; that is what helps them become Christians and leads them to Christ and established them,

but evangelistic preaching is milk.

Hebrews goes on to say that teaching concerning rituals like baptism and laying on of hands (probably for healing), and all this emphasis on physical healing, rituals and ceremonies are part of the milk that babies need. It is not yet meat, the strong food that is required for maturity.

Hebrews 6 tells us also that truth about the resurrection and the last judgments, about prophecy and eschatology, all this is milk. It is designed to get them started in the Christian life, but it is no way to build maturity as a Christian. Yet, across America there are thousands and thousands of churches that spend their whole teaching period, year after year, in investigating more about rituals, ceremonies, baptisms, prophecy and prophetic matters, and evangelizing. That is milk.

What is meat?

Meat is preaching that unfolds the full riches and magnificence of the gospel so that people grow up. They stop being children, as Paul says in Ephesians 4, "...no longer to be children, tossed to and fro and carried about every wind of doctrine," {Eph 4:14 RSV}. That requires the meat of the word.

Piper: The problem with this contrast between the natural person and the spiritual person [chaps. 1-2] is that it passes over the people who are not in either of these categories. It talks in terms that are all white or all black -- natural, without the Spirit at all, or spiritual in the sense of being mature(2:6).

So now in 3:1-4 Paul goes on to make some more distinctions. He distinguishes between Christians who are spiritual in the mature sense and Christians who are "fleshly" or "carnal." Why?

I think to guard one kind of person from despair and to guard another kind from presumption. The text is hopeful to the spiritual struggler and warning for the casual drifter. . .

So the term "babes in Christ" in 3:1 contrasts with "the mature" in 2:6. And the term "men of the flesh" (or: "fleshly") in 3:1 contrasts with "the spiritual person" in 2:15.

Now we have three categories of people. First there is the "natural person" in 2:14 -- the person who has no spiritual life and who can't recognize anything compelling in the gospel. Second, there is the "spiritual person" in 2:15 or "mature" person in 2:6 -- the person who is so deeply controlled by the Holy Spirit that he can receive and value any level of Biblical truth. And third, there is a group of people in between whom Paul calls not spiritual and not natural, but "fleshly," or "babes in Christ."

Wiersbe: The immature believer knows little about the present ministry of Christ... He knows the facts about our Lord's life and ministry on earth, but not the truths about His present ministry in heaven. He lives on 'Bible stories' and not Bible doctrines."

Jeffries: [Signs of Maturity]

I will become filled with His truth. This will not make me "smarter," though I will gain Scriptural knowledge. It will not swell my ego with pride, although God will make use of my maturity in ministry toward others.

Yet a powerful and observable effect will be wrought in me as I abide in God's Word. The illuminating power of the Holy Spirit will re-orient me time and again to the cross of Jesus Christ and so will cause me to be ever more often reminded of the fundamental equality of all believers when measured against the attributes and character of God.

Spiritual maturity will pour forth from my life in genuine humility.

When I am in congregation with God's people, that humility will manifest itself in unity.

MacArthur: From 1:18 through 2:16 Paul points out that the Corinthians were divided because of worldliness, because of their continued love for human wisdom. In 3:1-9 the apostle shows them that they also were divided because of the flesh, because of their continued yielding to the evil in their humanness. He shows the cause, the symptoms, and the cure.

I. The Cause of Division: The Flesh

So a Christian is not characterized by sin; it no longer represents his basic nature. But he is still able to sin, and his sin is just as sinful as the sin of an unbeliever. Sin is sin. When a Christian sins, he is being practically unspiritual, living on the same practical level as an unbeliever. Consequently Paul is compelled to speak to the Corinthian believers much as if they were unbelievers.

II. The Symptoms of Division: Jealousy and Strife

Jealousy is a severe form of selfishness, begrudging someone else what we wish were ours. And selfishness is one of the most obvious characteristics of babyhood. An infant's life is almost totally self-centered and selfish.

III. The Cure for Divisions: Glorifying Christ (:5-9)

Leake (2:15 – 3:4) Are There Spiritual and Carnal Christians?

Introduction: How carnal can a Christian be? And for how long??

Refutation of the doctrine of the "carnal Christian" developed by Chafer and Dallas Seminary; a prominent teaching that someone can be a believer with no changed life; no fruit at all; therefore what is needed is some type of second blessing or dedication of the life or commitment to Christ as Lord when He has only been Savior = bad theology;

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Review of the process of revelation/inspiration/illumination = how God's thoughts become recorded in the Scriptures as words and come into our minds where we understand through the illumination of the Holy Spirit – thus we have the mind of Christ

Is. 40:13 quote

Speaks to the sufficiency of the Scriptures for Christian living

III. The Carnal/Spiritual Man (3:1-4)

A. What Paul does NOT mean:

Not saying that this group is just men of the flesh = unsaved;

- clearly he calls them *brethren* in this passage;

- cf. 1:2 where despite their evidence of carnal living and serious sins they are described as owning Christ as Lord of their lives;

- by virtue of calling them infants in Christ – acknowledges they have been born into God's family

B. What DOES Paul mean here?

They are walking AS mere men; therefore Paul in some sense has to treat them as if they did not have the mind of Christ [or at least very limited capacity to discern spiritual truth]

Their practice is not matching their spiritual reality; these are saved individuals here; it was quite a rebuke to call them fleshly in their practice; like selfish little babies; nobody likes a seven year old baby

They had been taught by the best = Apostle Paul himself; but still couldn't digest the meat of the Word

No one denies that true believers can act carnally for a time – Question is How Carnal

and For How Long??

But they must evidence some fruit of a changed life or there was never any root;

Only 2 categories: either in Adam or in Christ – no third category

Evidences against the “carnal Christian” category popularized by Scofield Study Bible

- 1) Corinthian church only been around for 4-5 years – so not like they had been mired in carnality for 35 years with no evidence of fruit
- 2) Paul certainly expected some greater level of maturity from them; expected spiritual growth; this state (even for relatively young believers) was unnatural
- 3) 5:11 – This person who had sinned so grievously was designated as a “so-called” brother – Paul willing to open up for question the genuineness of his faith
- 4) Not carnal through and through; you can point to some evidence of a changed life Cf. 6:9-11
- 5) By the writing of 2 Corinthians the church had experienced godly sorrow; genuine repentance; changed heart; etc.
- 6) 2 Cor. 13:5 – admonition still to test yourself to see whether you are in the faith; Paul perhaps still unsure of some of them
- 7) 6:9-11 – Direct statement that people who persist in these types of sinful mindsets and activities are not saved – flies in the face of the “carnal Christian” view; cf. Ga. 5 and Eph. 5
- 8) Argument from silence – Paul never exhorts them to seek some type of second blessing or dedicate themselves to the Lordship of Christ, etc.

Conclusion: Sometimes trust in the Lord and a changed life will be slow to come and difficult to see ... but it will be there

Cautions:

- 1) Don't be fooled if you don't see any evidence of a changed life – don't be naïve in just assuming someone is a believer
- 2) Don't be too quick to call someone a non-believer; be humble and careful and balanced and realistic in our discernment

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3: 5-9

TITLE: SECTARIANISM DEFEATED BY GIVING ALL GLORY TO GOD

BIG IDEA:

ALL OF THE ACCOLADES FOR SPIRITUAL MINISTRY SHOULD GO TO GOD WHO CAUSES THE GROWTH -- NOT TO THE PARTICULAR SERVANTS LABORING TOGETHER ON GOD'S BEHALF

INTRODUCTION:

Paul is not saying that we should refrain from expressing appreciation and rendering respect and honor to those who minister the Word of God and perform the servant work of evangelists and teachers and under shepherds. But God needs to get all of the credit since the work is ultimately His. He deserves the loyalty and dependence – which would be idolatrous if placed on any Christian minister. He warns against ascribing ultimate credit or building loyalty at the level of the individual Christian minister.

You would think that it would be impossible for believers to lose focus and put Christian workers up on a pedestal. But that is exactly what had been happening in Corinth. The problem had not been the fault of any lobbying for popularity on the part of the ministers, but the people themselves were looking at the messenger rather than the Lord Jesus who was being faithfully proclaimed.

5 REMINDERS OF THE UNIQUE, SOVEREIGN ROLE OF GOD IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

We need these same reminders today.

I. (:5) REMINDER #1: CHRISTIAN MINISTERS ARE ONLY SERVANTS

“What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.”

Don't forget the crucial distinction between the Many Ministers and the One Lord over all

Should servants get the glory? Obviously not.

What happens when spiritual leaders get too big for their britches?? Study 1 Samuel
What happens when the flock gives too much attention to a particular Christian preacher? The strength and depth of faith and dependence on the one Good Shepherd is undermined. Churches which focus the public ministry of the church in just the giftedness of one individual are especially susceptible to putting that person up on a pedestal. But even in the context where multiple ministers exist there can be a fleshly tendency to align oneself with the individual personality rather than with the corporate body of Christ.

A. Reexamine Your Perspective Towards Your Christian Ministers

1. How do you view the erudite preacher Apollos?

2. How do you view the gifted Apostle Paul?

Lenski: The Corinthians are making party heads of these men and each party glorifies its man to the detriment of Christ and the gospel.

B. Recognize Their Role as God's Servants in Guiding Us to Faith

C. Refocus on the Primacy of the Lord who Gives Opportunities to Minister and Blesses the Results of Such Ministry

God gives the giftedness and grace and opportunity and fruitfulness to each minister as He intends. Ministry is a distinct privilege and comes by way of divine appointment so that no man can boast.

II. (:6) REMINDER #2: ONLY GOD CAN PRODUCE SPIRITUAL FRUIT

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."

Don't forget the crucial distinction between the secondary role of the exercise of a variety of spiritual gifts and the primary role of God who alone can initiate and develop spiritual life and growth

Are planting and watering necessary? Yes . . . but not anything apart from the behind-the-scenes work of God.

A. Secondary Role of the Exercise of a Variety of Spiritual Gifts

1. Role of Evangelists / Church Planters

2. Role of Teachers / Preachers / Under shepherds / Disciplers

B. Primary Role of God

III. (:7) REMINDER #3: ALL OF THE GLORY BELONGS TO GOD

"So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth."

Don't forget that all of the glory and credit and loyalty and dependence belongs not to the many secondary ministers but to the One Sovereign Lord

A. Christian Ministers are Nothing in Themselves

B. God is Everything – when it comes to producing spiritual fruit

IV. (:8) REMINDER #4: STRESS TEAMWORK NOW; REWARDS WILL COME LATER

“Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.”

Don’t forget that all Christian ministers labor on the same team but their individual reward will be dispensed equitably by God rather than by man

Not a time for competition, envy, strife, etc. But still each minister must be careful and diligent how he labors ... as developed in the next section (vv. 10-15).

A. One Team . . . Many Gifts / Functions

- teamwork is the emphasis for now – one Master; one goal
- variety of different gifts are still essential

B. Individual Rewards – Dispensed equitably by God after the job is finished

- ministers are not looking to the people for accolades and rewards; not serving as man-pleasers

V. (:9) REMINDER #5: GOD OWNS IT ALL

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

Don’t forget that God owns it all – whether the agents of Christian ministry or the product of that ministry

The local church is God’s church – He owns it all.

A. God Owns the Agents of Christian Ministry

B. God Owns the Product of that Ministry – 2 Analogies

1. From Agriculture – The Farmer cultivates the crop – “*God’s field*”
Emphasis on life and growth
2. From Construction – The Builder constructs the building – “*God’s building*”
Emphasis on effort and cohesiveness

Hodge: Union and fidelity in labour are required of those engaged in tilling the same farm, or in the erection of the same building; and they are no less required in those engaged in cultivating the vineyard of the Lord, or in erecting his temple. The apostle drops the former, and carries out the latter figure. [into the next paragraph]

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In this light, how do we view radio personalities and famous Bible teachers? How do we view those who preach the word to us at our local congregations?

- 2) When we think of the term “Christian minister” do we think in terms of humble service or exalted privilege?
- 3) How are we encouraged by the knowledge that spiritual fruit ultimately depends on the work of God?
- 4) What comes to mind when we think of Christian preachers and teachers united in working side-by-side with God as *fellow workers*?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: So it is not the people who are important, it is the God who works through the people. Therefore, to give glory to men as though they were all-in-all (honor is one thing that is right to give to those to whom honor is due), but to give glory to men and to exalt one as more important than another is wrong. Paul says we are equal. He says, "*He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor,*" i.e.. they are equally in need of the grace and the power of God.

Finally, his view is that all of us share the same high privilege. He says, "*We are God's fellow workers.*" Isn't that amazing? Nothing is more important in all of life than that. Think of the privilege of your being a fellow-worker with God in this day and age. When at last it is all over, and we stand before the King, the greatest honor that ever will have been accorded us is the honor that we have of bearing his name and being an instrument of his grace where we live, where we work, in our family.

Piper: Seven statements that Paul makes about himself and Apollos and God.

1. We are servants, but God alone is Master.
2. God is the object of your faith not us; we only point to him.
3. We did not make ourselves servants or make you converts, God did.
4. Apollos and I planted and watered but God alone can create spiritual life.
5. Apollos and I amount to nothing compared to God.
6. Apollos and I are not competitors but allies with a common goal, and in the end God will give us our rewards, not you.
7. We are workers on the farm and the building, but God owns it and us.

In summary, then Paul's answer to why there was pride and boasting and jealousy and strife at Corinth is that they were putting man where God belongs and failing to see the all-pervasive sovereignty of God.

Goins: It is an understanding of the fundamental equality of all Christians, including Christian leaders in particular, as Paul mentions himself and Apollos. It's also a call to turn away from looking at ourselves and our needs and our demands, and focus on the

Lord. His name shows up six times in the last five verses. He is the only one worthy of glory. When our attention is focused on him, there will be no place for jealousy or strife or self-centered competition. When his mighty presence and power fill our awareness, we're not going to focus on ourselves or on human leaders or human factions.

Morris: “*ministers*” – It is a word which stresses the lowly character of the service rendered. It accordingly ridicules the tendency to make much of preachers. Who would set servants on pedestals? The real work was done by God, as *by whom*, which is really “*through whom*”, shows. Paul and Apollos are nothing more than instruments “*through whom*” He does His work. These ministers could work only as the Lord gave to them.

MacArthur: It is appropriate that God’s faithful servants be appreciated and encouraged while they are on earth. But they are not to be glorified, set apart, or made the center of special groups or movements.

Paul and Apollos were but *God’s fellow workers*. It was not their own ministry that they worked in, but His. What divine companionship! It was God’s church in Corinth, not Paul’s or Apollos’s or Peter’s. The believers there were God’s field, God’s building, and His alone. And the glory for any good work done there, or anywhere, is also His alone.

Leake: Ten Lessons About Spiritual Leadership (continued in next message)

I. A Spiritual Leader is a Servant

1 Cor. 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:5

- Test of leadership = is he serving others in the local church?
- Must be a teachable person

II. A Spiritual Leader is a Servant Furthering the Faith of Others

- Test of leadership = whom has he been discipling?
- teaching in his own home
- involved in evangelism

III. A Spiritual Leader is a Minister Appointed by God

- the Lord grants the spiritual gifts and opportunities for ministry
- What about calling into full-time Christian ministry??

IV. A Spiritual Leader is a Worker Relying on God’s Power

- must rely on the power and sovereignty of God
- takes the pressure off us; gives a sense of relief; leader should have sense of personal inadequacy

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

TITLE: *DIVINE BLUEPRINT FOR SPIRITUAL CONSTRUCTION*

BIG IDEA:

THE HARD WORK OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY CAN REAP ETERNAL REWARDS WHEN WE BUILD WISELY ON THE PROPER FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION:

Most of you are familiar with The Big Dig tunnel project in the Boston area. Faulty materials and construction practices led to a concrete ceiling panel braking loose, falling and killing someone. That sparked a huge investigation and comprehensive testing that revealed many shortcomings.

The Central Artery project, even as it opened the skyline downtown and provided a smoother commute for many motorists, was already infamous for delays, overruns and possibly criminal defects in design and construction. But it moved from embarrassment to fatal civic liability July 10, when a ceiling panel in the Ted Williams Tunnel gave way and crushed Milena Del Valle to death. Her husband escaped, and his lawsuit may set an all-time high for award or settlement. Attorney General Thomas Reilly said he'll seek criminal charges against designers and contractors of the Big Dig in the case,

<http://www.townonline.com/pembroke/homepage/8999026040860835838>

Remember in the last paragraph Paul had introduced the two analogies for Christian workers: that of a farmer and that of a builder. Here he extends the construction analogy. Church ministry in this text is compared to a large building project. The spiritual leaders are charged with taking care how they build so that they will produce quality results which will last and pass the fiery test. Future rewards are promised to those who stay true to the foundation of Jesus Christ and the apostolic model of ministry.

**I. (:10-11) SPIRITUAL LEADERS MUST FOLLOW THE DIVINELY REVEALED PATTERN FOR CHURCH MINISTRY–
4 REQUIREMENTS:**

A. Humble Reliance on the Grace of God

“According to the grace of God which was given to me”

- Different gifts; different callings; different opportunities
- Individualized grace
- Faithfulness is required for all (4:2)
- Aggressiveness in trusting Christ for His enablement rather than burying our talents (cf. parable of the talents)
- No room for pride or boasting in human accomplishments
- No running away from ministry or bailing because God’s grace is sufficient

B. Skillful Labor in Accordance with God’s Wisdom

“like a wise master builder”

Distinction between God's wisdom and the wisdom of the world continues to flow through this epistle to the Corinthians. Expediency is not the standard. God's ways are not our ways. The type of leadership model derived from the business community will not cut it.

Word from which we get "architect" – but here used in an expanded sense as the one who faithfully carries out the master blueprint plans as a good general contractor.

Stedman: Paul calls himself here "the wise master builder," and the word for master builder, *architectron* is the word from which we get our word "architect." But he really uses this word in a different sense than we use the word "architect" today. To us an architect is the man who thinks up the building. He conceptualizes it; he designs it; he sees it in his mind's eye; he plans it, and programs it, and draws the designs for it. In that sense, of course, God is the architect of the church. The Lord Jesus said, "I will build my church," {Matt 16:18}. He has conceived it; he has designed it; he has planned its structure; he has programmed its activities, and he continues to do so, so he is really the architect in that sense today.

C. Careful Construction in Accordance with the Apostolic Pattern

"I laid a foundation and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it."

- Rom. 15:20 – Paul called to do pioneering work; the apostle of the Gentiles
- No selfish ambition
- Spirit of teamwork rather than competition
- There is a biblical pattern to follow; the apostles followed that pattern

Be careful in the sense of:

- communicating the whole counsel of God accurately and faithfully
(2 Tim. 2:2)
- following the biblical ministry model – not relying on the marketing techniques of the world
- keeping the focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ

Goins: The second half of verse 10 reminds us that a foundation is supposed to support something. In the case of the church, it's a spiritual building. Paul is concerned that those who continue the work that he started work as faithfully and effectively as he did. They've got to draw on God's gracious resources and reflect God's spiritual wisdom. Paul is referring particularly to evangelists and pastors and teachers in the church, but the principle applies to every single believer. All of us to some extent represent the gospel by what we do. Our life and our witness with each other must be grounded in the Lord Jesus and in his word.

D. Zero Deviation From the Supreme Standard = the Church's One Foundation = Jesus Christ Her Lord

"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

1 Pet. 2:6; Eph. 2:20
Concept of a plumb line

Lenski: When Paul writes that he “*laid a foundation*” in Corinth he means only that he began the work in that place. Laying a foundation in this sense is in contrast with the erecting of the superstructure. . . A vaster thing is meant by the one and only foundation that Paul says is “*lying*”, a present tense, lying permanently and forever. Paul says nothing about him who laid this foundation or how it was laid. . . They shall also note what this foundation, is, namely “*Jesus Christ.*”

II. (:12-13) THE QUALITY OF ONE’S MINISTRY WILL BE TESTED AND REVEALED

A. (:12) Two Contrasting Types of Building Materials

“Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw”

Presented from most costly to least costly; key is ability to endure fire

1. High Quality – permanent, valuable, uncommon
 - a. gold
 - b. silver
 - c. precious stones

2. Low Quality – temporary, useless, very common, highly combustible
 - a. wood
 - b. hay
 - c. straw

The problem will not be with the foundation – that is solid;
Look at the effort and cost involved in doing things the right way;
You can’t be cutting corners in the ministry;
These kinds of materials refer to the various doctrines, the modeling of those doctrines via a life of holiness, and the ministry motives and methods employed

Leake: the continuous teaching; not mixing in worldly philosophy and methodology; the foundation being built upon is the doctrine about the person of Christ

Goins: Paul speaks of human wisdom, the spirit of the world, and words or speculations. The wisdom of the world is a common-sense view of life. It's the constantly changing opinions and traditions and philosophies and social theories that our race manufactures.

B. (:13) Testing By Fire Will Reveal the Quality of the Work

“each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to

be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work."

Speaking of judgment day for believers – not to determine their eternal destiny – but the nature of their rewards. This is commonly referred to as the *bema* seat judgment.

Goins: When the glorified Jesus appeared to the apostle John on the island of Patmos, John described him in the Revelation as having eyes that were like a flame of fire, having a burning intensity, evaluating. Our loving Lord Jesus, who is passionately committed to the life and health of the church, will examine our building activity and materials and sort out the bad and the good, what is of the Spirit and what is of the flesh, what is built on God's revealed eternal word and what is built on the current human philosophies swirling around us.

I. (:14-15) ONLY MINISTRY THAT STANDS THE TEST OF FIRE WILL QUALIFY FOR FUTURE REWARDS

2 Categories when it comes to Rewards:

A. Spiritual Leaders Who Qualify For Future Rewards

"If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward."

B. Spiritual Leaders Whose Efforts at Ministry Were Wasted Because They Failed to Follow the Divine Blueprint

"If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

MacArthur: No matter how worthless, no believer will forfeit salvation.

Grosheide: The teachers who build badly may be believers. They build on the good foundation without having the intention of destroying the work of God, and although they are guilty by reason of the lack of permanency of their work, their state before God may be secure. Here again Paul assumes that there are teachers at Corinth who lead the church in the wrong direction.

Leake: Misuse of passage – not talking about a carnal Christian who produces zero fruit his whole life; not speaking of purgatory; no second chance to start over and build it right

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is involved in Jesus Christ being the foundation of the church?
- 2) How do we know right now whether we are building with gold, silver and precious stones? Is it right to be concerned with the level of future rewards we will receive?

3) How does this passage speak to the tendency of believers to evaluate right now the quality of the ministry work of others?

4) What type of "loss" will the believer suffer who has built with wood, hay, and straw? Will there be emotional disappointment as well? Will these believers be happy in heaven?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Re His person, his life, his doctrines, his teachings, his resurrection, his ascension, his return by means of the Holy Spirit to make himself universally available among us, his coming return in person from heaven -- all that is included as part of the foundation. The teachings concerning Jesus were given to us by the apostles, but they focus on the person of the Lord. Every church that departs from teaching about Christ and his work, his person and his resurrection, begins to slide away from the foundation and soon becomes tottery and wobbly. It becomes filled with many forms of weakness and failure and finally collapses and crumbles into nothing. Every individual who is not built upon that foundation will find his life crumbling and failing ultimately. So our Lord is to remain always present as the foundation of the church, the God and Lord of the universal church, the head of the local body manifesting his presence, his power and his guidance throughout that body and the Master and Savior of every individual heart which has come to know him. That is the foundation.

That foundation, of course, basically consists of the Scriptures. They are the foundation of the church. They were given to us by the apostles and as such they constitute the unshakeable foundation. That is why every church, either local or universal, or any individual who does not base his life upon the Scriptures soon begins to waver and wobble; they find inconsistencies and weaknesses. Today we hear the words "Jesus" and "Christ" used in many ways that are not reflected in the Scriptures, but the only foundation that God ever recognizes is the apostolic Christ, the one given to us, the Jesus who is reflected in the Scriptures. "No other foundation can any one lay," Paul says. That is the foundation, and this is why we must keep Jesus central in all things. . .

Are our lives going to be lived on the basis of gold, silver and precious stones, growing out of that revelation of God by the Spirit, or are they going to reflect the empty, vain philosophies and speculations of the world around so that we live only for pleasure, fame and power instead of being an instrument of the living God?

Martha Snell Nicholson has put it in this little poem with which I close:

When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ
And He shows me His plan for me,
The plan of my life as it might have been
Had He had His way, and I see

How I blocked Him here, and I checked Him there,
And I would not yield my will
Will there be grief in my Saviour's eyes,
Grief, though He loves me still?

He would have me rich, and I stand there poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing
Down the paths I cannot retrace.

Then my desolate heart will well-nigh break
With the tears that I cannot shed;
I shall cover my face with my empty hands,
I shall bow my uncrowned head...

Lord of the years that are left to me,
I give them to Thy hand;
Take me and break me, mould me to
The pattern Thou hast planned!

Piper: What that means is that the foundation must control the materials used in the superstructure. Otherwise the connection between verses 10 and 11 makes no sense. Does it make sense to say: Watch out what kind of windows you use because the foundation is Christ! Watch out what kind of roof you build because the foundation is Christ? Watch out what kind of wiring you use because the foundation is Christ! Yes it does make sense if the foundation controls the shape and quality of the building.

Hoke: But those who are faithful in their work in the Kingdom shall receive a reward. There will be a prize for the faithful in Jesus. The Bible speaks of definite rewards, or "crowns" which await us. There is the "Crown of Life" for those who love Jesus and endure temptation (James 1:12). There is the "Crown Incorruptable" for those who discipline their lives in the race (1 Cor. 9:25). There is the "Crown of Rejoicing" for those who are soul winners (1 Thess. 2:19). There is the "Crown of Righteousness" for those who love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). And there is the "Crown of Glory" for those who faithfully shepherd God's flock (1 Peter 5:4).

What does it mean to receive a "crown"? Does this mean we'll receive a literal crown to go on our heads? If these crowns are a symbol of something, what would that be?

Well, a crown is given to those who rule. To have a crown is itself symbolic of the reality of authority and rule. Kings have a crown. Queens have a crown. They're given this crown at their coronation, when they're installed officially in office.

Now that's very interesting, because the Bible has much to say about ruling and reigning with Christ. In Revelation there's a promise of rule to those who overcome.

Jesus says to those who have been faithful in little that they shall be made ruler over much. Perhaps here these crowns refer to various kinds of rule available in the age to come.

Holwick:

TRIAL BY FIRE

I. Testing time.

A. Final exams are soon approaching in school.

B. God's final exam is also approaching.

1) He will assess our lives in detail.

2) He looks at us as if we are building contractors.

II. Building from the ground up. 3:9

A. Church is in view, more than individuals.

1) Each of us is making our contribution to God's house.

2) What one of you does, reflects on all of us.

B. Jesus is only foundation. 3:11

1) If foundation is weak, building won't stand.

a) King Store and massive basement walls.

b) Jesus is a firm foundation.

2) Jesus is required - not just one answer among many.

a) Only name for salvation. Acts 4:12

b) No one gets to Father except through Jesus. John 14:6

III. "Be careful how you build..." The structure is up to us.

A. The Christian life is open-ended potential.

1) Are we content to rest in our salvation?

a) Or do we intend to build ourselves up?

b) Most Christians exhibit little growth.

2) New office buildings at Roxbury Mall. <<<<<<

a) Look good on outside, but an empty shell.

B. Different building materials.

1) Gold, silver, precious stones alludes to materials of Solomon's Temple.

2) Wood, hay and straw are easily consumed.

a) (3 pigs and Big Bad Wolf)

3) What we do for God lasts, rest does not. Perishes.

IV. How to build with quality in the Christian life.

A. Know your God.

1) Bible is our blueprints.

a) Nightmare in college - I realize I have final exam in

- a class I never attended, and didn't read material.
 - b) Do we read God's material?
 - c) Disciplined Bible study is surest way to grow as a believer.
- 2) Prayer keeps us in God's power.
 - a) Most people talk about prayer, more than they pray.
 - b) If prayer seems remote, challenge God to reveal what he can do.

B. Watch your inner life.

- 1) Mexico City earthquake - buildings looked the same, but substandard building practices and materials caused some to collapse.
[Building demolition: only a few supports need to be knocked out.]
- 2) Moral impurity causes many Christians to fall.
 - a) Sin that is not checked only grows worse.
 - b) After a while, you will feel no pangs of guilt but the damage will still be there.
- 3) Challenge yourself to do what Jesus would do in everyday circumstances.

Boyer: What do these six kinds of building material represent? Certainly the context makes the primary application to people. They represent persons being built into the church. This is not to be understood, however, as a mere adding of another brick to the wall by getting another convert to Christ. Remember, these people are “*living stones*.” They themselves grow, so that the temple grows and is edified as its people grow. Thus, the minister’s work is twofold: He builds (1) by getting new people into the building, and (2) by getting those in the building to increase in stature and maturity. And since both of these tasks are accomplished by a ministry of teaching, there is some truth to the interpretation often encountered in the commentaries that the works here refer to the *doctrines* of the church leaders. Doctrine, however, is involved only secondarily, as it affects persons.

Lenski: Paul considers three classes of builders:

- 1) those who are truly wise (v.10)
 - 2) those who are unwise and introduce wrong material although they do not leave the foundation;
 - 3) those who are fools and destroy God’s temple (vv. 16-17)
- The eventual fate of these three classes Paul also indicates.

Ken Alford: ETERNAL LEGACIES AREN’T BUILT FROM COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS.

Here are Four considerations of choice concerning combustible Christianity.

I. There is only one choice concerning life’s FOUNDATION (1 Corinthians 3: 10-11).

A. The foundation for life's work is Jesus Christ. We see this in the parable of the wise man who built his house upon a rock (Matt. 7: 24-27). Jesus Himself said that no one could come to the Father but by Him (John 14: 6). We are told that there is no other name for salvation (Acts 4: 12).

B. Now, in all or any of these manifestations the matter of first importance is the foundation. A church, or a building, is no good if the foundation is no good, and in this case the apostle is very clear to make sure that we understand who that foundation is. He does not leave it to debate; we do not have to argue about it; it is stated as plainly as it can be. (God's Builders by Ray C. Stedman, June 4, 1978)

II. A believer chooses the CHARACTER of his life structure (1 Corinthians 3: 12-13).

A. The Christian is warned to "take heed" how he builds. Most of life's choices may be reduced to the issue of whom one is going to please: himself or the Lord. A major temptation is to yield to the urges of self.

B. Materials of life structure are temporal or eternal.

1. Worldly things are temporal (1 John 2: 15-17).
2. Fleshly things are temporal (Galatians 6: 8).
3. Devilish things are temporal (Matthew 25: 41).

C. The structure of our lives will be tested by the examination of Christ (2 Corinthians 5: 10). The examination of Christ is compared to a fire that reveals the nature of materials thrown into it. If one's life is built with wood, hay, or stubble, these are temporal materials that cannot endure the presence of God's consuming glory. The eternal materials, on the other hand, are compared to the qualities of gold, silver, and precious stones. These are the elements in a life structure that are consistent and compatible with God's glory. They will withstand the examination of Christ.

D. There is a sense in which every one of us who is possessed of the Spirit of God builds upon this foundation. We all touch one another; we build into other's lives; we affect everyone by the way we live and the way we think, the apostle called our attention to that. How are you building on the foundation? What materials are you using? Is it the wood, the hay and the stubble of human wisdom, the love of status, the seeking for ambition and prestige by which the world is characterized? Is this what you are building for and with? Or is it with the truth revealed in that secret and hidden mystery of God, truth about yourself, about humanity, and about history? Is that what you are building on? Is that what you are building with? That is the question. (Ray C. Stedman in How to Destroy a Church, June 11, 1978.)

III. There is no choice in what will OUTLAST one's life (1 Corinthians 3: 14-15).

A. Did you ever watch a winning team at the end of a game? Do you notice what they do? Why, they go crazy! Grown men jump on each other's backs; they pound one

another, and hug one another, and even kiss one another. They jump up and down like little kids in a candy store. Why? They are filled with joy because the efforts they put forth produced results; it was satisfying to them. That was their reward.

Did you ever watch the losing team? They slink off; there is no jumping around and slapping one another on the back. No. Sadness and gloom prevail; they are ashamed because all their efforts were to no avail. It was all wasted effort.

Now, all of us shall have some of both in our lives. There is nobody who is a Christian who will not have some degree of gold, silver and precious stones because God guarantees it by having come into our lives as Christians. But there can also be a lot of wood, hay and stubble too, built upon the philosophy of the flesh instead of the Spirit. John says, "Let us so live that we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming," {cf, 1Jn 2:28}.

What is your life going to count for? (God's Builders by Ray C. Stedman, June 4, 1978)

B. Every one of us here is investing his life in something. You cannot live without making an investment. What is it in? Will it be permanent? Will it abide? Will it stand the test? In the great day when all the universe sees things the way they are, will you be filled with joy that your life was invested in what stood the test and contributed to the glory of the Lord himself? Or will you be ashamed that you wasted all these years making an impression on men and teaching and influencing others to do so, and it was all burned up in the fire -- saved, but as though you had to run through the flames and lost everything besides? (God's Builders by Ray C. Stedman, June 4, 1978)

IV. The local church has been chosen by God as His building (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17).

A. The local church is the place of God's dwelling, or, His Temple. The second person references in verses 16 and 17 are plural, and indicate that the Holy Spirit not only indwells believers individually, but also chooses to live among them corporately. Whenever we gather, He is there.

B. [Because the nature of God is holy, His building, by design, is also meant to be holy.] Well, how do you damage the church? How do you corrupt the congregation? I think the answer is clear from the context -- we have been looking at this all along. Corruption takes place when someone introduces the wisdom of the world into the life style and the practice of a congregation. If someone individually chooses to begin to live according to the wisdom and the practice of the world, he begins to corrupt and damage the church. He is building with shoddy material, with wood, hay and stubble which will not stand the test of the fire and therefore he is marring the building of the church. When someone seeks to make the church impressive and powerful by the methods and the standards of the world, he is fulfilling this very thing -- corrupting and damaging the church. So whoever suggests a compromise with the spirit of the age is fulfilling this dangerous thing, especially when he does so at the expense of the teachings of our Lord himself. (Ray C. Stedman in How to Destroy a Church, June 11, 1978.)

C. God is protective of His building (that is, you).

Dr. Ronald Schultz: Does Your House Come Up to Code?

Leake: Ten Lessons About Spiritual Leadership (continued – 1-4 last message)

- I. A Spiritual Leader is a Servant (:5)
- II. A Spiritual Leader is a Servant Furthering the Faith of Others (:5)
- III. A Spiritual Leader is a Minister Appointed by God (:5)
- IV. A Spiritual Leader is a Worker Relying on God's Power (:6-7)
- V. A Spiritual Leader is a Team Player (:6-7)
- VI. A Spiritual Leader is a Paid Worker (paid by God) (:8)
- VII. A Spiritual Leader is a Hard Worker (:9)
- VIII. A Spiritual Leader is a Wise Builder (:10-11)
- IX. A Spiritual Leader is an Accountable Builder (:12-13)
- X. A Spiritual Leader is an Eternal Builder (:14-15)

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

TITLE: *THE SANCTITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH AS THE TEMPLE OF GOD – (DON'T TAMPER WITH THE TEMPLE -- Deffinbaugh)*

BIG IDEA:

BECAUSE THE LOCAL CHURCH IS GOD'S HOLY SANCTUARY, ANYONE WHO DAMAGES (DESTROYS/CORRUPTS) IT WILL BE PUNISHED ACCORDINGLY

CONTEXT (3:10-15):

Divine Blueprint for Spiritual Construction of the Church – exhortation to build with best possible materials so your work would stand the test of fire and reap eternal rewards; there are two classes of saved spiritual leaders described:

- those who build with the best materials
- those who build with worthless materials

The issue here is one of rewards rather than eternal destiny. Throughout the entire section Paul is dealing with the problem of divisions within the church at Corinth.

INRODUCTION:

But there is a far more dangerous threat to the integrity and health of a local church. The Apostle Paul takes up the thread from vs. 9 where he had referred to the church as “*God’s building.*” Now he shows that it is a very special building = the temple of God. There are those ravenous wolves (whether from outside or from within) who would seek to destroy the flock of God. These would seem to be unsaved individuals who preach false doctrine and introduce the wisdom of the world in place of the wisdom of God. Because the church is a temple of God and indwelt by His Spirit, anyone who damages it will be punished accordingly. Here in verses 16-17 he deals with the most extreme consequence of the worst type of divisions = sin that would end up destroying the local church.

I. (:16) THE CHURCH MUST BE REGARDED AS GOD’S HOLY SANCTUARY

A. Tone of Foundational Truth

“Do you not know”

Lowery: the first of 10 occurrences of the clause in this letter (cf. 5:6; 6:2-3, 9, 15-16, 19; 9:13, 24; each time it introduces an indisputable statement).

Every Christian expected to understand these basic truths and live accordingly

B. Two Descriptions of the Church as God’s Holy Sanctuary

1. Temple of God

“that you are a temple of God”

The building is not the church; but the believers are
Second person plural used throughout this section – not just talking
about an individual believer

2. Dwelling Place for God

“and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

Not just dwells in you individually (which is true for all believers; no
second act of grace involved; but here regarded as true of the local
church corporately)

IMPLICATIONS of the church being God’s Holy Sanctuary:

- We are not your own; we belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19)
- We must remain separate from idols (2 Cor. 6:16)
- Glory of God should shine forth from His temple
- We should experience the presence of the majestic and holy God
- We should walk worthy of your calling in the fear of God
- We have direct access to God and privilege of worship and service
- We should live lives of complete dedication and surrender (Rom. 12:1-2)
- Attitude of Thanksgiving and Humility for tremendous privilege

II. (:17) ATTACKS AGAINST THE CHURCH WILL BE PUNISHED ACCORDINGLY BY GOD WHO JEALOUSLY GUARDS HIS HOLINESS

A. Destructive Attacks Will Come

“If any man destroys the temple of God”

Why would someone even want to do this? Instrument of Satan.

B. Appropriate Punishment Will Be Dispensed

“God will destroy him”

Serious threat; sounds like much more than just the loss of reward for believers.

Tony Monaghan: Talk about a threat! That’s how seriously God considers the sin of
division within the church. He will avenge his church himself. And so we read,

Prov. 6:16 *“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to
him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart
that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false witness who
breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”*

It was a capital offense in the Old Testament to defile the temple, and surely Paul is
picking up upon that idea here.

Lev. 15:31 *“Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness,*

lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst."

God simply won't allow it. It shall not go unpunished.

<http://www.covenantcommunityopc.org/The%20Temple%20of%20God.htm>

C. Standard of Holiness Must Be Applied

1. Applied to the temple as the Sanctuary of God
"for the temple of God is holy"

2. Applied to the Corinthian Believers as the Temple of God
"and that is what you are."

Implications of living in accordance with our Holiness . . .

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why do we constantly need to be reminded about basic Christian truth regarding our privileged standing before God?

2) What do we learn from studying the OT accounts of the Holy of Holies that we can apply to the church being the temple of God?

3) In what ways do false teachers and false shepherds and church members attempt to destroy or seduce or compromise or lead astray their local church? What are some of their tactics?

4) What are the implications in my life for being held to the high standard of the holiness of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: Don't Tamper with the Temple --

A person can "*defile the temple of God*" by doing the things for which Paul rebukes the Corinthians. One can defile the temple by dividing it up into little groups and factions. One can defile the temple by forsaking the simplicity of the gospel and seeking wisdom elsewhere. He can defile the temple of God by sexual immorality (chapter 5) or by taking a brother to the law court (chapter 6). God's temple can be defiled by divorce (chapter 7) or by causing a weaker brother to sin through the insensitive use of your rights as a Christian (chapters 8-10). One can defile the temple of God by misconduct at the Lord's Supper and the meeting of the church (chapters 11-14). One can also defile the temple by false teaching (chapter 15).

Lenski: Paul does not say how he conceives this destroying. We shall not go far wrong when we say that, if the Corinthians themselves are God's sanctuary because of the indwelling of the Spirit, he destroys this sanctuary, be he teacher or layman, who by lies and deceptions drives the Spirit out of the hearts of the Corinthians and fills them with the spirit of the world.

Lenski: Paul's statement really involves a syllogism. Major premise: Whoever destroys the sanctuary of God, God will destroy him, for his sanctuary is holy. Minor premise: You Corinthians are holy and God's sanctuary. Conclusion, implied: Whoever destroys you, God will destroy him. The verb may mean either "destroy" or "corrupt" as the context determines. We have no English verb that has this double sense.

Hodge: As in the Jewish temple, in its inmost recess, the Shechinah, or glory of God, was constantly present, and conferred on the building its awe-inspiring power, and rendered any profanation of it a direct offence to God; so does the Holy Spirit dwell in the Church, the profanation of which by false doctrine is therefore sacrilege.

Mare: Paul states (v.17) that anyone who actually destroys or tends to destroy (i.e., defile or damage) God's temple will be destroyed by God (cf. Lev 15:31). The reason is clear: God's temple is holy, sacred, set apart (Isa 28:16; Rev 3:12). God in his justice and holiness cannot allow part of his holy work to be damaged without bringing retribution.

Stedman: Well, how do you damage the church? How do you corrupt the congregation? I think the answer is clear from the context -- we have been looking at this all along. Corruption takes place when someone introduces the wisdom of the world into the life style and the practice of a congregation. If someone individually chooses to begin to live according to the wisdom and the practice of the world, he begins to corrupt and damage the church. He is building with shoddy material, with wood, hay and stubble which will not stand the test of the fire and therefore he is marring the building of the church. When someone seeks to make the church impressive and powerful by the methods and the standards of the world, he is fulfilling this very thing -- corrupting and damaging the church. So whoever suggests a compromise with the spirit of the age is fulfilling this dangerous thing, especially when he does so at the expense of the teachings of our Lord himself. . .

This happens when a church insists on having a hierarchy in the government of a congregation -- someone at the top, someone in authority over everyone else. This is wrong, as our Lord said. "Among the Gentiles they are in authority over one another, but it shall not be so among you," he said {cf, Matt 20:25-26}. Yet how widely that has been ignored and how many churches still today have brought in the hierarchical structure of the world's government into the church. As a result the church is severely damaged by it.

This happens when a church permits the lax moral standards of the world to go

unjudged within the congregation. (Paul is going to deal more with this as he comes into the next chapters.) It is happening all around us today. Sexual practices widely tolerated in the world are admitted into the church and Christians allow themselves to practice these kinds of things. This damages the church and tears it apart; it destroys and mars what God is doing.

This happens when you substitute secular insights and secular authority for guidance in the matter of counseling and discipline problems in a church. This is happening widely in our day. Much of secular counseling is designed to build up the flesh, to make people self-confident. This whole business of Transactional Analysis and Transcendental Meditation is based on the secular view of life, and the church forgets that the secular viewpoint is narrow and limited. It does not take in the whole factor of human life and make-up as God has made man to be. Apart from that understanding, operating only on that very narrow, limited viewpoint, severe damage is done to people in counseling. Although there may be momentary or temporary help, they are locked into a plateau from which they cannot emerge, and this is a way of damaging the church.

I think one widespread way of damaging the church today is to allow a congregation to drift into a "mechanical" worship. Perhaps nothing is more deadly than to permit people a kind of outward compliance with the matters of worship and service without any inward, heartfelt commitment to it. That will destroy a church.

When Paul wrote to the church at Colossae he saw them severely threatened by three things that were coming into the Church in their worship together:

1. One was **formalism**. They were going through ceremonies and rituals in a set way as though that was what God was after and not the change of heart that these things represented. That formalistic pattern of worship is a destructive thing to the life of the church that God is seeking to build.

2. The second thing was **emotionalism**. Many of the Colossians were caught up in a kind of a mystical experience. They were talking about these things and they had forsaken, therefore, clinging to the Head of the body, which is Jesus himself. That was destroying the church, as it does in many places today.

3. And the third thing was an **asceticism**, a legalistic spirit that was taking pride in its dedicated heart and its willingness to give up so many things, to go in for fasting and beating the body, and not touching certain things. They were glorying in that fact. The apostle saw the church being threatened, choked and sabotaged by these kinds of practices.

Goins: How do we damage or corrupt the church? Looking back at the context to this point, the Corinthians had introduced the wisdom of the world into their decision-making and their teaching. It was hard to tell what was Biblical and what was the secular philosophy of Corinth in that church. They had allowed fleshly competition to defile their fellowship. And they ended up treating each other no differently than any

nonbelievers in pagan institutions would. We're going to see in the chapters ahead that there were ugly legal battles between members of the church. There were power struggles in leadership, with teachers and prophets battling for preeminence, position, and influence in the church. The church had permitted lax moral standards to go unjudged within the community; they were living with serious immorality and nobody was saying a word. Their corporate worship life was out of control. Personal experience had become the most important thing in worship, and self-indulgence was the rule.

But the good news, the logic of the appeal that Paul is making, is that they don't have to continue living out these destructive attitudes and behaviors. Paul's motive in writing this is to remind the Corinthian Christians of who they are. They don't have to live in contradiction to their true identity as God's holy ones.

I believe that one of our desperate needs in the church is to recapture this vision of what God intends us to be. Most of us tend to take our life together too lightly. Seldom do we sense that our church can be an experience of community that is so powerfully indwelt by the Spirit that it is a genuine alternative to the pagan world that surrounds us.

In closing, let me ask you three important questions, going back through this passage. The first one has to do with the issue of foundation. Jesus Christ is the foundation. Are you committed to Jesus Christ alone and to his apostolic word as the only foundation for our church? Or do we need Christ crucified plus other foundational issues on which to build our church?

Let me ask you about this issue of the process of building the superstructure. What kind of workmanship and materials are you building into your brothers and sisters in this church? Have you become invested in building materials that won't stand the test? I remembered last week as I was studying this, the wasted effort that I put into several human systems based on worldly wisdom, especially in my earlier years in ministry. These were philosophical, managerial, and psychological systems that became far more important to me than the gospel itself. They were relational wood, hay and stubble. The ironic thing is that I've seen all that modern wisdom swept away by newer combustible materials.

The last question concerns this issue of the nature of the church, our identity. Do you take the church and your identity as a saint, a holy, set-apart one in this holy temple of God, as seriously as he does? The good news is that we don't have to go on living with the Corinthian casualness Paul has exposed here. We must examine our hearts and see what is Corinthian and what is Christian, what is from below and what is from above.

Adrian Dieleman: There are two Greek words that Paul could have used for "temple." One is "hieron," which includes the entire temple area and structure on Mount Zion: the inner and outer courts, the walls, the storage places, and even the selling booths. The other, the word that Paul uses, is "naos." "Naos" is used of the sanctuary itself, consisting of the Holy place and the Holy of Holies.

The sanctuary, the naos, is where God lives. Here is the ark, here is the cherubim; here lives His Name, His Glory, His Power. From here comes His revelation for the people. And from here the people receive blessing and salvation. The sanctuary, the naos, is where God dwells with mankind and moves among them. The sanctuary, the naos, is where God fellowships with men and women and where they can enjoy His presence.

The church is God's temple, God's naos. What does this mean? This tells us three things about the church. First, this tells us that the church is where God dwells. She is His sanctuary. In her is His Name, His Glory, His Power. From here – or through here – comes God's revelation for His people. Here God dwells with man and man fellowships with God and enjoys His presence.

The church, the people of God, the congregation of believers, form the temple of God, His dwelling place. But many people don't believe this. They think that if God is living anywhere on earth, it has to be in a ten million dollar building, or a crystal cathedral, or a magnificent edifice set on a hill-top. "Not so," says Paul, for "you yourselves are God's temple."

The church is God's temple, God's naos. Second, this tells us that the church is indwelt by the Spirit of God. The Bible teaches us that where God's Spirit is, there is the temple. That's why Paul can say, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you" (1 Cor 3:16). A church indwelt by the Spirit is a church abounding in gifts and fruit, a church that ministers within and without the body, a church that grows and increases and matures.

The church is God's temple, God's naos. Third, this tells us she is the body of Christ. More than once Jesus identifies the temple with His body. In an argument with the Jews, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews scoffed at this because they didn't understand that the temple he had spoken of was his body (John 2:19-21).

"You yourselves are God's temple." The church is being identified as the body of Christ. What happened to Him happens to her. That's why Paul can say elsewhere that with Christ she suffered, with Him she died, and with Him she was raised. And, someday, with Him she will be glorified.

The church is God's temple, God's naos. And God's temple, says Paul, "is sacred." God's temple is holy. God's temple is special, set apart, consecrated, not used for ordinary things.

Think, for a moment, of the Old Testament tabernacle. The tabernacle and its furnishings were pronounced holy by God, set apart. They were not to be touched by mere humans. And the priests could touch them only after they were cleansed, washed, and dressed in white. Remember the death of Uzzah? King David was bringing the Ark to Jerusalem on a new cart pulled by oxen. Uzzah took hold of the Ark to steady it when the oxen stumbled. Scripture says,

(2Sam 6:7) The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God. Uzzah touched a holy thing, something set apart by God, something he had no right to touch.

The church is God's temple, God's naos. And God's temple, says Paul, "is sacred." The congregation, in other words, is holy, set apart, reserved for God and His use. Of course she is sacred because in her God dwells, she is indwelt by the Spirit, and she is the body of Christ. But many people don't believe this. They want to believe that if anything is holy, it is a place, a building.

<http://www.trinitycrc.org/sermons/1co03v16-17.html>

Mark Copeland:

I. HOW MIGHT ONE DESTROY THE TEMPLE OF GOD?

A. THROUGH RELIGIOUS STRIFE...

1. This was the problem that existed at Corinth - **1 Co 1:10-13**
 2. It prevented many members from receiving spiritual meat - **1 Co 3:1-2**
 3. It left such members in a state of carnality - **1 Co 3:3-4**
 4. Paul warned the churches of Galatia of the dangers of strife - **Ga 5:15**
- **Where religious strife exists, the temple of God is being destroyed!**

B. THROUGH DESTRUCTIVE DOCTRINES...

1. Peter warned of the destructive influence of false teachers - **2 Pe 2:1**
 2. Causing many to follow their destructive ways - **2 Pe 2:2-3**
 3. Paul also warned of those who lead many astray - **Ac 20:29-30**
 4. The Spirit also expressly warned of such an apostasy - **1 Ti 4:1-3**
- **Where false teaching occurs, the temple of God is being destroyed!**

C. THROUGH SLOTHFUL SERVICE...

1. The slothful person is a brother to one who is a great destroyer - **Pro 18:9**
 2. The devastating effect of sloth can be vividly illustrated
 - a. By Solomon, in the book of Proverbs - **Pro 24:30-34**
 - b. By the illustrating the church as a wagon, where some help by pulling or pushing, while others simply go along for the ride, making travel difficult through their dead weight
 3. Thus the need for diligent, fervent service to the Lord - **Ro 12:11**
 4. Instead of sluggishness, we ought to serve with faith and patience - **He 6:12**
- **Where slothful service is found, the temple of God is being destroyed!**

http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/1cor/1co3_16.htm

Leake:

Introduction: Evangelicals have not had a high view of the church; tend to have less

formal and more transient connections to their local church; have reacted against Roman Catholicism with its excesses of traditionalism and sacramentalism; What has been lost is the importance of the sacraments, of church discipline and membership requirements

I. (:16) The Exceptional Nature of the Church

“Don’t you know” – tone of Rebuke; they should know these truths;

God is omnipresent; but He chooses to make His presence manifest at certain special places and times – cf. in the Heavens where His glory is manifested in a special way (Rev 5:13; Acts 7:55)

Why does God need a temple on earth? So that God can dwell with people – track the history of God meeting with people

- Gen. 3:8 – regular time and place for meeting
- until the Fall when man was removed from the presence of God
- Ps 16:11; Is. 59:2; Gen. 8:20; 12:7
- significance of the altar = where God connected with man in his sinful state
- Significance of the Tabernacle = portable and mobile – Ex. 25:9
 - Heb. 8:5 – a blueprint of heavenly reality
 - Ex. 40:34-38; Lev. 10:2
- If you mess with the presence of God = serious matter; end up burned
- 2 Chron. 7:1-2
- Immanuel = bringing the presence of God down to man; pitched a tent and dwelt among men so we could see glory of God – John 1:14
Col. 2:9

How did the church become the temple of God? On Day of Pentecost when after body of Christ (= temple of God) was crucified and raised and ascended to heaven, Christ poured out the Holy Spirit on the church; now we house the presence of God; only believers are the channel for how people can connect to the presence of God (Eph 2:19-22)

We are the temple of the Holy Spirit corporately; we all fit together

Cf. many false temples in Corinth; we are to be Holy = set aside to God for His purposes, His use

Holiness not defined by externals; but a matter of the heart and mindset and practice daily; a burning passion to see Christ exalted in our lives; getting along with others in the body of Christ; not fighting each other

II. (:17) The Extraordinary Defense of the Church

Keyword = “destroy” – used for ruining a house, a marriage; seducing a virgin; spoiling milk; mixing colors

Speaking of something that goes way beyond just the shoddy workmanship and no rewards of vs. 15

Universal church is ultimately indestructible; but here talking about the local church
Ezra 7:23; 2 Kings 23:19ff

There is Violence in zeal for God

Apostle Paul felt great grace and mercy of God because he had been actively trying to destroy the church of Christ

Don't tamper with God's holy Word either

III. (:21-23) Extravagant Possessions of the Church

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23

TITLE: GOD'S WISDOM ALWAYS TRUMPS MAN'S WISDOM

BIG IDEA:

TWO FOOLISH MISTAKES THAT UNDERMINE GOD'S WISDOM AND CAUSE DIVISION WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

In this section Paul has already shown how the church must be built on the wisdom of God rather than human wisdom. His goal is to combat divisions that were forming in the church of Corinth where believers were dividing into factions based on their attraction to the preaching style and personality of specific gifted leaders. There were also false teachers whose motive was to destroy the temple of God (the church) by substituting their own religious philosophies for the authoritative Word of God. The only safeguard for the church was to humbly rely on the revealed wisdom of God as contained in Scripture. This approach stands directly in opposition to the sophisticated educational and philosophical and psychological systems of human wisdom.

This message has application to unbelievers who need to renounce their worldly thinking in order to be filled with God's wisdom as well as to believers who need to guard against worldly wisdom infiltrating and harming the church.

I. (:18-20) FOOLISH MISTAKE #1 – THINKING TOO HIGHLY OF SELF

A. (:18a) Clear Warning – Human Wisdom Is Attractive and Seductive --

(Exalt the Word of God and the Foolishness of the Cross Rather than Human Wisdom)

“Let no man deceive himself.”

It is an easy sell for Satan to try to convince men that their own opinions have merit and that they can rely on their own powers of logic and argumentation.

B. (:18b) Consistent Antidote: Acquiring God's Wisdom Requires Forsaking Human Wisdom (this antidote works for everyone, everywhere, all time)

1. Pride Associated with Human Wisdom (*“knowledge puffs up”*)

“If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age”

2. Humility Required for Acquiring God's Wisdom

“let him become foolish that he may become wise.”

C. (:19-20) Clinching Explanation: God's Wisdom Always Trumps Human Wisdom

1. Thesis Stated

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God”

2. Thesis Supported from 2 OT Quotes – *“For it is written”*

a. (Job 5:13) Catches the Crafty

“He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness”

- b. “ *and again*” (Psalm 94:11) Frustrates the Futile
“*The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.*”

II. (:21-23) FOOLISH MISTAKE #2 – THINKING TOO HIGHLY OF ANY PROMINENT MEN (NOTABLE TEACHERS, SPIRITUAL LEADERS, ETC.)

A. (:21a) Clear Warning – Our Natural Tendency is to Place Undue Dependence on Specific Visible Human Leaders

“*So then let no one boast in men.*”

Goins: The point is that if we give ultimate authority to any human being in our lives, even someone who is spiritually sensitive, trustworthy, and mature, we're being much too limiting. We are to no longer place our confidence in the impact that human beings can have on us.

B. (:21b-22) Consistent Antidote: Embrace all that God has Provided for All Believers (this antidote works for everyone, everywhere, all time)

1. There are No Second Class Believers – So no need to choose up sides

“*For all things belong to you*”

You are just missing out on the riches of all that God has provided for you when you focus attention on loyalty to one key leader

2. Delineation of these precious “*all things*”

a. “*whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas*”

b. “*or the world or life or death*”

c. “*or things present or things to come*”

3. Repeating the Theme: There are No Second Class Believers

“*all things belong to you*”

Goins: Twice he makes the powerful statement, “...All things belong to you....” Either this is some exaggerated religious cliché or it's literally true. And in fact we have riches that we don't understand or take advantage of. We sell them much too short. We're willing to give them up to follow some human leadership or some human opinion or theory. In the New Testament there is a consistent pattern of emphasis on the truth that because we have life in Jesus Christ, we have everything. Paul writes in Romans 8:16-17, “...We are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ....” He also says in 8:32, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?” There is no limitation on what will give us a life of health and wholeness. God has given us every resource that we can imagine in this inheritance with Jesus Christ.

C. (:23) Clinching Explanation: Focus must ultimately be on Boasting in the Headship of Christ and the Fatherhood of God – not Boasting in Man

“and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are the fundamental presuppositions of those who embrace worldly wisdom?
- 2) What type of suffering and rejection is involved in becoming a fool for the sake of Christ?
- 3) What can we learn from the OT example of Haman in the book of Esther regarding how God turns the craftiness of the schemers back on themselves?
- 4) How can we address our insecurities with the knowledge of all that we possess in Christ?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Lenski: But the real danger that lurks in this conceit of deeming oneself wise is not so much in being filled (subjectively) with a false idea concerning oneself but in the fact (objectively) that this worldly wisdom detracts from Christ and thus destroys that on which all salvation and all true wisdom depend, namely the cross of Christ, 1:17. Hence also the way in which to escape the dangers of this conceit is not by trying to supplement the world’s wisdom by adding some of the wisdom of Christ to it, or vice versa, but only in utterly casting aside the spurious wisdom, in no longer holding to any of it, and thus in actually becoming a fool.

Tom Leake: (vv. 18-20) **The Foolishness of Educated Unbelievers** (2/25/07)

Introduction: Problem with unbelievers = something has happened to their thinking at a fundamental level; to be an unbeliever is actually against Reason; This will be an apologetic message (not apologizing for the gospel)

Apologetics = Companion of Evangelism; Why we believe what we believe

Basic False Presupposition of Unbelievers = You ought to be thinking for yourself; don’t let anyone else tell you what to believe

Mankind intended by God to be rational and logical; but Reason not intended to be Supreme; only way we can know ultimate truth = revelation of truth from the Supreme Being to a lesser mind; God must tell men things he cannot figure out for himself; Man was created to be Dependent in his own thinking

Satan’s message has always been: “Don’t listen to God . . . Think for yourself”

God is not real impressed with the independent thought process of man in his educational pursuits

Some inside the church at Corinth had embraced worldly thinking; this led to divisions and problems

The thinking of God's people must first be correct in order to have healthy relationships

Two Simple and Direct Components to Approach to Ultimate Truth

I. (:18) God's Commands – there are two presented here

A. *“Don't Deceive Yourself”* – Renounce Self-Deception

2 Thess 2:3 – false teachers can deceive; 2 Cor. 11:3 – Satan is the master deceiver;

Rom. 16:8 – others can deceive us

Here talking about Self-Deception

Illustration of American Idol – ultimate self deception – somebody needs to tell these people they cannot sing

When it comes to eternal truth and your eternal destiny, self deception is a major problem

Theme repeated to the Corinthians: 8:2; 14:37

The worldly wise can try to pass themselves off as balanced, objective, open-minded, humble, reasonable – but they have the spirit of “I already know” – when you confront them with God's Word, they show their true colors quickly – become quite close-minded

Def. of a Humble Mind = when it bumps into the Mind of God it submits

B. *“Be a Fool”*

Must understand the context of this command – who it is addressed to and why; God not commanding people to stupid

You must admit that of yourself you do not know the truth

1) Renounce your human wisdom

Start all over to be filled with the wisdom of God

2) Submit your mind to Divine Revelation

Revelation from God does not eliminate Human Reason, it establishes it; only the Bible can bring us the Mind of God

3) Accept what you yourself might think to be foolish

Prov 3:7-8 – *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding”*

4) You will have to go in the direction of the Wisdom of the Cross that does not have a lot of prestige associated with it (1:18-23)

“We preach Christ crucified” – never change the message; not out to give people what some survey says they want

Must kill your Pride; involves an emptying process – get rid of wrong presuppositions and base thinking – Where is the wisdom of men?? Amounts to nothing

II. (:19-20) God's Reasons

A. *God is the Standard* – Calls the world's wisdom foolishness

All kinds of evidence (fulfilled prophecy, archaeology, etc.) – but in the end it is a circular argument – but God knows and He has revealed the truth

Only the Mind of God can give certainty on spiritual issues

1:25 – God turns around this statement – you must choose sides; there will soon come a

time when you will have to reckon with God whether you want to or not; there will no longer be any patience with independent thinking

Scientists cannot measure the age of the earth without making some presuppositions; these are essentially guesses and are not equal to science

What does God know?? Who is He?? Prov. 3:19; Dan. 2:20; 1 Cor. 1:25; 1 Sam. 2:3

B. *Two Supporting Facts*

1) God Catches the Wise in Their Craftiness

Image of hunting; grips them with death grip using their very own arguments turned against them – Jer. 2:19; Ps. 5:10 [example of Haman on gallows]

2) God Knows Their Reasonings = Judges them to be Vain = empty, leading to nothing;

Quoted from LXX

Heb. 4:13 – nothing catches God off guard

Conclusion: The beliefs of unbelievers are arbitrary and inconsistent; listen to them; understand what they are saying; play that back to them and challenge their own inconsistent logic; they are advocating what they want to be true

Prov. 26:5 – Geisler has book on *Christian Apologetics*

Key = What are you going to do about Jesus?

Key verse = John 7:17 – you must place your faith in Christ; God will reveal to you the veracity of His revelation [self-authenticating]

Piper: First in verses 18-20 Paul gives at least two reasons why we should give up boasting in men, particularly in the wisdom of men, either in ourselves or vicariously in our favorite teacher.

The first reason is that the wisdom of man that supports human boasting is not really wisdom, but foolishness. Verse 18b-19a: "If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God."

We saw all this spelled out in chapter 1, especially verse 18: "The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing." And in verse 25: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." So if you want to be really wise, Paul says, wise in God's eyes, you have to believe things and do things that the world will regard as foolish -- that a crucified Jewish teacher is the Lord of the universe; and that the way to joy is the Calvary road.

The world's wisdom that supports boasting and accents man's self-sufficiency, is no wisdom at all. So don't boast in men.

The second reason to give up boasting in men is that it is a dead end street. Verse 19b (a quote from Job 5:13) "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and (a quote from Psalm 94:11), "The Lord knows that the

thoughts of the wise are futile." In other words the wisdom of man may get him to the moon, but it gets him know where in what matters most: his relation to God. Human wisdom feeds pride and pride drives a person away from God. And what is there away from God? A snare and futility. A dead end street.

So those are the two reasons for not boasting in men that come before the command in verse 21a. The wisdom of the world is not really wisdom but folly, and it's a dead end street. If you ponder what it is about this worldly wisdom that makes it foolish and futile the answer of verses 18-20 is that it is self-exalting. You can see that in verse 18b: "If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise." So the problem is that people who are exalting themselves: thinking themselves wise in this age.

So in verses 18-20, the root of boasting seems to be an inflated view of one's own wisdom, or perhaps of one's teacher's wisdom. And so Paul opposes it by saying that you are not as wise as you think you are and your supposed wisdom is a dead end street.

Now this is very different from what we see in verses 21b-23. Paul is also giving reasons for not boasting after his command not to boast, but it looks as though the root of the problem is very different from the root in verses 18-20.

The reason Paul gives in verse 21b for not boasting is this: "For all things are yours." This is strange at first thought. It sounds reassuring, comforting. But the reasons for not boasting in verse 19 and 20 were threatening: "God catches the wise in their craftiness." And: "The thoughts of the wise are futile." The tone is one of warning and alarm.

But the tone now after the command not to boast (in v. 21b) is reassuring; it's full of relief and hope.

The first argument goes like this: Don't boast in men because man's wisdom is folly and God traps people who take that path (v. 19). The second argument goes like this: Don't boast in men because all things are yours (v. 21).

In the first argument the root of boasting seems to be self-exaltation ("I am wise in the eyes of the world!" v. 18). But now what is the root of boasting in this second argument in verse 21b?

Suppose you are standing in the hall bragging about your Sunday School teacher and putting another teacher down, and I walk up to you and say (trying to paraphrase Paul's argument here), "Why do you feel the need to

talk like that? Don't you know that everything in this universe is yours? Don't you know that every teacher in this church belongs to you -- and the world and life and death and present and future?"

What's the root of boasting that I am trying to sever in saying that? What am I assuming -- what's Paul assuming -- about the cause of boasting when I say, "Don't you know that all things are yours? You don't need to boast in man"?

I think Paul is assuming that the root of boasting is a feeling of insecurity. In other words, Paul pictures the boasters as people who feel threatened or endangered by hostile or hopeless circumstances. They feel that some other teacher besides their own might shine brighter and call some of their distinctives into question. They feel that the world and unknown future events and death itself are menacing. And so they try to shore up their security and by touting their own wisdom or the wisdom of their leader.

And so Paul says that the problem is that they don't realize the massive -- and I mean massive -- security of belonging to Christ. Why stoop to boast in men when all things -- absolutely all things -- are yours? Which I think means (on the basis of Romans 8:28 and 32) all things work together as your servants for your good.

Now let's try to put these two arguments together. How do they fit? Is Paul talking about two different people? In verses 18-20 is he talking about a person who feels self-sufficient, and in verses 21-23 about a person who feels insecure? Does he have two different kind of people in view: one cocky and the other fearful?

I don't think so? There is no indication of that in the text. He warns the self-sufficient who proudly boast in men how foolish and dangerous that is (vv. 18-20); then he tells them not to boast like this (v. 21a); and then without any turn to another group he says in v. 21b, "For all things are yours."

So how can the same people be addressed as though the root of boasting were both cocky self-sufficiency and fearful insecurity? I think the answer is found in the first line of verse 18: "Let no one deceive himself!"

Cocky, self-sufficient people, who boast in the wisdom of men, have deceived themselves. How? By denying their deeply rooted insecurity. These aren't two kinds of people in this text. They are one kind of people with driven by two contrary forces held together by the glue of self-deception.

One force is a built-in sense of insecurity, and vulnerability, and fear in a

world beyond their control and threatening to their happiness. This comes with our creaturehood and is compounded by our sin. Everyone of us has it. The other force driving these boasters is the feeling that we have got things under control -- that man is the master of his fate, that human wisdom will suffice to solve our problems, that we have got it all together -- or we know someone who does!

And the glue that holds these forces together in one heart?
Self-deception. "Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise."

So when Paul wants to dismantle the soul-destroying, community-rending, God-dishonoring pride at Corinth he must do at least two things not just one thing. He must overcome the deception of human self-sufficiency, and he must solve the problem of human insecurity. That is what he is trying to do here in this text.

Let me put it another way. Human pride is rooted in two kinds of self-deception. One is the deception that I can handle my own problems. And the other is the deception that nobody can handle my problems.

Or to put it another way, there are two ways for the pride of man to dishonor Christ. One is to feel no need for him. And the other is to feel your need is so great he can't meet it. The one says, I don't need a crucified Christ to help me. The other says a crucified Christ can't help me. The one looks strong. The other looks weak. Both are demeaning to the grace of God.

Why? Because the grace of God means these two things: 1) we do need help, let's admit it. And 2) the help is there, let's accept it. Grace always means these two things: humility, we do need help; and encouragement, the help is there.

Indictment and deliverance! That's the work of saving grace! Indictment: "If you think you are wise become a fool!" Deliverance: "All things are yours!"

Watch Paul the master-pastor and counselor bring his counsel to a great God-centered end.

To the self-sufficient he says, "Your wisdom is folly. Give it up. Become a fool. Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of God."

And then to the fearful and insecure and threatened he says, "Boasting in

men is a cheap substitute for inheriting the universe. Don't you realize that I have made all things to serve your joy.

-- Every teacher exists for your benefit.

-- The whole world in all its secular corruption conspires in vain against your soul, for Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33).

-- The sting of death is gone your last enemy unwittingly must serve your entrance into glory.

-- Nothing present and nothing future can separate you from the love of God.

-- Those whom he justified he will glorify.

-- 'He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, will he not with him freely give us all things?'"

And just to make sure that we don't make this grace a ground for boasting in ourselves, Paul adds in verse 23: "And you are Christ's." In other words, the only reason any of these benefits comes to us is because we are his. Christ has made all the universe to exist for our joy, because we exist for his. Therefore let him who boasts boast in the Lord! Not in man.

But Paul the master-pastor and counselor is not yet done dealing with the problem of pride. He takes us out of our deception of self-sufficiency. He lifts us up to see the universe as our inheritance. He takes us higher yet to see Christ as the source and goal of it all. But there is one more step. The chapter ends with the words, "And Christ is God's."

In the end Jesus Christ will hand over the kingdom to the Father and God the Father will be all in all (15:28). "From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever and ever (Rom. 11:36).

Stedman: I will never forget in my own life, as a young Christian many years ago, hearing George Beverly Shea sing the words for which he became famous. They spoke volumes to my own heart along this line.

*I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold.
I'd rather have him than have riches untold.
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands.
I'd rather be led by his nail pierced hands
Than to be a king of a vast domain
And be held in sin's dread sway.*

I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.

That is what Paul is talking about. Never mind what the world thinks, never mind what the world says, for the wisdom of the world will prove to be foolish in the end.

Goins: In these first three verses Paul warns them not to be deceived by what appears to be wisdom but really isn't. There are three sobering realities, one in each verse, about worldly wisdom. The first point that Paul makes in verse 18 is that worldly wisdom leads to self-deception: "If any man thinks that he is wise in this age...." Imagine how much conflict in our church could be avoided if each of us was not so impressed with his own wisdom. It's self-deception, Paul says, to believe that we are wise in terms of any contemporary human wisdom. C.K. Barrett writes, "Self-deception is the common fate of those who mistakenly fancy themselves wise; deluded in this, they are deluded in many other matters...They estimate wisdom by the wrong standards. Such men need to take new standards and reverse their judgments." That reversal of judgment is the point Paul makes in the clause "...Let him become foolish...." That means that we are to repent of intellectual pride, to recognize that human wisdom, including our own, is foolishness apart from God. As long as we consider ourselves wise in terms of prevailing standards, it's impossible to become wise in God's ways.

In the last message we defined worldly wisdom as common sense, as the theories of natural man, as fleshly speculation or competing opinions about truth and lies, about reality and fantasy. . .

Paul tells us something else about this wisdom in verse 19. He quotes Job 5:13: "He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness." It's not just foolish, it's also dangerous. Craftiness means sneakiness, plotting. It looks wise, but it has a hidden agenda. The good news in that quote from Job is that God can see through it. God can thwart the plans of the crafty wise men of the world who have hidden agendas at work. Again, C.K. Barrett writes, "The wise are like cunning beasts of prey for whom the hunter is nevertheless too clever."

Paul goes on to point out another sobering reality about worldly wisdom in verse 20. It's totally inadequate to bring us to God, not just initially in salvation, but in understanding God's heart and mind, God's design for human relationships and how we're to live life. The quote, "The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless," is from Psalm 94:11. In the context of that verse the psalmist thunders against the intellectually elite and politically powerful. He calls these people who pride themselves on their intellectual prowess "stupid" and "senseless." He says, "The Lord knows their reasonings." The Greek word for reasonings that Paul uses in his paraphrase is *dialogismos*, from which we get the word dialogue. The wisdom of the world can be very dialogical or conversational; it can sound very reasonable. But God says at the end of verse 20 that it ends up being useless. The Hebrew word for useless in Psalm 94 means a puff of air, a little wisp of wind that dissipates. The wisdom of the world won't endure the test of time. . .

The following powerful quotation from John Stott's book *Essays in Evangelical Ethics* captures the kind of vision that the apostle wants for the Corinthians, and that he would want for us today. It is the vision of who God is, the breadth of his plan for us, his wisdom, the expansive view of how we ought to live life:

"The vision we need is the vision of God himself; the God of the whole biblical revelation; the God of creation who made all things fair and good, and made man male and female to bear his image and subdue his world; the God of the covenant of grace who in spite of human rebellion has been calling out a people for himself; the God of compassion and justice who hates oppression and loves the oppressed; the God of the incarnation who made himself weak, small, limited and vulnerable, and entered our pain and alienation; the God of resurrection, ascension and Pentecost, and so of universal authority and power; the God of the church or the kingdom community to whom he has committed himself for ever, and whom he sends into the world to live, serve, suffer and die; the God of history who is working according to a plan and towards a conclusion; the God of the eschaton, who one day will make all things new.

There is no room for pessimism here, or for apathy either. There is room only for worship, for expectant faith, and for practical obedience in witness and service. For once we have seen something of the glory of our God, and of the greatness of his commission, we can only respond, 'I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.'"

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

TITLE: PERFORMANCE REVIEW FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTERS

BIG IDEA:

THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD IS ALL THAT MATTERS WHEN IT COMES TO ULTIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION:

We all are used to performance reviews at work. We are used to receiving them – might not like them all that much – if we supervise people, we are also used to giving them. We have a set of criteria that we use to measure performance. Some standards might be more objective and easy to evaluate . . . others are more subjective and take into account a variety of intangible attributes. The Corinthian believers had wrongly established themselves as judges over the effectiveness of the gifted preachers in their church. This had caused them to align with particular personalities in a manner that was divisive. Paul settles the issue decisively by pointing to the ultimate accountability of the Lord when He returns to evaluate the job done by His servants. Faithfulness will be the standard. And the scope of judgment will extend to “*the things hidden in the darkness*” and “*the motives of men’s hearts.*” There is the prospect of great reward and praise in that day; but let no one usurp the Lord’s prerogative of judging His own servants. Christians have an unhealthy bent towards being judgmental in critiquing those who are publicly ministering the Word of God by preaching and teaching. We are charged to be like the Bereans in making sure that the message is in line with the whole of Scripture. But we are not allowed to judge on the basis of motives or personality preferences.

He is not saying that Christian ministers have no earthly accountability within the governance of the local church. He is not saying that we should not examine our own hearts before the Lord and correct any deficiencies brought to light by our conscience as informed by the Holy Spirit. He is addressing the issue of ultimate accountability. How will one minister stack up against another at the end of the day? Why is it wrong for Christians to take it upon themselves to try to judge the ministry work of others when they have no oversight over those ministers? How can Christian ministers become complacent and overconfident if they put too much stock in their own self-evaluation of their own ministries? The one who examines us is the Lord = the one who knows all about us – even to the motives and hidden thoughts of our hearts. When He returns, He will give out the rewards that are appropriate.

I. (:1) THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER – TWOFOLD JOB DESCRIPTION

“Let a man regard us in this manner”

How should Christian ministers want others to view them? What type of job description have the leaders of the church written for themselves? What are they trying

to accomplish?

A. SERVANTS OF CHRIST

MacArthur: Paul expresses his humility by using a word lit. meaning “*under rowers*,” referring to the lowest, most menial, and most despised galley slaves, who rowed on the bottom tier of a ship (9:16; see Luk 1:2; Ac 20:19).

B. STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD

Goins: Paul has already introduced us to the mysteries of God. In 2:7 he is talking about his teaching ministry in Corinth: "...We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory...." This mysterious, hidden wisdom isn't understood by the natural man apart from Jesus Christ. It can be known only through divine revelation. It is the Biblical deposit of truth that contains the secrets of life. So a teacher or a preacher in this household of faith is to take God's revealed word and dispense it to the household. We're to administer all of it, to hold nothing back.

Boyer: The word “*mystery*” in the Bible denotes something which can be known only by revelation. It is not something that can be figured out from reason. It must be told. Christ’s servants have been entrusted with a treasure of great truths, previously not known to men but now made known in the gospel. It is their responsibility to administer these treasures according to the instructions and the will of their giver, God.

II. (:1) THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE CHRISTAIN MINISTER = FAITHFULNESS = THE ONE ESSENTIAL STANDARD OF MEASUREMENT

“In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.”

A steward is responsible for the capable administration of the property of another; hence faithfulness is the primary standard of evaluation.

2 Tim. 2:2

Acts 20:27

III. (:3-4) THE REVIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER:

A. BY OTHER BELIEVERS . . . INCONSEQUENTIAL

“But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you,”

Stedman: **Stuart Briscoe** says there are three kinds of congregational pressure --

There is adulation, which swells the head;

There is manipulation, which ties the hands; and

There is antagonism, which breaks the heart.

Preacher needs to guard against getting prideful as well as getting discouraged by the comments of others.

B. BY ANY ELEMENT OF SOCIETY . . . INAPPROPRIATE / IRRELEVANT
“or by any human court”

Society can be very unkind in their characterization of preachers.

C. BY SELF . . . INADEQUATE
“in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted”

MacArthur: Paul’s own sincere evaluation of his life did not acquit him of all failures to be faithful.

D. BY THE LORD . . . INDISPENSABLE
“but the one who examines me is the Lord”

IV. (:5) THE REWARD FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER = COMES ULTIMATELY FROM THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD

A. Proper Time for Ultimate Accountability

1. Not Now = Premature
“Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time”

2. At Christ’s Return = Judgment Seat for Believers
“but wait until the Lord comes”

B. Pervasive Scope of Ultimate Accountability

1. Examining Private and Unknown Areas (as well as Public Ministry)
“who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness”

MacArthur: Because Paul speaks here of *each man’s praise*, I do not believe *things hidden in the darkness* refers to sins or anything evil, but simply to things presently unknown to us. The passage emphasizes that every believers will have praise, no matter what his works and motives, because *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 8:1). All Christians will have some reward and some praise. Who will receive much and who will receive little only God knows. But once the wood, hay, and straw are burned away, the gold, silver, and precious stones will remain to be eternally rewarded.

2. Examining Heart Motives
“and disclose the motives of men’s hearts”

C. Personal Praise from the Divine Judge
“and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What do we learn from the ministry of Christ about being both a *servant* and a *steward*? What parables of Christ teach us important principles about these two roles?
- 2) Why does Paul not consider himself "*acquitted*" if his conscience was clean?
- 3) What are some instances where I have been involved in *passing judgment before the time* on the Lord's public ministry servants?
- 4) Why is it so important to minister from pure motives for the glory of God rather than from any type of selfish ambition?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: When I use the term "minister of Christ," I am not speaking of the traditional concept of a full-time employee of a church who is kept around to do the preaching, the teaching, the counseling and to run the mimeograph machine. Unfortunately that is a widespread concept of what the pastor ought to be and I run into it in many places.

This concept, of course, is totally unknown in the New Testament. The idea of having a single pastor, the pastor, is an unbiblical imposition that has come into the church within the past 250 years. A minister of Christ in the New Testament churches was anyone, anyone, who by virtue of a gift of the Spirit was a preacher or a teacher of the Word of God. That is what Paul is talking about here.

There is a sense in which we are all ministers of Christ. Every Christian is in the ministry -- I have said that many times. But there is a special sense -- Paul is dealing with it here -- of those who have the gift of teaching or preaching ("prophesying" as it is called in Scripture), and their function within the body of Christ. There are dozens of ministers like that in every church. In fact, here at PBC, since we have stressed some of these things for a long time, there are probably scores, if not hundreds, of people who fulfill the qualifications and the characterization of ministers of Christ as Paul is speaking of them in this particular passage.

Well, how are we to look at people like that, and what are we to think about them? Paul deals with this first.

Who are these people? Should we call them bishops? Are they wardens, as the Episcopalians call them? Are they doctors, rabbis, popes or even senior pastors?

Well, you do not find those titles in the Scriptures. (Bishops are referred to, but not in the usual sense that we think of them today. Bishops were not in oversight over more than one church. They were the equivalent of elders and overseers.)

The word the apostle uses here is a very remarkable one. He says, "We want you to look at us as servants of Christ." The word for servant is the Greek word *huperetes*, which literally means "an under-rower."

Now everyone in Corinth understood what that word meant. Corinth was where the war galleys of the Roman Empire crossed through the isthmus that separated the Ionian Sea from the Aegean Sea, and the Corinthians knew that the lowest deck of a war galley was made of single rows of benches on both sides of the ship where the rowers sat. Then on a little deck raised up above them all, so that each rower could see him, was the captain of the ship. It was the rowers' task to row according to what he said. If he wanted the ship to move then they were to row; if he wanted them to stop they had to stop instantly. Their whole business was to obey his orders. Now, that is the word that Paul chooses to describe those who are teachers, preachers and ministers of the Word of God within the congregation of the Church. They are "under-rowers" of Christ.

Goins: What matters to Paul is how the Lord Jesus Christ evaluates him. (When he says "the Lord" he always means Jesus.) Paul follows the counsel that he gave to his spiritual son Timothy when he said, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God..." (2 Timothy 2:15). We serve people spiritually in our teaching and preaching only when we're faithful servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Jesus Christ alone is the judge of the true spiritual value of that ministry. He is the only one who has the right to judge, because he is the master of the household, and we are all servants and stewards together under him. He is the only one who completely understands why ministry is being done. All we can see in each other is our external behavior. But the Lord knows our hearts, our motives, our inward intentions. That's what is crucial. We are very presumptuous when we judge external behavior in one another. We cannot fully understand the motives of others.

Another reason that we're not to evaluate the teaching ministry of other people or even our own is that any judgment that we make now is premature, "before the time." Paul says, "Wait until Jesus comes back. At the second coming of Jesus Christ we will all stand before his judgment seat." Remember 3:13: "...Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it [that will be the appropriate time], because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work." On that day there may be a lot of high-profile teaching ministries that we thought were incredible that turn out to be wood, hay, and stubble. And the ministry of a Sunday School teacher who spent thirty years laboring in the obscurity of the same four-year-old Sunday School class may be gold and silver and precious stones. God's timing for judgment and evaluation is perfect; ours is premature. Remember, this evaluation, the judgment seat of Christ, comes at the end of the age, not at the end of the meeting.

Deffinbaugh: Thus the Corinthians must take their leader off the pedestal on which they had placed him (or her). Even apostles are mere men, who have been chosen and appointed by God to be His servants, and to whom He has given authority to serve as “stewards of the mysteries of God.” These words are pregnant with meaning, but we will only mention several important nuances. First, the apostles are servants. Servants do not own things; they are owned by their Master. As servants, the apostles did not own or possess their followers as the false teachers seemed to do, and as their followers even boasted (“We are of ...”). As stewards, the apostles had a certain authority to act in behalf of their Master, but they are still slaves, servants of Christ. As slaves and stewards, the apostles are not intent on pleasing men (see Galatians 1:10), but on pleasing the Master. The Lord is their Master, and He will be their Judge. They will give account to Him for their stewardship, and the standard for judgment is their faithfulness in fulfilling their stewardship. . .

Paul instructs the Corinthian saints to cease judging their fellow servants because they do not have sufficient data on which to base a judgment now. The arrogant, boastful Corinthians who are judging actually think they are wise enough to judge in God’s place. They base their judgments on outward appearances, a very dangerous thing to do (see Luke 16:15). No wonder we will soon find Paul insisting that all do not possess gifts which produce visible results (1 Corinthians 12:29-30). These are the gifts the boastful Corinthians hold in such high esteem, because those granted such gifts are able to produce visible results, and thus judged spiritually superior by their fellow-saints.

One thing remains vague in what Paul says, something we must infer from the context: what are the Corinthians judging about which they are told to cease passing judgment? It seems evident that it is making a final and decisive judgment on the success and quality of the ministry of an apostle of our Lord. Paul warns these Corinthians (who are themselves “servants” of Christ) not to keep on passing judgment on the service of those servants who are apostles, and in so doing condemning apostolic leadership, while choosing to follow a particular favorite leader. Just who these individuals are becomes more and more clear as Paul’s epistles fill in further details.

Leake: (:1-4) How to Have and Keep a Healthy Christian Self-image

Introduction: popular song lyrics: “Please tell me Who I am ...”; Identity Crisis in many people’s lives; each of us needs a clear and confident understanding of “Who I Am.”

Cf. other biblical references to self-image

- Is 41:8-9 nation of Israel = “my servant” – identifies where the nation came from, where it is going and what is its mission
- 1 Pet. 2:9 – the church; 1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Cor. 3:16 – God wants us to know who we are;

In speaking to the church at Corinth, Paul was correcting a spirit of spiritual elitism

3 Insights From Paul’s Self-Image as a Minister – apply how he thought about himself to how we should think about ourselves

I. (:1) I Need to Have a Christ-Centered View of Myself

Our culture has made a virtue out of selfishness; infatuation with self; what is best for me;

What image of Paul should we have? What drives him?

A. Concept of being a *servant of Christ*

Phil. 2:3 = A low mind – contrast message of Robert Shuller and Norman Vincent Peale;

Rom. 3:10-12

- concept of under-rower – different word than Paul used in 1 Cor. 3:5 = waiter on tables

Think of the worthiness of the one we are serving = Christ – Mark 9:35; Phil. 2:17

B. Concept of being *stewards of the mysteries of God*

Truth that God had once hidden but now has revealed

II. (:2) How I Live Affects My View of Myself

“trustworthy” = faithful, reliable, dependable

How do I obey Christ, listen to Him and fulfill His will?

One who stays on task; carries out the will of His master.

1 Cor. 1:9 – God is faithful to us; expects us to be faithful to Him

1 Pet. 4:10

How should we evaluate preachers?? How smart they are? How funny? No – How faithful are they?

Matt. 25:21

III. (:3-4) I Need to Guard My Self-Image by Blocking 3 Potential Evaluators

A. Not you Corinthians

Shocking statement – we place so much importance in what others think of ourselves

B. Not by any Human Court

Yes, he knew what others were saying about him ... but that did not unduly encourage or discourage him; because ultimately all that matters is what God thinks

C. I don't even examine myself

Yes, he listened to his conscience; but he understood the limitations of such self-examination

Leake: (:5) 3 Reasons We Should Not Judge Others

Introduction: Discernment is a good thing if exercised appropriately; 1 Jn 4:1; 1 Cor 14:20; there is a right kind of judging and a wrong kind of judging; can be a blind spot for bible-believing Christians; on the other hand, the unsaved and the immoral and false teachers will throw up the false complaint: “Don't Judge me”

I. We are Limited in Our Perspective

The only complete and competent judge = the Lord; we cannot even judge others or ourselves accurately; Timing is a key element of when to judge

This passage deals with:

- How we should judge
- What we should judge (and what we shouldn't)
- When we should judge

Any judging now would be premature and inadequate; we need to wait for return of Christ; don't usurp His judging role – James 4:11; Luke 6:37; Rom. 14:13

What is Wrongful Judging?

- Judging with incomplete information – Prov 18:13; need to first get all of the facts; don't just listen to one side of the story – James 1:19; Prov 18:2; Prov 18:17
- Showing partiality – Deut 1:17; 16:18-20
- Accepting the testimony of only one witness – Deut 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19
- Judging unseen motives – it is appropriate to judge external words and actions that are visible and can be compared to God's standard as revealed in the Scriptures
5: 12-13 – this is our duty; 6:2-3; 14:29 – we need to pass judgment on prophets = use the Word of God to detect error

Wrong Judging emerges from Sinful Attitudes:

- Pride of knowledge
- lack of concern and love for others
- impatience
- fear of discovering the truth about the one you love (maybe they are wrong)
- jealousy

Wrong judging ruins oneness and leads to all sorts of sinful problems in relationships, in the church, in the workplace, etc.

The media thrives on wrongful judging

Destroys relationships and trust

(Illustration: teenage kids will shut down if parents are overly critical)

II. Christ's Greater Judgment is Coming

Now is not the judging season but rather the time to wait and suspend judgment; 1 Cor. 16:22; 3:10-15; John 8:15-16 – even Christ did not come to Judge at His first coming; but He will at His second coming – Jn 5:22; Acts 17:31; Rev 1:7 (in fact the whole book of Revelation)

2 Aspects of Christ's Judging in the last days:

- 1) General – He will judge those things we can't fully see now; emphasis seems to be on good things since the result will be praise – Eccles 12:14; Rom 2:16; Matt 12:36
- 2) Particular – The disclosing of motives of men's hearts; this is necessary for correct judgment; we should perform everything for the glory of God
Jer 17:9-10 – the Lord will judge even the tricky, deceitful heart
This type of judgment is the prerogative of the Lord alone (Charles Hodge quote)

III. Christ's Judgment Will Settle All Things

3:8; 3:14 – individual judgment; specific praise for you; 2 Cor. 10:18

Do we anticipate this judgment as a source of shame or comfort?

All wrongs will be righted; pride will be humbled; we don't have to go around trying to

make everything right

Don't pick on others about the little things; keep things in perspective

7 Things I can do to Stop Judging Wrongly:

- 1) Recognize when my thoughts are starting to turn towards critical judging
- 2) Ask the Lord to help me focus on my own problems and sin areas so that I would be correcting those
- 3) Recognize that there are many things I do not know about that particular person or situation
- 4) Make sure my opinions and convictions are based on the Scripture and not just man-made rules
- 5) Think about reversed roles – how would I want to be treated or viewed
- 6) Cultivate a humble heart that increasingly knows the depths of my own sin
- 7) Rest in God's perfect judgment that will come when Christ returns

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 4:6-13

TITLE: *EXPOSING ARROGANT PRIDE AND SELF SUFFICIENCY*

BIG IDEA:

BOASTING IN PARTICULAR PROMINENT PREACHERS DEMONSTRATES ARROGANT PRIDE AND SELF SUFFICIENCY

INTRODUCTION:

Christians often play the game of “Look at whose camp I am in! We are followers of Dr. John MacArthur; we are disciples of C. J. Mahaney . . .” Even though the Apostle Paul and Apollos effectively taught the truth and were not trying to develop a personal following, the example of the Corinthians shows that believers can make the mistake of rendering undue praise to the preacher. The resulting schisms become a source of pride and competitive boasting. People become self sufficient and complacent in their intellectual understanding and preoccupied with their own gifts and ministries rather than transformed by radical obedience to the Word of Truth that is being proclaimed. Instead of becoming more Christ-like, they become more arrogant and judgmental. They look with disdain at the humble sacrifices of servant leaders that are not bearing the type of externally impressive results that might be consistent with the world’s benchmarks for success. Paul employs scathing sarcasm to expose their self-deception.

**I. (:6-7) EXPOSING ARROGANT PRIDE –
IN LIFTING PREACHERS UP ON A PEDESTAL AND BOASTING IN ONE
AGAINST ANOTHER**

A. (:6) Exposing the Prideful Practice of Preferring Specific Prominent Preachers

1. Reviewing How Christian Ministers Should be Viewed

“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes”

- (1:17) as messengers sent by God to preach the gospel (not to baptize a band of loyal followers)
- (2:1-5) as those preaching Christ crucified rather than relying on superiority of speech or wisdom
- (2:13) as those speaking Spirit-revealed thoughts in words taught by the Spirit
- (3:5-10) servants and farmers and builders
- (4:1-2) servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God

Paul still considers them as *brethren* despite all of their flaws;
His goal is to edify them – not to tear them down

2. Renouncing the Schismatic Pride of Party Loyalties

a. The Apostolic Example = Don’t Go Beyond the Scriptures

“so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written”

The Sufficiency of the Scriptures – Sola Scriptura
Anything beyond that where you try to enforce man-made rules and your own opinions and preferences is legalism

b. The Apostolic Example = Ministry Teamwork not Ministry Competition

“so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.”

We need each other; don't become arrogant and puffed up in preferring one over another;

Plurality of elder system of church government and multiple gifted men involved in the public teaching ministry should help to promote this spirit of teamwork

MacArthur: Arrogant (*phusioo*) literally means to “puff up (KJV), inflate, blow up.” The term was used metaphorically to indicate pride, which is having an inflated view of oneself. Paul uses that word four times to describe the Corinthian believers (see also 4:18, 19; 5:2) and three other times to warn them against pride (8:1; 13:4; 2 Cor. 12:20). The meaning of pride basically is “I'm for me.” When everyone is pulling first of all for himself, fellowship and harmony are torn apart in the process.

B. (:7) Exposing Underlying Attitudes of Arrogant Pride via 3 Simple Questions

1. Attitude of Superiority

“For who regards you as superior?”

2. Attitude of Ungratefulness

“What do you have that you did not receive?”

3. Attitude of Boasting in Self

“And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

Lenski: The three questions asked in v. 7 are short and have the intention of puncturing their bubble of pride and the further intention of bringing the Corinthians down to the level of true Christian humility. But they needed still more.

II. (:8-13) EXPOSING SELF SUFFICIENCY – THINKING YOU HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED WHILE DESPISING THE HUMBLE SACRIFICES OF GENUINE SERVANT LEADERS

A. (:8) The Delusion of Self Sufficiency = A Wrong View of Their Own Condition -- They Wrongly Thought They Had Already Arrived

1. Sarcastic Parody of Their Self Sufficient Complacency – Laodicean Syndrome (Rev. 3:14-22)

a. Resting in their satiated state – ignorant of their need

“You are already filled,”

b. Rich in their spiritual condition – blind to their poverty
“you have already become rich,”

b. Reigning in their own myopic millennium – deceived regarding their standing in the kingdom
“you have become kings without us;”

2. Ultimate Goal = Co-Reigning . . . Not Lording it Over Others
“and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.”

B. (:9-13) The Delusion of Self Sufficiency = A Wrong View of the Ministry of Others --

They Failed to Value the Apostolic Contribution

1. (:9) Overall Summary: Dead Men Walking = a Spectacle for all to see
“For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.”

2. (:10) Comparisons to Highlight the Difference Between Selfless Ministry and Ambitious Pride

a. Fools For Christ

“We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are prudent in Christ”

b. Enduring Weakness

“we are weak, but you are strong”

c. Foregoing Honor

“you are distinguished, but we are without honor”

3. (:11-12a) Catalog of Apostolic Sacrificial Sufferings for the Cause of Christ

“To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty,”

“and are poorly clothed,”

“and are roughly treated,”

“and are homeless;”

“and we toil, working with our own hands;”

4. (:12b-13a) Godly Example of Righteous Response to Persecution

“when we are reviled, we bless;”

“when we are persecuted, we endure;”

“when we are slandered, we try to conciliate;”

5. (:13b) Complete Rejection by the World

“we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.”

MacArthur: Verses 9-13 can be summarized by four words: spectacles, fools, sufferers, and scum. Those words describe Paul's condition in contrast to what the Corinthians considered their condition to be. They thought they had everything in themselves; he knew he had nothing in himself.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the ways that believers today go beyond what is written in the Scriptures and try to enforce their opinions and preferences on others? How do people ascribe more honor to pastors and preachers than is appropriate?
- 2) How do we evidence a spirit of superiority in how we discuss the ministry of others or different churches or denominations?
- 3) Are we willing to minister after the pattern of the Apostle Paul and be viewed as fools for the sake of Christ?
- 4) Do we respond to slander and persecution and abuse with the type of love and concern for others shown by the apostles?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: Paul does something very similar in the first chapters of 1 Corinthians. The Corinthians have a problem of divisions in the church, divisions based upon undue attachment to a particular leader, one that leads to the rejection (or at least disdain) of other leaders. The leader they follow is a great source of pride to these cultic cliques. They boast of belonging to a particular person as their leader. Paul first deals with the matter in principle, contrasting the gospel, weak and foolish in the eyes of the unbelieving world, with the false wisdom and power of those who are considered leaders in the secular world. . .

In a general way, these Corinthians have become arrogant in behalf of one against another. In verse 7, Paul becomes much more specific: the Corinthians have become arrogant against the apostles. Verses 7-13 are a graphic description of how the Corinthians look at themselves and, in contrast, how they look at Paul and his fellow-apostles.

Paul raises three very crucial questions in verse 7 which, if answered correctly by the Corinthians, will expose the seriousness of their self-deception and sin. Paul first asks, "Who regards you as superior?" Who is their judge? If the Corinthians are so high and mighty, who thinks this? Is it the unbelieving community? God is their judge, not the

corrupt Corinthians of that day. Paul asks yet another question: “What do you have that you did not receive?” Do the Corinthians boast in their abilities? Where did these abilities come from? If they were given, and they were, then they were given by God. If the Corinthians are boasting in their God-given gifts, then they are boasting in God’s place. They have the wrong judge, and they have the wrong object of praise. Men have taken the place of God.

There is then a third and final question: “If all that the Corinthians possess is a God-given gift, then how can they boast, as if it were not a gift?” The Corinthians think themselves so wise. They are arrogant and boastful. Yet, if they are so wise, how can they be so foolish as to take credit for something they were given, as though they were not the recipients of a gift? They have forgotten—or worse yet, they have forsaken—grace. These all-wise Corinthians are self-deceived.

MacArthur: The Corinthians had gone far beyond scriptural respect for ministers and had developed factions that were virtually sects. As is often the case, the leaders were exalted for the followers’ own sakes, not for the leaders’ sakes. The leaders were not a party to their glorification but were simply used as a focal point for the Corinthians own pride. In fact, the humble example of their leaders was rejected; thus Paul had to remind them of his own humility and that of Apollos. The factions gave the Corinthians a means to become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

Leake: 6 Signs of Sinful Pride (:6-8)

Introduction: Illustration about medical surgery; the Word of God is the surgical tool that can cut us open and expose our pride; goal is spiritual health

- 1) Going Beyond the Scriptures
- 2) An Arrogant Posture Towards Others
- 3) Thinking Oneself Superior
- 4) Ungratefulness
- 5) Boasting in Self
- 6) Self-Sufficiency

Leake: 3 Commitments we must make to be a Fool for Christ (:9-13)

Introduction: We must learn from the personal example of Christ what is involved in living a Cross-centered life (that will seem foolish to the world) in contrast to the Corinthian believers; How far am I really prepared to go in following Christ?

- 1) (:9) Accept Your Humble Role in the World

Corinthians took an elitist position; vie wed themselves as already reigning; image is of a victorious military procession with captured prisoners brought back in chains under the sentence of death to be killed by wild animals in the coliseum

Acts 9:15-16; signif of angels watching what is going on – 1 Pet 1:12; 1 Tim. 5:21; 1 Cor. 11:10

A lot of suffering associated with being a follower of Christ (reigning comes later)

Mark 9:35; Rom 8:36-37

- 2) (:10) Be Distinguished From the World

“We” / “You” – pronouns are emphatic in the Greek by position

Problem = when Christians want to look good to non-believers;
Wear mocking as a badge; be willing to be a fool for the sake of Christ;
Not out to make the gospel socially acceptable;
Don't join compromisers or excuse them

- 3) (:11-12) Endure Poor Treatment by the World – Pres tense – still going on
- 6 Hardships the apostles endured
 - 3 Responses – not bitter; not giving up = Christlikeness
 - a) blessing not cursing – 1 Pet. 2:23; Luk 6:27-28
 - b) enduring persecution – not quitting; not compromising
middle voice – hold oneself up
 - c) answer kindly when slandered
 - Gained 2 Reputations from the world
 - a) scum of the world = that which is removed by cleaning
 - b) dregs of all things = the scrapings

Conclusion: 2 Cor. 11: 21-29 – look at what Paul endured for the sake of the Cross; Is. 52-53 = not a pretty picture; we sadly have more in common with the Corinthians than with the apostles

Hodges: The Corinthians were not to think of their ministers more highly than the Bible authorized them to think. . . The followers of Apollos exalted themselves over those of Paul, and those of Paul over those of Cephas. One exalted himself above another and against him He not only thought himself better than his brother, but assumed a hostile attitude towards him.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 4:14-21

TITLE: TOUGH LOVE

BIG IDEA:

EFFECTIVE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AGGRESSIVELY CONFRONTS SIN AND PROVIDES JUST THE RIGHT BALANCE OF NURTURE AND DISCIPLINE FOR THE NEED OF THE MOMENT TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR

INTRODUCTION:

Sin in the church of Jesus Christ cannot be ignored or swept under the carpet. It would be wrong to imagine that things will just correct themselves over time. Look at the tragic outcome in the life of the prophet Eli for failing to properly discipline his sons. The Apostle Paul deeply felt the burden of nurturing each church along the treacherous pathway of spiritual growth and maturity with all of the pitfalls and opposition along the way. Here he is concluding his lengthy section on contrasting the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God. He has just exposed the arrogant pride and self sufficiency of the Corinthians who were undermining his pastoral example and ministry foundation. They had taken their eyes off of their crucified Savior and were boasting in schisms centered around various prominent personalities in the church.

This section provides a casebook example of how to effectively perform **nouthetic counseling** (after the pattern described by Jay Adams in *How to Help People Change*). “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness . . .” (2 Tim. 3:16). Certainly all of these four elements can be traced through Paul’s interaction with the Corinthians as he seeks to correct them and restore them to vibrant spiritual health.

THREE TACTICS PURSUED BY THE APOSTLE PAUL IN HIS NOUTHETIC COUNSELING OF THE CORINTHIANS

Def. of “nouthetic counseling”:

The three ideas found in the word nouthesia are *Confrontation*, *Concern* and *Change*. To put it simply, nouthetic counseling consists of lovingly confronting people out of deep concern in order to help them make those changes that God requires.

<http://www.gateway-biblical-counseling.net/definition.html>

I. (:14-15) TACTIC #1 = CONFRONTATION -- HIS AGGRESSIVE APPROACH -- THE PREROGATIVE OF A SPIRITUAL FATHER TO ADMONISH AND CORRECT ERROR

Def. of Prerogative: an exclusive or special right, power or privilege (Webster’s)

A. (:14) His Fatherly Role Motivates Him to Confront Sin

1. Context for this Confrontation

“I write these things”

Look especially at the previous paragraph covered in 4:6-13

2. Goal for this Confrontation
 - a. Negatively – *“not to shame you”*
 - b. Positively – *“but to admonish you”*
word from which we get *“nouthetic”*
3. Tone for this Confrontation = Father-Child Love Relationship
“as my beloved children”
 - writes out of a heart of loving concern
 - it is appropriate for him to address their behavior issues
 - he writes with the authority of a father

MacArthur: Despite their fleshly, even sometimes hateful immaturity, Paul always looked on the Corinthian believers with affection (cf. 2 Co 12:14, 15; Gal 4:19; Php 1:23-27; 3 Jn4).

B. (:15) His Fatherly Role Should Motivate the Corinthians to Receive His Counsel

1. Limitation of Role of Tutors
“for if you were to have countless tutors in Christ”
2. Uniqueness of Role of Father
“yet you would not have many fathers”

No, you only have one legitimate father.

[Illustration: Julie has been in many plays; many different actors have played her father; I always made it a point with her that I was uniquely “Father #1!]

3. Privilege of Role of Soul Winner
“for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.”
 - spiritual father in Christ
 - power of the proclamation of the gospel message
 - as a result, he certainly deserves their obedience – as long as what he is asking is consistent with following Christ = transition to next point
 - “Who’s your Daddy?”

II. (:16-17) TACTIC #2 = CONCERN – SHARING HIS LIFE EXAMPLE -- THE PATTERN OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND MINISTRY METHODOLOGY WORTH EMULATING

- A. (:16) Key Exhortation: Imitate the Apostle Paul (as he imitated Christ)
“I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.”

Paul's life and ministry methodology were consistent with his teaching;
What spiritual mentors have provided helpful examples for us?
What are the limitations of such models?

- B. (:17) Reinforced by the Personal Ministry of Timothy
1. Choice of Sending Timothy = Paul's #1 Clone
"For this reason I have sent to you Timothy"
They are getting Paul's best representative – His ace card
 2. Commendation of Timothy – Properly mirrors this father-son bond
"who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord"
 3. Christ-Centered Focus of Paul's Example
"he will remind you of my ways where are in Christ"
 4. Consistency of the Apostolic Example
 - a. All places
"just as I teach everywhere"
 - b. All churches
"in every church"
 - No cultural accommodation
 - There are certain non-negotiables in following Christ

III. (:18-21) TACTIC #3 = CHANGE -- HIS CONFIDENCE IN DEMANDING CHANGE -- THE POWER TO DISCIPLINE SIN AND OPPOSE ARROGANT OPPOSITION

- A. (:18) The Challenge of Arrogance
"Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you."
- B. (:19-20) The Confidence of Spiritual Power
1. (:19a) Personal Presence of the Apostle Paul – subject to God's leading
"But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills"
 2. (:19b) Prideful Pretenders – exposed as powerless
"and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power"
 3. (:20) Spiritual Power – in submission to the kingdom of God
"for the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power."
- C. (:21) The Call for Decision
1. You Make the Call

“What do you desire?”

2. Two Options

a. Rod of Loving Discipline

“Shall I come to you with a rod”

b. Peacefulness of Loving Gentleness

“or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) When have you applied these tactics of nouthetic counseling? Did you cover all of these bases? What was the result?

2) When have you been too slow to confront sin in your family and what were the consequences?

3) What type of example do you have to commend to others? How visible and accessible is your life to others?

4) Are you equally willing to apply the rod of discipline as to fellowshiping in love and gentleness – depending on the situation?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: The **first principle** we looked at (at the conference) was that, in dealing with another person, you should try to convey some sense of confidence and love first. Never wipe out somebody: "If you are going to act this way I don't want anything to do with you again. Get out of my sight." Paul never does that. He never says, "I don't want to have anything to do with you Corinthians again." Rather, he says, "You are my beloved children." At the point of sharpest censure, you find this term of deepest endearment. Isn't that amazing?

The **second principle** was: Present a model. Notice how Paul does that here -- "Be imitators of me. I sent Timothy to you to remind you of my ways in Christ. I do not want you to follow what I say; I want you to follow what I do." Now, that troubles a lot of us. Many people think Paul is conceited when he says that. But he is not. He is recognizing the universal psychological principle that people will always follow what you do, not what you say. You can talk your head off to people, but, if your life does not reflect what you say, they will not follow you. They will pay no attention to it, because coming through all the time is that non-verbal communication that is saying, "Yes, I am saying all this to you, but it is not really very important because I do not

bother to do it myself." You have no right to talk if you do not do what you say. Many parents have kidded themselves into thinking they were teaching their children right when they told them what to do, but never did it themselves. The child picked up all the vibes that were coming through, and did just like the parents did. So the second principle is: Present a model.

The **third principle** was: Preserve liberty. That is, do not box someone in so they have no choice in the matter. Allow them to have a choice as to what they do or do not do. Notice how Paul does that here. "I admonish you," he says. "I do not command you; I admonish you. I urge you, but the choice is yours. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love in a spirit of gentleness? You have the liberty to choose." What an important principle that is. Everybody resists being compelled to do things, but Paul does not threaten sanctions or punishment. He simply says, "You have the choice to make, and it is up to you to choose."

And then the **last principle** was: Confront realistically. That is, strip off all the illusions and bring things down to the way they are. That is what Paul says, "When I come I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people, but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power." What is the fruit of your life? Jesus said, "By their fruits you will know them," {cf, Matt 12:33}. Do not listen to their words. Many a person has been deceived by the smooth talk of someone who leads him along with deceptive words that sounded wonderful. But the thing to do is to ask, "What has happened as a result of all these good words?"

Doug Goins: The word in verse 14 that is translated "admonish" can also be translated "warn." It's what a father does in hopes that his children will see the error of their ways and change. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament makes this comment about the word "admonish": "The word carries the idea of having a corrective influence on someone while not provoking or embittering." It implies counsel and appeal. His desire isn't to criticize and punish, but to admonish and encourage. In this appeal to follow his corrective instruction he conveys a wonderful confidence that they can change and that they will want to. There are many people who will criticize. That's what "tutors" do. They don't have a personal, relational, familial interest in you. What Paul wants is for the Corinthians to grow up more fully in the image of Jesus Christ, seeing life the way he does. . .

Paul's appeal here is very wise, because there is no real spiritual growth until each of us personally, volitionally responds to the correction of the word of God. The Lord Jesus desires that each one of us be fully alive, vital, and truly effective for him. He wants to destroy our complacency. He wants to change our illusion of having arrived and of needing nothing more. He wants to replace our sense of self-sufficiency with his own sufficiency. The Lord Jesus desires white-hot, passionate intimacy with us, not just lukewarm congeniality, or being on pleasant speaking terms with him. He wants us to passionately be in love with him. The apostle Paul has appealed to us with great sensitivity, clarity, and gentleness. The Lord Jesus is equally gentle in his appeal in Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and

opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me." Jesus says, "Let's have a meal together. I would love that sort of intimacy with you."

Deffinbaugh: Paul's intent is to come as quickly to Corinth as he can. His desire is that the saints there have heeded his written warnings and made right the things in which they are wrong. If such is the case, Paul can expect to come and be warmly received, forgetting the sins of the past. But if there is no repentance, if those who oppose him persist, Paul will come in power, and he will then use his apostolic authority to deal with them. The eloquent speech of these leaders will not be enough when Paul arrives, for he will expose their lack of real spiritual power.

David Lowery: Though Paul loved the Corinthians he knew that a loving father did not shy away from discipline (cf. Heb. 12:7). If it were needed, he would wield a whip (rabdos, a "rod"). From the Greco-Roman point of view this "rod was a symbol of discipline executed by one in authority.

Leake: 5 Insights into the heart of a Spiritual Father

Introduction: Privilege of becoming a spiritual father; Paul is expressing his heart for the new believers under his care

Matt 23:5-12 – Different context here – applies to false teachers taking on lofty titles; does not contradict this passage

1) (:14) A Spiritual Father Lovingly Admonishes

3:1-3 – using strong language; 4:7, 10

Some Dads wrongly shame their kids – Eph 6:4 = speaking down, demeaning

Paul's intent = to admonish = "to put to mind," exhort to change, bringing the truth to bear; a loving confrontation to benefit and change the other; other NT usages:

Acts 20:31 – night and day for space of 3 years; both publicly and house to house; with tears

Col. 1:28 – admonishing and teaching go hand-in-hand; goal is maturity

1 Thess 5:14 – unruly need admonishing; those who are not listening or responding

Dads need to do this whether they think it will work or not; you cannot take a hands-off approach

We all need to learn to receive admonishment as good children

2) (:15) A Spiritual Father Cherishes a Special Relation to His Children

Contrast the role of a tutor vs role of a father

Def of the gospel

1 John 3:1 – we are children of God – birthed by the Holy Spirit: Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 1:23

Nothing wrong with a tutor = glorified babysitter; guardian of boys to protect them, keep them out of trouble; take them back and forth to school; only the upper class could afford

Unique status as father – Titus 1:4

Am I being faithful to sow the gospel message??

- pray for oppts to witness and be sensitive when God presents them
- Help with ministering to the visitors at church
- Carry tracts and literature and CDs and use them strategically

- Invite unsaved person to church
- Get involved in new evangelism ministries that are offered
- live a consistent example among your own children = your first harvest field

3) (:16) A Spiritual Father Wants His Children to Be Like Him

“Be imitators of me” 11:1 – “just as I am of Christ”

Use of parakaleo – exhort – 1:10; 14:31; 16:15

They did not have a chance to see Christ in person, but they had the Apostle Paul to imitate

We need to be a copy of what is good; Paul not being proud here

Corinthians needed a servant type example – 4:1

“you shall be holy for I am holy”

Our model of discipleship involves the entire church – not just limited to following the example of one person

4) (:17) A Spiritual Father Wants His Children Taught Correctly

- Sent Timothy because he was trusted; faithful to Paul’s ways

Prov 10:1; 1 Tim 1:2; Acts 16:1-3; Acts 18:5; 1 Cor 16:10-11; 2 Cor 1:19;

Sent as an example; but sent on a teaching mission – children tend to forget and need to be continually retaught = requires great patience 2 Tim 4:2

- Consistent teaching; same in all of the churches; not singling out the Corinthians and expecting something special of them – 1 Cor 7:17; 11:16; 14:33 (cf. mantra of some pastors today = “you will not hear any sermons here”)

- Spiritual heart of a pastor = same as that of a nurturing father – 1 Pet 5:1-2; Ezek 34:2; What good is a father who doesn’t teach his children or a shepherd who doesn’t teach his flock? – 1 Tim 4:15; Deut 8:3

- Must teach every word, not just the popular ones – Job 23:12; must have greater allegiance to the Word of God than to anything else

5) (:18-21) A Spiritual Father Holds His Children Accountable

- They arrogantly think that Paul is not coming; maybe he is scared of them; maybe that is why he is sending Timothy;

- Title: “Just wait until Daddy gets home”

They are not getting away with things – 1 Cor 11:34; 16:3 – no doubt that Paul is coming;

- “if the Lord will” is not a softening of Paul’s resolve; just submission to God’s will

- “I will find out” – direct confrontation; talk is cheap

- “words” = human wisdom and teaching; as opposed to the message of the Cross which has power in it – 1 Cor 2:4

- “power” – not a fascination with miracles; not emotionalism but power to change lives (1 Thess 1:5)

- present aspect of the kingdom of God – Col 1:13; 4:11 – transferred into that kingdom and workers right now; it is a spiritual reality

- resurrection power – 2 Cor 5:17 – How do drunkards turn into disciples? How do worldly toads turn into godly princes? Phil 3:7-11 – power to turn the greatest persecutor of the church into its greatest Apostle and proponent; Rom 14:17

- the choice is theirs – but having Paul not come is not an option; they had underestimated Paul and his resolve and his spiritual power

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

TITLE: NO TOLERANCE FOR SEXUAL SIN

BIG IDEA:
CHURCH DISCIPLINE MUST BE ENFORCED AGAINST SEXUAL IMMORALITY

INTRODUCTION:

The failure of the Christian church to enforce church discipline against sexual immorality in its midst has severely compromised its inner health and outward testimony. Tolerance has become the modern virtue; but apparently tolerance was very much in vogue back in the Corinthian church as well. The Apostle Paul calls God's people to take sin seriously and to understand the devastating impact of allowing sexual immorality to go unjudged. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." The urgency of the situation calls for immediate intervention on the part of the Apostle Paul and clear direction to the Corinthian church.

I. (:1-5) APOSTOLIC INTERVENTION – SEXUAL IMMORALITY CANNOT BE TOLERATED IN THE CHURCH

A. (:1) Shocking Report of Sexual Immorality Tolerated in the Church

"It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife."

1. Sin was Publicly Known – reported to the Apostle Paul
2. Nature of "Immorality" – *porneia* – general word for any type of sexual immorality: fornication / adultery / homosexuality / etc.
(cf. English word "pornography")
3. Shocking Nature of This Deviant Behavior = Incest
 - condemned by even the unbelieving Gentiles
 - sex with the man's stepmother
 - Present tense for a continuing relationship

MacArthur: This sin was so vile that even the church's pagan neighbors were doubtless scandalized by it. The Corinthians had rationalized or minimized this sin which was common knowledge, even though Paul had written them before about it (v. 9).

Zeisler: Notice, finally, that the woman involved in this relationship is never mentioned. The reason is that she probably was not a believer. Paul is very clear in saying (vs.12,13) that a non-believer will be judged by his or her specific refusal to know God. It is not the business of the church to judge non-believers.

Boyer: The least that can be said is that they were living together as man and wife.

B. (:2-5) Contrasting Responses of the Corinthian Church vs the Apostle Paul

1. (:2) Arrogant Tolerance on the Part of the Corinthian Church

“You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.”

a. Wrong Attitude – Arrogance vs Mourning

connection to previous context of spiritual pride in chap. 4

b. Simple Solution – Remove the transgressor

2. (:3-5) Decisive Judgment on the Part of the Apostle Paul –

Six Lessons from this Enforcement of Church Discipline by Paul:
(these verses are one long sentence in the Greek)

a. Emphatic Intervention – pronoun emphasized by word order in Greek

“For I, on my part”

b. Connectivity of the Universal Church by the Spirit of God

“though absent in body but present in spirit”

c. Urgency of Rendering Judgment

“have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present”

contrast when it is appropriate and necessary to render judgment
vs when we are warned against judging others

d. (:4) Power of Authority Delegated from the Head of the Church

“In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus”

e. (:5) Severity of the Judgment – this is serious business --

“I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh”

MacArthur: “*Deliver*” is a strong term, used of judicial sentencing. This is equal to excommunicating the professed believer. It amounts to putting that person out of the blessing of Christian worship and fellowship by thrusting him into Satan’s realm, the world system. . . The unrepentant person may suffer greatly under God’s judgment, but will not be an evil influence in the church; and he will more likely be saved under that judgment than if tolerated and accepted in the church.

f. (:5b) Goal of the Judgment – tough love

“so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

II. (:6-8) CORRECTIVE INSTRUCTION – IMMORALITY COMPROMISES THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH AND MAKES A MOCKERY OF OUR WORSHIP

A. (:6) Need for Corrective Instruction

1. Attitude of Sinful Pride

“Your boasting is not good”

2. Neglect of Obvious Principles – Sin Spreads Quickly

“Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?”

Remember the sad example of Achan – Joshua 7-8

B. (:7) Separation From Sin Should Characterize the Church

“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.”

C. (:8) Sincerity and Truth Should Characterize our Life and Worship

“Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Stedman: Judgment permits the celebration of Christian deliverance and liberty.

Boyer: Here Paul draws a lesson from the Feast of Unleavened Bread which followed the observance of Passover. For seven days after Passover the Jews ate no leavened bread. Their law required that they remove all leaven from the household. . . As it was unthinkable for a Jew to keep Passover without observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, so it is unthinkable for a Christian to claim Christ as his Saviour from sin and to go on living in sin.

III. (:9-13) CLEAR INJUNCTION (WITH SIMPLE CLARIFICATION) – ENFORCE CHURCH DISCIPLINE AGAINST IMMORAL BROTHERS

“Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”

A. (:9) Earlier Reminder of Clear Injunction

“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people”

B. Simple Clarification

1. (:10) What Paul did not mean = not talking about unbelievers (Outsiders)

“I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.”

2. (:11) What Paul actually did mean = Talking about professed believers (Insiders)

“But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler – not even to eat with such a one.”

Stedman: There you have the world characterized for you:

The sins of the body (immorality),

The sins of the mind or heart (the attitudes, greedy and grasping), and

The sins of the spirit (idolatry, another god.)

The offense against yourself, the offense against your neighbor, and the offense against God himself -- those are the characteristics of the world.

3. (:12-13a) Different Judges for Different Folks

“For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges.”

C. (:13b) Reiteration of Clear Injunction = Enforce Church Discipline

“Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why might the Corinthians have been proud and arrogant in this situation?
- 2) What obstacles do church leaders reference to try to excuse their failure to enforce church discipline? How would you respond to those objections?
- 3) What are some examples in your experience (family, church, etc.) where you have seen the multiplying impact of sin and its devastating effects (when not decisively dealt with on a timely basis)? Why is there a different standard in terms of associating with sinning Christians vs non-Christians?
- 4) Why does the church put a special emphasis on the sin of sexual immorality but not address with similar severity the other sins listed in parallel fashion in vs. 11? When have you seen church discipline enforced against covetousness or idolatry?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: These great Greek cities, such as Corinth and others, were given over to the casual acceptance of sex outside of the marriage relationship. As you know, there was in Corinth a temple devoted to the worship of sex, the temple of Aphrodite. Therefore,

it was the common thing for Christians to be tempted in this area. Many of them had indulged themselves in constant sexual liaisons before they became Christians and it was difficult for them to break these habits. If we think we have difficulty in these areas living in California today, we are no different at all than these Corinthians. . .

It is rather interesting that even in our own day the most degrading epithet that anybody can apply to another is to suggest that he is sleeping with his own mother. That shows how still today incest is regarded as a terrible thing even in the pagan world. . .

They were boasting and glorying in their tolerance of this condition, as many people do today. They have a mistaken feeling that, rather than showing condemnation and judgment on this, the church ought to express understanding of the pressures and the difficulties of living in a world like we have today, and to say nothing about this: Let the individual work it out on his own. This is what was happening in Corinth. They thought they were showing love and understanding by their attitude of casualness toward this.

There are four clear, definite, practical steps to take here when immorality is present:

- 1) The first one is: There must be a right attitude. We must mourn and feel grief instead of harsh, critical judgment or tolerant, casual love.
- 2) The second step is: There must be a right basis for discipline. . .
- 3) So step number three in this passage we are looking at is: There must be a right action. . .
- 4) it should be for a right purpose . . .

Grosheide: The purpose of this whole chapter is to disclose the grave sin of the church. It is the church more than the sinner which is spoken of. The church is guilty and has to correct herself and do what is required.

MacArthur: One of the greatest protections from sin that we have as Christians is simply focusing on our Lord and on the sacrifice He made for us. To understand that His death for sin applied to us calls us away from sin and to a clean break with the old ways is to understand the sanctifying work of the cross. It is impossible to be occupied with this truth and with sin at the same time.

Zeisler: Perhaps we can draw an analogy with fruit flies. If a single female fruit fly were introduced into this county, the fruit harvest could be devastated. The fruit fly does its work invisibly, reproducing in massive numbers and destroying valuable crops. Leaven works in the same way. Paul charges the Corinthians that they are an arrogant people. One rotten apple among them was threatening to rot all of the other apples and they had to do something about it. They were clean and unleavened, the Lord having paid a price for them. If they were to have an impact for good on their world, they had to be willing to make the hard choice to clean out the leaven, to not put up with it any longer.

Paul calls the Corinthians to worship in "sincerity and truth" (verse 8). He is not

speaking of perfection, but of sincerity. Rather than hide and pamper their sin and allow it to fester, they should be willing to deal with it. David Prior writes of these verses, "The world is waiting to see such a church, a church which takes sin seriously, which enjoys forgiveness fully, which in its time of gathering together combines joyful celebration with an awesome sense of God's immediacy and authority."

Goins: In the remainder of the chapter, beginning in verse 3, Paul is going to explain how and why they must face into the problem. He gives three reasons why we need to take sin among us very seriously.

- In verses 3-5 it's for the sake of the individual. Their very soul is at stake.
- In verses 6-8 it's for the health and life of the church, which is the holy temple of God. We are saints of God, the called-out and sanctified ones.
- And in verses 9-13 it's for the sake of the lost world around us.

Boyer: Authority to take disciplinary action against a wayward member must rest on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and is to be exercised in an officially called congregational meeting at which there is present the voice of the apostle through the Word of God, and the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ himself as head of the church.

Leake: Tolerating Sexual Immorality in the Church

Introduction: The subject of Sex is not taboo; not a bad word; but actually much written about it in the Word of God. God knows how to make life exciting. We need to understand God's pattern for physical intimacy = one man dedicated to one woman for a life of intimacy.

Take a look at the various perversions of sex which the world has created – fornication / adultery / homosexuality / etc.

Our Duty to Deal with Sexual Sin in God's Church – 6 Realities that teach us not to tolerate sexual sin in the church"

Context: connection between 4:6 and 5:2 is the matter of spiritual pride

Sins of the Mind lead to sins of the Body;

Paul is correcting the entire church (not primarily addressing the sinning brother)

1) (:1) The Reality of Depravity within the Church

- truth of the behavior was well known
- Acts 15:19-20; 1 Thess 4:3 = abstinence program!
- Lev. 18:8 – shame, disrespect involved in this incestuous behavior

2) (:2) The Reality of Disregard of the Congregation – 3 Reactions

- a) Became Arrogant
- b) Did not Mourn
- c) Did not Judge His Act and Remove Him

- 3) (:3-5) The Reality of the Decision of the Apostle** – God takes sin seriously
- note Paul's Determination – emphatic "I" by Greek word order
 - Spirit of God present in life of Paul and in Corinthian church – so they were connected via the Spirit of God in the realm of their spirit; more than just thinking and praying about them
 - Perfect tense – Paul had judged them already and that judgment stands
 - not judging what he has no right or ability to judge; but judging what he ought to judge (actions that were observable)
 - we need to make a big deal out of what God makes a big deal out of; and not major on minor areas of personal conviction or even legalism
 - people of God must respond as God responds



TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-8

COMPETENT TO JUDGE CIVIL DISPUTES

BIG IDEA:
BELIEVERS SHOULD NEVER SUE FELLOW BELIEVERS

INTRODUCTION:

Remember the book written by Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* – that laid a lot of the groundwork for the basis for nouthetic counseling. Adams made the argument that believers would be wrong to submit to the counseling of unsaved psychologists. Instead believers have the resources they need to confront the most serious problems of life – the resources of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. In a similar vein, the Apostle Paul argues in this passage that the Church is *Competent to Judge* as well. Why would we ever consider taking a fellow believer to court and submit to the “wisdom” of unsaved judges? This would be damaging to the testimony of Christ.

We live in a society that goes to court at the drop of a hat. Look at the number of lawyers ... the backlog of court cases ... the ridiculous amounts of some of the settlements for damages, etc. Look at how people demand that their “rights” be protected and have the expectation of compensation if they are wronged in any way. Look at how this contributes to the high cost of liability insurance.

Some commentators want to temper Paul’s tone in this passage and say that believers should try to avoid suing fellow believers. But the clear import of the teaching is that believers should never sue fellow believers! Remember the context from chapter 5 where believers were reminded of their responsibility to judge among themselves. “Not only is the church to judge in matters of morality, but in other matters having to do with everyday life (civil situations).” (Gil Rugh)

I. (:1) ENTERTAINING THE QUESTION OF TAKING ANOTHER BELIEVER TO COURT EXPOSES PRESUMPTUOUS PRIDE

A. Universal Application to the Church of Christ

“Does any one of you”

Not just giving some local advice that applies only to certain special situations

B. Unsettled Grievance vs Another Brother

“when he has a case against his neighbor”

- assumes that this is not just some frivolous complaint but a serious and legitimate (at least in the mind of the plaintiff) grievance
- not talking about spiritual differences but about matters of property and civil law; things that people might normally sue someone over
- neighbor (lit “another”) in this context indicates another believer

C. Unthinkable Choice of Venue

“dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?”

Lawsuits common practice in Corinth.

Paul expressing **shock**; look at that word “dare” – emphatic by position in the Greek 6:9 -- these *unrighteous* are not destined for the kingdom of God; stand in contrast to the saints; carries a moral connotation as well (**Rugh**)

II. (:2-6) EVALUATING THE OPTION BETWEEN A SECULAR COURT AND THE JUDGMENT OF THE SAINTS SHOULD BE A NO-BRAINER

A. (:2) Reminder #1 – The Saints Will Ultimately Judge the World –

Argument from the Greater to the Lesser

1. Statement of the Obvious – Doctrine 101 class

“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?”

This is a huge responsibility; clearly delineates a great chasm between believers and non-believers; speaking of responsibility of believers in coming kingdom

2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21 – we share the authority of His rule; 20:4

2. Simple Argument – Based on Competency

“If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?”

the trivial matters

B. (:3) Reminder #2 – The Saints Will Ultimately Judge the Angels

1. Statement of the Obvious

“Do you not know that we will judge angels?”

Rugh: Heb. 1:14 -- in the millennial kingdom, all the angels will be subject to believers in glorified bodies as well; angels serve on our behalf even right now – who are destined for the fullness of salvation; Heb. 2:5-9; we should be living right now in the light of this truth; no problem judging trivial matters of this life right now

2. Simple Argument – Based on argument from the greater to the lesser

“How much more matters of this life?”

C. (:4-6) Clear Conclusion: Avoid Taking Your Fellow Brother to Court

1. Because Believers are More Competent to Judge

“Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?” (NIV)

Many different interpretations suggested for the difficult text in vs. 4.
Pagan judges would have no standing in the church ...

Does not require a jury of 12

2. Because the Testimony of the Church is at Stake

“but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?”

Believers should be characterized by love, forgiveness and reconciliation; We should be the experts at putting up with one another and yielding our rights. We certainly don't want to air our dirty laundry in front of unbelievers who do not possess the wisdom of God or the insight from the Holy Spirit.

III. (:7-8) ENGAGING IN SECULAR LAWSUITS RATHER THAN YIELDING YOUR RIGHTS TO YOUR FELLOW BROTHER CANNOT PRODUCE A GOOD OUTCOME

A Suing a Fellow Brother Automatically Makes You a Loser

“Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another.”

B. Suffering Injustice Should Always Be the Preferred Option

“Why not rather be defrauded?”

Jeffries: In the kingdom, when a dispute arises between believers, the primary goal of resolution is not justice but reconciliation.

Difficulty: both believers convinced they are right and refuse to accept the adjudication of the believer appointed to do the judging; won't be a problem if we have the attitude of willing to be defrauded

C. Suing a Fellow Brother Automatically Puts You in the Wrong

“On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.”

Matt. 5:38-42; Rom 12:17-19; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 2

A family should be able to work things out within the family

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How would this apply to situations of divorce where a secular court must get involved? Is this a strong argument for a “no divorce” policy among believers?

2) Where had the Corinthians been taught previously that they would ultimately judge angels? What type of judgment is involved if the fallen angels have already been identified? What will be the relationship between believers and angels in the coming

millennial kingdom?

3) Why do we resist the concept of yielding our rights and willingly allowing ourselves to be wronged in this life? How does the message of 1 Peter provide instruction for us in this regard?

4) How have you seen the testimony of believers and of the church be damaged by such lawsuits? Where have you seen families torn apart by legal disputes?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Boyer: There is no real break in the context through Chapters 5 and 6, and by implication this also is a moral problem (cf. the inclusion of covetousness among the lists of sins in 5:10, 11; 6:9, 10). The sins of impurity and covetousness are kindred sins. Both were prevalent at Corinth, both are destructive of society, both are basically selfishness, and the lamentable lack of church discipline in Corinth allowed both to flourish.

William Barclay: The Greeks were naturally and characteristically a litigious people. The lawcourts were in fact one of their chief amusements and entertainments. In a Greek city every male citizen was more or less a lawyer and spent a very great deal of his time either deciding or listening to law cases. The Greeks were in fact famous, or notorious, for their love of going to law. Not unnaturally, certain of the Greeks had brought their litigious tendencies into the Christian church; and Paul was shocked.

Jeffries: This stands in stark and sad contrast to Luke's inspiring portrait of the earliest church.

ref: Acts 2:44-47 [NLT]

And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity -- all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

Acts 4:32 [NLT]

All the believers were of one heart and mind, and they felt that what they owned was not their own; they shared everything they had.

Holwick: The case for lawsuits.

A. The Old Testament is very concerned about justice.

1) Law courts are set up for our good.

2) Many laws concern fairness and justice.

3) Judged by God's standards, not bribes or favoritism.

B. Jesus - parable of woman who pesters judge for justice.

C. Paul himself used human courts.

- 1) Defended his faith before Gallio in Corinth. Acts 18:12-16
- 2) In Philippi, he referred to his rights as a Roman citizen.
- 3) Appealed to court of Caesar. (Ended up getting executed.)
- 4) Principle - gov't (and courts) instituted by God. Rom 13

D. Passage is limited to Christian-against-Christian lawsuits.

- 1) Lawsuits are permissible with non-believers.
 - a) However, allow biblical values to direct every action.
- 2) Lawsuits are permissible when the motive is justice, not pride.
- 3) Lawsuits are permissible when no shame is brought to Christ.
 - a) We should not air our dirty laundry in public. 6:6
 - b) Glorifying God must be our highest priority.

V. Difficulty with text for modern Christians.

A. Most commentaries try to find "permissible" cases.

- 1) Basic thrust here is **avoiding lawsuits**.

B. We must face up to fact we operate by world's system.

- 1) Be defrauded - it would drive us nuts. 6:7
 - a) Our world full of injustice.
We long for simple justice - more jails, more police.
Hard for us to accept being wronged.
 - b) "People's Court" and Judge Wapner.
 - 1> Good guys are supposed to win.
- 2) We are materialistic.
 - a) Focus on property.
 - b) Focus on "rights."

Gil Rugh: (audio sermons)

Paul's concern has to do with believer's availing themselves of the local legal system to settle disputes among themselves. He addresses the issue of the damage done to their testimony before unbelievers who become witnesses to their disagreements and disputes. As a result of sin we have all become self-centered and self-focused, concerned with our own rights. We want to seek redress for the wrongs done unto us, real or imagined. Caution: Governing authorities ordained by God and designed for a good purpose (this would include the legal system). Paul's concern is not with the legal system per se; but with the conduct of believers availing themselves of this legal system when it comes to grievances against fellow believers.

MacArthur: Believers who go to court with believers are more concerned with revenge or gain than with the unity of the Body and the glory of Jesus Christ. . . If two Christian parties cannot agree between themselves, they should ask fellow Christians to settle the

matter for them, and be willing to abide by that decision. The poorest equipped believer, who seeks the counsel of God's Word and Spirit, is much more competent to settle disagreements between fellow believers than is the most highly trained and experienced unbelieving judge who is devoid of divine truth. Because we are in Christ, Christians rank above the world and even above angels. And by settling our own disputes, we give a testimony of our resources and of our unity, harmony, and humility before the world. When we go to public court, our testimony is the opposite.

Pastor Tom Leake: When Brother Wrongs Brother --

Introduction: Overall theme of 1 Corinthians = Corrections in the Church; We don't like dealing with conflict for the most part. "The best armor is to keep out of range." But offenses will come at some point in time; it is unavoidable. Paul not concerned here with correcting who was causing the offense, but rather making sure that we deal with the reaction to the offense correctly.

Thesis: We should never choose to go to court against our Christian brother or sister.

I. (:1-4) **The Shock**

Are you nuts? Have you lost your Christian mind?

The situation in Corinth was that a business type of dispute would develop and the injured party would take the other person to court = bema seat in the Agora where the sitting judge would hear the case and render his verdict. The issue was not whether justice would be administered but what that process would communicate about the corporate church and Christianity. Petty squabbles in the church should be a piece of cake. To go before the unrighteous (not that they were all morally corrupt as judges, but they were unsaved and devoid of the wisdom of God) contradicts who you are as holy ones.

II. (:5-8) **The Shame**

For the Corinthian church, that shame has lasted down through the generations. In 4:14 Paul apparently did not write to shame them; but in this context he felt he had to. Verse 6 is the crux of the passage. You have elevated the status of the unbeliever and lowered the status of believers. You have dragged the name of Christ in the mud. You have let down the entire team.

Clarification:

- not saying that believers can never sue unbelievers
- not saying that you can always avoid going to court – sometimes you are dragged there by the other party
- it is necessary to defend your rights as Christians and citizens so that the gospel can go forth freely (the Apostle Paul appealed to the court system in this way)
- but in that case make sure you are using the court system to reflect positively on the church

Simple teaching: we should never choose to go to court against our Christian brother or sister; but the application can become complicated in our day when people might not even belong to a local church

III. **Two Solutions**

A. (:5B) Find a Wise Man in the Church who can Adjudicate

Prov. 2:6 – one who will be able to make proper distinctions; weigh the evidence; render a balanced and impartial verdict

Where does he get this type of wisdom? Not from his education; not from the world; not even from his years of experience; But from the Lord who gives it in His Word; study the Word; Psalm 119

B. (:7B) Radical Solution = Be Wronged; Be Defrauded

The real answer is Love; 1 Thess. 4:9 vs. 1 Cor. 13 – the Corinthians needed Paul to spell out for them what love truly involves; Love does not take into account wrongs suffered; an accounting term; don't keep records in relationships; it is not merely about getting justice for your situation; Paul emphasizes the importance of Christian relationships; view the conflict not a personal battle, but a spiritual battle.

How often must we forgive? Not just seven times, but 70 X 7 (unlimited);

When we are reviled, we need to bless

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

TITLE: WHO'S IN . . . WHO'S OUT? -- NO EXCEPTIONS WHEN IT COMES TO QUALIFYING FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

BIG IDEA:

**UNCONVERTED SINNERS HAVE NO PART IN GOD'S KINGDOM –
A TRANSFORMED LIFE SHOULD PRODUCE TRANSFORMED LIVING**

INTRODUCTION:

Dealing today with the biggest question of all: Who qualifies for entrance into God's Kingdom and enjoyment of all Kingdom Blessings? There was much fuzzy thinking and denial of reality among the Corinthians just as there is much fuzzy thinking and denial of reality in our culture today. Paul was urging the Corinthians to take sin seriously. It was unthinkable that a converted believer who was now consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ could persist in the types of sins mentioned here. When one sees clearly the distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous, why would one ever consider submitting conflicts between believers to the adjudication of the unrighteous?

How does this section mesh with the overall context?

Stedman: What ties this section with that which has gone before is found in the word in Verse 8, "*But you yourselves wrong,*" and the word in Verse 9, "*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?*" Those are the same basic root words. What Paul is really saying is, "Look, when you are so aggressive in defense of your own rights that you take another brother to law before a secular court, you are wronging that brother. Even though you may be right in your cause, you are wronging your brother, and that wronging, that unjust action, gives rise to the question, 'Have you yourself ever been justified before God?'" That is what Paul is saying. To treat another unjustly makes one ask if you have ever been justified, and he says the unjustified, the unrighteous, the unregenerate cannot inherit the kingdom of God if they are committed to these things that he lists as a life style.

Now he surely does not mean that those who have been involved in these things cannot be saved, for he goes on to say, "*such were some of you*"; they have come out of it. But what he is saying, very clearly, is that these things cannot be continued as a lifestyle for Christians. Conversion makes a visible difference, and if it does not, there is room to question whether there has ever been a conversion.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO GROUPS OF PEOPLE:

**I. (:9-10) THOSE WHO DON'T QUALIFY FOR GOD'S KINGDOM =
UNCONVERTED SINNERS = THE UNRIGHTEOUS –
NO EXCEPTIONS – NO SURPRISES**

A. (:9a) General Characterization of Who is Excluded from God's Kingdom

1. No Surprise

“Or do you not know”

Common expression in 1 Corinthians – cf. our similar expression to our children: “Don’t you know any better? Of course you do!” **Gil Rugh**

2. Universal Standard – Stated in General Terms

“that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?”

Hodge: The tendency to divorce religion from morality has manifested itself in all ages of the world, and under all forms of religion.

a. Definition of *“the unrighteous”*

described earlier in 6:1 as those contrasted with *the saints*;
contrasted with believers in 6:6;
only 2 groups of people

Morris: *Unrighteous* is without the article in the Greek, the stress being on the character of these people, and not on the unrighteous as a class. People of this kind are excluded from the kingdom.

b. Concept of *“inherit”*

(Error of Joseph C. Dillow in The Reign of the Servant Kings –
See below in the Notes section)

Inheritance derives from family relationship – not meritorious works

c. Identification of *“the kingdom of God”*

The kingdom that Christ will establish on earth when He returns;
new birth is requirement for entrance (John 3) – We are not yet in the kingdom physically. Destiny of unbelievers is the eternal fire of Matt. 25:41 -- **Gil Rugh**

B. (9b-10) Specific Characterization of Who is Excluded from God’s Kingdom

1. Danger of Deception

“Do not be deceived”

Do not presume upon the doctrine of God’s grace and wink the eye at sin; Do not water down the impact of what God says in this passage. It is difficult for us to explain some individual case testimonies . . . but here is what God says about who will not inherit the kingdom of God.

2. Universal Standard – Illustrated by Ten Specific Sinful Practices

Reveals who are the unrighteous by position and practice

a. *Neither fornicators*

Boyer: one guilty of any sexual immorality

MacArthur: by unmarried persons in particular

Rugh: There is no safe sex outside of marriage because God will call you to account for it. . . The real problem is not AIDS, but Hell – fear God!

b. *Nor idolaters*

Idolatry and immoral sex very closely related in Corinth

c. *Nor adulterers*

Boyer: a particular kind of fornicator, referring to infidelity within the married state

Heb 13:4 – God will judge fornicators and adulterers – make no mistake

d. *Nor effeminate*

Boyer: probable that it is used in the technical sense of a man who submits to homosexual relations, a passive homosexual

e. *Nor homosexuals*

Boyer: abusers of themselves with mankind (KJV) . . . The vividly descriptive term which Paul uses in the original Greek (“one who goes to bed with a male”) makes the meaning distinct

MacArthur: Effeminate and homosexuals both refer to those who exchange and corrupt normal male-female roles and relations.

Scripture could not be clearer that such practices are immoral – not some type of alternative lifestyle that should be accepted and accommodated by society.

f. *Nor thieves*

Boyer: those who steal by stealth, the sneak-thief, as compared with a robber who steals by force

g. *Nor the covetous*

Boyer: a greedy, grasping person, one who is always after more.

h. *Nor drunkards*

By inclusion in this list it is obvious that Scripture treats alcohol and drug addiction as sinful behaviors rather than medical disorders. Despite any amount of genetic predisposition, the individual is viewed as accountable for his choices leading to

whatever degree of bondage is experienced.

i. *Nor revilers*

Boyer: one who speaks harshly, reproachfully, uses abusive language

j. *Nor swindlers*

MacArthur: *Swindlers* are thieves who steal indirectly. They take unfair advantage of others to promote their own financial gain. Extortioners, embezzlers, confidence men, promoters of defective merchandise and services, false advertisers, and many other types of swindlers are as common to our day as to Paul's.

3. Exclusion from God's Kingdom
"will inherit the kingdom of God"

Again, this is a blanket statement – no exceptions

II. (:11) THOSE WHO QUALIFY FOR GOD'S KINGDOM = SINNERS CONVERTED BY THE POWER OF THE TRIUNE GOD = THE RIGHTEOUS – NO EXCEPTIONS – NO SURPRISES

A. Pre-Conversion State
"Such were some of you"

B. Process of Conversion – What Happened? Tremendous Transformation

1. Cleansed and Forgiven of Your Sins
"but you were washed"

There was a lot of filth and defilement and guilt associated with our sins;
This washing was pictured in baptism.

Rugh: Don't you feel like you need a bath after you go through the listing of these sins?
Isaiah 1:18

2. Consecrated to God
"but you were sanctified"

Set apart from our sins and this evil world and Satan and consecrated as
clean vessels to the Lord

3. Considered Righteous
"but you were justified"

Imputation of the righteousness of Christ

Should these three actions be taken as generally synonymous or be treated with individual significance? While all wrapped together in the process of conversion, it seems best to give each term its specific emphasis.

MacArthur:

Washed speaks of new life, of regeneration . . .

Sanctified speaks of new behavior. . .

Justified speaks of new standing before God.

C. Powerful Agency of the Triune God

1. Redemption Accomplished by Christ

“in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”

On the basis of His authority and work

2. Redemption Applied by the Holy Spirit

“and in the Spirit of our God”

The Spirit is the one who has baptized us into the body of Christ

Hodge: These clauses are not to be restricted to the preceding word . . . they belong equally to all three of the preceding terms.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does this passage give hope to believers that the Holy Spirit can deliver them from the bondage of any type of sinful habit or practice?

2) How does this passage refute today’s characterization of certain sinful lifestyles (such as drug and alcohol addiction) as medical diseases or of other sinful lifestyles (such as homosexuality) as merely an alternative morally neutral lifestyle?

3) How can someone’s false and unfounded profession of faith be exposed as counterfeit?

4) How is the work of the Trinity involved in the accomplishing of our conversion, justification and sanctification?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Paul Miller: In this passage, Paul affirmed twice that the unsaved would "not inherit the kingdom of God." This judgment is based both on the unbeliever's position

(6:9a) and practice (6:10b). The inference is evident. Why should Christians who are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17; Gal. 4:7), submit themselves to those whose character and conduct will prevent them from entering into the kingdom?

<http://www.calvarysbd.com/pdf/1cor.pdf>

MacArthur: The kingdom is the spiritual sphere of salvation where God rules as king over all who belong to Him by faith. All believers are in that spiritual kingdom, yet are waiting to enter into the full inheritance of it in the age to come. People who are characterized by these iniquities are not saved (v.10). While believers can and do commit these sins, they do not characterize them as an unbroken life pattern. When they do, it demonstrates that the person is not in God's kingdom. True believers who do sin, repent that sin and seek to gain the victory over it.

Erroneous Position of Joseph C. Dillow:

He tries to argue that this group of sinners represent saved Christians who have forfeited the blessings of the inheritance of the kingdom. They are still allowed entrance into heaven on the basis of having been justified by faith, but they forfeit the rewards associated with inheriting the millennial kingdom blessings. His reasoning is as follows:

“there are two kinds of inheritance presented in the New Testament. All believers have God as their inheritance but not all will inherit the kingdom. Furthermore, inheriting the kingdom is not to be equated with entering it but, rather, with possessing it and ruling there. All Christians will enter the kingdom, but not all will rule there, i.e., inherit it. . .

We are told in v. 9 that the ‘wicked’ (Gk. **adikoi**) will not inherit this kingdom, and in v. 1 the same word is used for non-Christians (cf. 6:6). In fact, the contrast between the righteous, **dikaioi**, and the unrighteous, **adikoi**, is common in the New Testament, and those whose lives are characterized by **adikia** are in some contexts eternally condemned. But this kind of argument assumes that **adikoi** is a kind of technical term for those lacking the imputed righteousness of Christ. The illegitimate identity transfer is committed to import the contextually derived suggestion of one kind of consequence of being **adikos** into the semantic value of the word. However, it is a general term for those (Christian or non-Christian) lacking godly character. Both Christians and non-Christians can be **adikoi**. In fact, in 6:8 the apostle declares that the Corinthians are acting like **adikoi** (he uses the verb form, **adikeo**) just like the non-Christians of v. 1.”

Morris: The tremendous revolution brought about by the early preaching of the gospel is implied in the quiet words, *and such* (actually a little stronger, “*these*”) *were some of you*. It was no promising material that confronted the early preachers, but people whose values were exactly the opposite of those of Christ. It had required the mighty power of the Spirit of God to turn people like that away from their sins, and to make them members of Christ's Church.

Doug Goins: This final verse is wonderfully hopeful. The behaviors that he listed in

verses 9-10 characterized the pre-Christian lives of many of the Corinthians, but that old life is not who they are now. They have left those patterns behind. So there is every hope that they can stop suing each other.

I love Paul's logic here. When Paul wants to motivate or encourage people to action, his favorite appeal is, "Become what you really are. You aren't living like it, but it's your identity." And what are the Corinthians? Three things: First, they have been washed. That speaks of their new life in Jesus Christ, of God's work of regeneration or re-creation. Listen to how Paul describes it in Titus 3:5: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." In 2 Corinthians 5:17 he writes, "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." Finally, in Ephesians 2:10 he says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus..." We are washed to a new life.

The second thing Paul tells the Corinthians about their identity is that they are sanctified. That speaks of the sovereign act of God in making them his people, setting them apart for his intended purposes, which God promises they will fulfill; they will become everything that he has set them apart to become through sanctification.

Third, he uses the word "justified." This is one of Paul's favorite words for what God does to make people his children. Whenever Paul uses it in the past tense it's almost synonymous with sanctification. God finished a work in you to make you his own.

These Corinthians have experienced spiritual transformation, Paul reminds them. It was done in the name of Jesus Christ, by his authority and power, the authority that he won through his death on the cross in obedience to his Father, through the resurrection that his Father accomplished, and through his glorification and ascension to the right hand of the Father. That transformation that has happened in the past and that they can count on in the future is based on the authority of Jesus Christ and on the power of the Spirit of God at work in them. Their passionate commitment to their personal rights can be broken. God can humble them before each other. He can change them from an aggressive, competitive, rights-oriented community into people who are willing to give up their rights for the good of the whole, people who care more about the salvation of the world than their own personal possessions.

Deffinbaugh: Paul has a very different view of the relationship of the past to the present than that popularly held by many psychologists and psychiatrists today. In the psychological world of our day, what one was in the past determines what he is in the present. This is why so much time and money is spent digging up the past. It makes a great excuse for sin in the present. Paul's thinking is just the opposite for Christians. What we were in the past does not determine what we are today, because the cross of Christ separates us not only from our sins but from our past. Christ stands between us in the present and us as we were in the past. What we were is not what we are. The cross of Christ is the reason why we can be now what we were not then. The cross of Christ is the reason Christians cannot and must not be crooks. It is not because Christians cannot

sin, but because they must not sin. For a Christian to be a crook is for a person to return to that wicked state from which he (or she) was delivered by the grace of God in Christ.

When we were saved, we were completely saved, severed from our past identity and given a new identity. We were washed, cleansed of our sin and our guilt. We were sanctified, set apart from sin unto holiness. We were justified, legally declared righteous through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed to us by faith. All of this transpired in the name of Jesus Christ.

George Whitefield: cf. his message on Justification by Christ from this text <http://www.biblebb.com/files/whitefield/gw046.htm>

The words beginning with the particle BUT, have plainly a reference to something before; it may not therefore be improper, before I descend to particulars, to consider the words as they stand in relation to the context. The apostle, in the verses immediately foregoing, had been reckoning up many notorious sins, drunkenness, adultery, fornication, and such like, the commission of which, without a true and hearty repentance, he tells the Corinthians, would entirely shut them out of the kingdom of God. But then, lest they should, on the one hand, grow spiritually proud by seeing themselves differ from their unconverted brethren, and therefore be tempted to set them at nought, and say with the self-conceited hypocrite in the prophet, "Come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou;" or, on the other hand, by looking back on the multitude of their past offenses, should be apt to think their sins were too many and grievous to be forgiven: he first, in order to keep them humble, reminds them of their sad state before conversion, telling them in plain terms, "such (or as it might be read, these things) were some of you;" not only one, but all that sad catalogue of vices I have been drawing up, some of you were once guilty of; but then, at the same time, to preserve them from despair, behold he brings them glad tidings of great joy: "But ye are washed; but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God."

Gil Rugh: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=3306111142>

Our position and practice are distinct, but must not be separated from one another. . . Don't turn the grace of God into licentiousness. . . Their conduct didn't reflect what Christ had done in their lives. . . They (the Corinthians) were proud and arrogant because of their exalted position in Christ. . . Those who are born of God cannot live the same way as those who are children of the devil. . . Our conduct reveals what we are in our being. . . Nobody too sinful – the washing, sanctifying and justifying are sufficient for anyone; Rom. 6:16. . . Our position and practice are not perfectly conformed; nor are they radically unconverted. Only two kinds of people: slaves of sin and slaves of righteousness. . . Someone living in sin – challenge them: "What makes you think you are a believer?" I have to take God's Word even over your testimony.

Leake: (:9-10) Why Most Americans are NOT Headed to Heaven --

Introduction: Not anti-American; but not hard to find fault with our nation;

Matt. 7:13-14; 21 – many false professions of allegiance to Christ will be exposed; God

demands repentance and faith in Christ alone = an Exclusive Gospel message; the New Birth is essential and it will always result in a transformed life;
Exclusive Salvation = a hated doctrine by the world – John 14:3-6
(Quote from Billy Graham in interview with Robert Shuller on the radio where he denies the exclusivity of the gospel)
Only the type of faith in Jesus Christ that results in a transformed life will get you to heaven; cf. publishing a list of cuts from the football team = who did not make the team

I. The Exclusive Kingdom

The kingdom of God is not for everyone!

Concept of *Inheriting* – Ex. 32:13 = come into possession of it; Ps. 37:9-11 speaks of a future inheritance

Def. of *kingdom of God* = the place where God reigns supreme – Ps. 93:1-2 – in one sense God reigns over all things eternally (Ps 99:1; 115:3) – this is the broad sense of God’s kingdom; but used in this context in a much narrower sense = God reigns through His Son in mediatorial fashion over mankind who are believers – speaking of the Millennial Kingdom on earth; same as the kingdom of heaven in Book of Matthew; in the spiritual sense in the church we have already entered into that aspect of the kingdom: Col. 4:11; Matt. 24:14; Acts 28:31; Col. 1:13; Rev. 19:15 – but the physical millennial reign is still coming; in another sense the kingdom of God also encompasses God’s reign in heaven for all eternity – 1 Cor. 15:50 ff – this is still future as well
You are either in or out of the kingdom

II. The Excluded People

The *Unrighteous* = Unbelievers will not make it in = they are disobedient to God in their behavior; defined by their practices;

Starts with the arrogance of Unbelief;

This sample list deals with sins of chronic behavior (not just a momentary lapse);

Paul repeats 6 from previous chapter and adds another 4 vices;

There is a connection between *idolatry* (having a wrong concept of God) and the various expressions of sin;

Homosexuality (Rom. 1) = the clearest example of how a wrong mindset leads to unrighteous behavior;

This is not an exhaustive list – Gal. 5:19-21; Ephes. 5; Reve. 21:7-8 – the destiny of the unrighteous = the lake that burns with fire – No exceptions;

1 John 3:4-10 passage is key and very parallel to this passage in 1 Cor.

Believers can commit these same sins – but only as an exception to the pattern of their lives; the one given over to these sins is not a believer – no matter what they profess; not talking about anyone losing their salvation; but an indication they were never saved in the first place

III. The Necessity of Exclusion – Why must it be this way (by inference)

A. This is what the Scripture says – 1 Jn. 2:4 – this is clear

B. What is a Christian if he is not a Follower of Christ?

How did Jesus Himself live?; you can’t have a non-disciple disciple

C. The Kingdom of God is by nature a Holy Kingdom – 1 Pet. 2:9

D. This is what true biblical conversion is = it always leads to a changed life

Leake: (:11) How Sinners Turn Into Saints – The Theology of Biblical Conversion

Introduction: Baptism is very significant – believers giving testimony to how God has worked to change their lives; but the theology expressed in these testimonies can be very poor – that is OK, because these are babes in Christ; but we need more than a testimonial understanding of what conversion is; we need the biblical theology; Paul is reminding the Corinthians: you were converted; Their basic problem = Pride – don't boast; your arrogance is not good . . . Paul first chops down their pride . . . then has to be careful to build them back up; they need to understand their conversion better and live in light of it

Answering 7 Questions About Biblical Conversion:

1. Why is Conversion Needed? *“such were some of you”*

“and” is omitted at the beginning of this verse by NASV translation – connects this verse to previous verses = the list of specific sins in vs. 9-10 = pre-conversion life; Imperfect tense shows they had persisted in these sins – Ephes. 2:1-3, 11-12; (Believers should wear t-shirts saying “Yes, we are trying to convert you!”); Matt. 18:3 – everyone must be humbled and converted leading to a transformation of life (cf. convertible car = just the top is changed back and forth); Contrary to book by Max Lucado, God doesn't like sinners and think that they are so special; Yes, He cares for us; but the Cross tells us what God thinks of our sin; God has indignation every day over sin

2. Is Genuine Conversion Possible? Or is it just pie in the sky

Great hope in this verse – they were no longer living in these sins; no psycho therapy was available back then for them; they had no Freud; Titus 2:11-12; we have to believe in God's power to save and transform; “I can't help it . . . it is an addiction” = just an excuse
God saves from the guttermost to the uttermost
Rom. 8 – *the Spirit of God is putting to death the deeds of the body*

3. What exactly is Biblical Conversion?

“but” – repeated 3 times in this verse for emphasis

This verse is all about change and transformation – a radical departure from your past; we looked earlier at the greatness of sin; now we need to look at the greatness of the transformation; an abrupt about-face

Grudem def. of Conversion = Our willing response to the gospel call in which we sincerely repent of our sins and place our faith in Jesus Christ for salvation;

Repentance and faith = 2 sides of the same coin – Acts 26:20 – Repent and turn to God – the sinner is very aware of his conversion; 2 Cor. 7:10 – a godly sorrow;

Many examples of conversion: Acts 3:19; 8:30-40; 9:4-5; 11:20-23; 14:15; 15:3

Man is active in making that real choice

Cf. the Prodigal Son

OT illustrations of conversion – Is. 55:6-7; Ezek 33:11

4. How does Man's Conversion Relate to God's Work?

1 Cor. 6:11 describes in detail what God does, not what man does (repentance and faith are just implied here) – Conversion is a work that is done mysteriously together – man's part and God's part; but man's part is only made possible by God's part; people can only convert when God is doing a work in their heart

3 Works of God which accompany the conversion of man – don't view these as chronological steps or stages – they all happen simultaneously

a) Washing – sin is dirty; we need cleansing; new life

We Americans like to be clean; this is a complete cleansing; positional truth; past tense; God is the one who accomplished the work; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet 3:21 – water baptism cannot accomplish this (only picture it); some people can be baptized but never be washed; Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:4; Acts 3:26; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25 – Conversion not possible apart from the initiating work of God; God has to grant the repentance; John 6 – the drawing work of God; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8-9; Matt. 13:11; repentance and faith not granted to everyone – Acts 18:27; 1 Cor. 12:3; Acts 16:14 shows the divine and human side working together

Not talking about self improvement;

Regeneration must take place first – below the conscious level; then conversion takes place at the conscious level; Repentance and faith must be rooted in God's initiating work of regeneration

b) Sanctifying – sin contaminates; we need to be set apart to God for His special purposes; Lev. 22:32-33; 2 Chron. 36:14; 1 Chron. 23:13; Ex. 28:4; 30:31; we are not special in ourselves, but in Christ

Passive – God did the work; not looking at a process here but at positional sanctification; instantaneous; Corinthians had a lot more growing to do; Acts 26:18; Ex 19:6; Lev. 20:26; 1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 10:10; positional must lead to practical; you are to live what you are; we can't imitate the world

c) Justifying – sin brings guilt; legal term; picture serious setting of courtroom;

How can people reject the fear of the Lord as the ultimate Judge? Rev. 4:5 = unimaginable scene; Act of God whereby He declares an unrighteous person to be righteous based on the imputed righteousness of Christ; Rom. 3:28 – not us adding love to our faith; we add nothing; Christ had to do all the work; Rom. 4:1-5
Rom. 5:1 – “having been . . .” Not “hopefully will be . . .”

5. How is Conversion Accomplished? 2 prepositions used here – Location or Means – but the meaning essentially the same

a. in the name of the Lord Jesus

all that Jesus is; includes His authority – Luke 24; Acts 4:12 – not by any other name

b. by the Spirit of God

Acts 2:33; Ps. 19:7; Rom. 3:20; Eph. 5; John 17:13

6. How is Conversion Misunderstood Today?

Cf. course on evangelism taught at Willow Creek – How to be a Contagious Christian – stems from a wrong view of conversion; failure to understand the sovereignty of God; we can't come up with a method or gimmicks to get people into the kingdom; People don't need gimmicks; they need the power of the gospel
Entire Trinity involved here; speaks to the power of God

7. What are the Evidences of Conversion? (the Results or Effects)

2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 2:19; 3:9-10; need to persevere in the faith

This is Genuine conversion; not Counterfeit; accept no cheap substitutes

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

TITLE: *GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY*

BIG IDEA:

EIGHT GUIDELINES TO ENCOURAGE BELIEVERS TO GLORIFY GOD IN OUR PHYSICAL BODY

INTRODUCTION:

Paul has been talking about the subject of avoiding sexual immorality; but this passage has a much wider application to how believers should view the physical body which the Lord has provided. Sometimes we get so caught up with the discussion of what happens with our spirit that we act as though the body is inconsequential. When you see the importance that God places on the resurrection it is evident that the physical body is quite important indeed. We have the opportunity to yield the members of our body as instruments to sin or as instruments of righteousness to glorify the Creator who has redeemed us with the precious price of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ understood the importance of His physical body:

“But a body you have prepared for Me . . . behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) to do your will, O God.” We need to actively harness our physical body to be the instrument by which we carry out the will of God here on this earth.

1. (:12a) PURSUE WHAT IS PROFITABLE, NOT JUST ALLOWABLE – IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR NEW CHRISTIAN LIBERTIES

“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable.”

A. What Things are Now Lawful that were not previously lawful under the OT Mosaic economy? What truly are our Liberties in Jesus Christ?

B. What Things May Not Be Profitable even though Lawful? And Why?

2. (:12b) AVOID ANY ADDICTIONS (MASTERIES) THAT WOULD COMPROMISE OUR FREEDOM TO GLORIFY GOD IN OUR BODY

“All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

A. How can what is Good or Pleasurable or Allowable or Lawful actually become Bad for Me?

B. Is Jesus Christ the Lord over every area in my life and every appetite of my being?

3. (:13) AVOID ANY IMMORALITY – RESPECTING THE HOLY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE LORD

“Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with

both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.”

- A. Certain Physical Appetites are Only Temporary (for this life)
- B. Our Body is Designed as an Instrument to Glorify God for All Eternity
- C. Therefore Immoral Sexual Union has far-reaching implications

Roper: "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food"--another contemporary saying in Corinth. They were saying that nature demands satisfaction. If you're hungry, you go buy a hamburger. That is a perfectly legitimate position. But you cannot infer from it that because you have a sexual drive you must immediately fulfill it. Because both food and the stomach are temporary, but the body is not. The body is not for immorality. God has a higher purpose for it. "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body." Just as a perfect body was created for Jesus Christ and became an instrument through which he displayed the character of the Father, so a body is given to us to be used not as a plaything, not as an object for self-gratification, but as an eternal instrument through which we can declare the glory of Jesus Christ.

4. (:14) LIVE A TRANSFORMED LIFE – CONSISTENT WITH THE RESURRECTION PROGRAM GOD HAS REVEALED

“Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.”

- A. The Resurrection of the Physical Body of Christ has Significance for Us
- B. Our Resurrection Will be Accomplished by the Same Power and is Therefore Certain
- C. Therefore How we Use our Bodies Matters to God

5. (:15-17) AVOID SPIRITUAL ADULTERY (SEXUAL IMMORALITY) – RESPECTING THE PRECIOUS UNION WE HAVE WITH CHRIST

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, ‘The two shall become one flesh.’ But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

- A. Our Union with Christ Extends to Our Physical Bodies
- B. Defiling Our Physical Bodies (Via Sexual Immorality) Should be Unthinkable

C. The One Flesh Relationship of Sexual Union Has Spiritual Implications

6. (:18) FLEE IMMORALITY IN LIGHT OF THE UNIQUE DANGER AND DEFILEMENT IT POSES

“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”

A. There is Only One Way to Fight Sexual Immorality = Flee It

B. Sexual Immorality Presents Unique Dangers and Defilement

Roper: I think it is because in sexual sin we prostitute our bodies by using them for a purpose other than that for which they were intended. So such sin defiles the body in a way that no other sins can.

Stedman: That is why fornication is different from other sins. Here again Paul is reflecting on what we have just commented on that human nature is different than animal nature. It has a unique capacity: it is this marvelous capacity to hold God, to be intimately related to the greatness and the majesty and the glory of God, to have God in you. That is the temple -- God dwelling in something transforms it into a temple. But fornication defiles that temple. It offers the temple to another. It brings the body of that person who is the temple into a wrong union and therefore, it is basically the sin of idolatry. That is why in Colossians and other places the apostle links together "covetousness, which is idolatry." He means sexual covetousness, the desire for another person's body, is a form of idolatry.

Now only idolatry, the worship of another god, the substitution of a rival god, defiles the temple. That is why fornication has an immediate and profound but subtle effect upon the human psyche. It dehumanizes us. It animalizes us. It brutalizes us. Those who indulge in it grow continually more coarse, less sensitive, have less regard for the welfare of another, more self-centered, more desirous of having only their own needs met -- "To hell with the rest." That is what fornication does.

Deffinbaugh: How is sexual sin uniquely a sin against the body, while other sins are just sins we commit in the body? Let me seek to illustrate this by using the analogy of a fine automobile. If I owned a magnificent Rolls Royce, there are many ways I could sin in that car. I could, for example, exceed the speed limit. I would be sinning in the car, but not sinning against it. If I were to rob a bank and use the Rolls for a getaway car, I would once again be sinning in the car. But if I needed a load of cow manure for our flower garden, and I opened the doors and shoveled that manure into the car to transport it from the barnyard to my home, that, my friend, would be sinning against the Rolls Royce.

7. (:19a) LIVE A CONSECRATED LIFE – CONSISTENT WITH THE

PRESENCE OF THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT WHO MAKES OUR BODY A TEMPLE (AND EMPOWERS US)

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God”

- A. Our Physical Body Has become a Sacred Temple Housing the Very Presence of God
- B. Do Nothing to Grieve the Indwelling Holy Spirit Who has been given as a Gift from God

8. (:19b-20) GLORIFY GOD IN OUR BODY BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN REDEEMED SO THAT WE BELONG TO GOD

“and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

- A. We Belong to God
- B. We Have Been Redeemed with a Precious Price
- C. We Need to Glorify God in Our Body

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where have we chosen in our life to forego pursuing certain activities that are lawful for us in Christ in order to maximize what might be profitable for our Christian growth or the growth of others?
- 2) What areas do we need to guard against the indulgence of our appetites or the exercise of our freedoms so that we don't allow something to have mastery over us?
- 3) Why does Paul place such importance on the resurrection of the physical body? (cf. chap. 15)
- 4) In what sense are sexual sins different from other sins?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: What Are Bodies For?

The legalist looks at life and he says, "Everything is wrong unless you can prove from a verse of Scripture that it is right." That is legalism. It is a negative approach to life; it

clamps a prohibitive hand upon everything that is fun and says it is all either illegal, immoral or fattening.

But New Testament Christianity comes at it differently. It says everything is right: God made the earth and everything in it and everything is right except what the Word of God labels is wrong. That is an entirely different point of view, opening the whole world to exploration and discovery and enjoyment, except for a very limited part that Scripture clearly labels wrong. . .

Liberty is liberty only, the apostle insists, when it is balanced between two extremes. These people in Corinth were saying, "The Law is an extreme; it makes a rigid demand on my life that I and nobody else can live up to." And that is true -- the Law is an extreme. When you begin to understand the impact and import of the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments, you find that they are so easily and quickly broken there is not an individual in the world that has ever lived up to them except the Lord Jesus himself. The Law is an extreme, Paul says, "You are right, but license is an extreme too." Feeling that the reaction to being under the Law is to be free from all law and doing whatever you like, that too, Paul says, is an extreme, and you have lost your liberty when you fall into it. "All things are lawful," he quotes, "but they are not helpful." The moment your liberty begins to hurt you or to hurt someone else, you have fallen off into license, and you are in the same kettle of fish that you were on the other side.

"Further," Paul says, "the things that are not helpful are always enslaving. I will not be brought under the power of anything." Notice how he is balancing truth so beautifully here. The things that hurt you always have a tendency to be habit forming. Have you noticed that? You tend to keep on doing them. They hurt you because they are fun. They give you a certain degree of pleasure, and that is why you do not mind the hurt so much, but that degree of pleasure is habit-forming, either physically or emotionally or in whatever way. . .

The body, apart from its digestive apparatus, has a reason and purpose in God's program, therefore, digestion is temporary. But sexuality is much more profound and touches us at a much deeper level. Sexuality, according to the Scriptures, pervades our whole humanity. It touches us not only in terms of the body, physical, but in terms of the soul, the psyche, and our social relationships with one another. Even more profoundly, sex is something that characterizes and touches us at the level of the spirit as well. . .

He points out that God has a purpose for the body beyond this present life. He says, "The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." Notice the parallel there. They were saying, "'Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.' They are obviously designed to be together, and that is right." And they were right about that. Paul says, "All right, now carry it further: the counterpart to the human body is not sex expression; it is the possession of the Lord himself -- that is what your bodies were made for. There is a dignity about humanity that is far greater than any animal can claim. Humanity is made to be indwelt by God." That is the most

exciting, the most remarkable, the most revolutionary teaching in the Word of God: We were made to be indwelt by God himself!

The body was made for the Lord and the Lord for the body. This is incredible truth, when you begin to understand what Paul is really saying here. Therefore, you cannot compare it to any kind of relationship between the stomach and food. And, as Paul brings out, God has a purpose for the body: He is going to raise it up. He raised up the body of the Lord; he will raise us up also. Sexuality that penetrates our whole being will not be expressed on the physical level in the resurrected body, but it will have its expression on the soulish and the spiritual levels. God has a purpose for it in the life to come. That is why we are given physical sex. It is designed to teach us what we are like, who we are, what our role is.

Piper: When Christ paid the price for his people, he bought our bodies. So let me try to show you from this passage of God's word what this means. What would it mean for you if you were to accept the gift of God's price and trust him with your life--your soul and your body?

It would mean six things.

1. It means that the Lord is for the body and not against it. . .
2. It would mean that your body becomes the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. . .
3. It means that your bodies would be raised from the dead. . .
4. It means that you do not have to be mastered by anything but God. . .
5. You would not use your body for immorality. . .
6. Your bodies are for the glory of God. . .

Rugh: “*Profitable*” = Primarily: how will this benefit or edify others? Characteristic of sin = it dominates and enslaves someone. These 2 issues should put restraints on my behavior. This body belongs to the Lord and is the place where the Lord wants to manifest His character. Certain bodily functions may have limited use related to this life; but the body itself transcends this life. (Phil. 3:10ff – the resurrection power) Our body is included in God’s redemptive plan.

vv15-20 “*Do you not know*” = 3 divisions to make the arguments to support vv.12-14:

1) (:15) *Your bodies are members of Christ* (not just our spirit) (Ephes. 1 – *surpassing greatness of His power*); our sufficiency for living godly lives; Gal. 2:20 – *Christ lives in me* (more than me living for Christ); the life of Christ being lived through our body right now; Inconceivable and completely appalling that we would take the members of Christ and join them to a prostitute

2) (:16-18) That same marriage relationship of oneness (much more than just a physical connection) is established when a man visits a prostitute – no such thing as casual sex or one night fling; a bond of oneness has been established; we treat matters

of immorality too lightly; this is a serious matter for anyone – but especially when a Christian is involved – taking that which is inseparably joined to Christ and joining it to this immoral bond; we cannot separate what is done with our body from our spirit; Keep on running from immorality; we don't run because we don't want to – there is pleasure in immorality; don't provide any opportunities

3) (:19-20) Your body is a temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit; true of every believer; (3:16 – talking about the corporate body of the church); You belong to God; you were bought with a price; you were slaves of sin; you have become slaves of righteousness; Rev. 5:9; you can't do what you want with “your body” – it's not yours; Positive command: Glorify God in your body; 1 Thess. 4:3; the God who indwells me empowers me

Deffinbaugh: The Relationship Between Spirituality and Sexual Morality – The immorality Paul deals with in our text is sexual immorality. Specifically, Paul addresses sexual immorality with a prostitute. It seems this particular form of immorality is widely accepted as normal and moral, as well as legal. We should remember that prostitution in Corinth is a “religious act of worship.” Corinth takes pride in the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, which has 1,000 cult prostitutes. In the name of religion, men can indulge their fleshly appetites. The Greeks have a proverb about the city of Corinth, which tells us much of its moral decay: “It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth.”⁵⁸ Those who are worldly wise use the verb “to corinthianize” to describe an act of immorality. “Corinthian girl” was a synonym for a prostitute.⁵⁹ For a Corinthian saint, concluding that whatever is legal is also moral leaves him a great deal of latitude. There isn't much he can't do under this definition of morality. . .

Verses 12-20 give the biblical basis for sexual morality, and specifically why sexual immorality is wrong for the believer. Verse 12 explains why sexual immorality is wrong for the Christian: it is an obstacle to one's spiritual growth. Verses 13-20 demonstrate that immorality is an offense against God:

Verses 13-14 Sexual immorality is an offense against God

Verses 15-17 Sexual immorality is an offense against the Lord Jesus Christ

Verses 18-20 Sexual immorality is an offense against the Holy Spirit

MacArthur: Three of the evils of sexual sin

- 1) it is harmful to everyone involved
- 2) it gains control over those who indulge in it
- 3) it perverts God's purpose for the body

Boyer: The Sacredness of the Body (vv.15-20)

- 1) Our bodies are the members of Christ (vv. 15-17)
- 2) Our bodies are permanent (v. 18)
- 3) Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (vv. 19-20)

Leake: 8 Theological Truths About the Body

Introduction: Some facts to demonstrate the complexity of the human body; proof that God created the body; could not have come about on a random basis over time. We are incomplete without our body.

Look at the parallel structure in this passage – symmetrical relationships;

Paul is warning in particular against the use of the body in any type of sexual sin; but the application has a much wider sphere of reference

Key Idea: Glorify God in Your Body

1) All things are lawful for me

(NIV translation of “*permissible*” is not that good here)

Not talking about the Roman law or natural law; but the law of God;

Not saying that every type of action is allowable because it is ultimately forgivable;

There are definitely things that God approves of and things that He prohibits; the context is important; 1 John 3:4 – unlawful things are still unlawful – don’t take this verse in the wrong way;

The context must indicate what type of restriction is in view here = Paul is talking about the ceremonial aspects of the OT Mosaic law which no longer apply to believers in the new dispensation of the church age who are under the New Covenant;

Cf. Lev. 11 – spells out which animals are clean (and can be eaten) vs. unclean (and can not be eaten) – but now we have entered a new era – Mark 7:18-19;

Ex. 31 speaks of the necessity of keeping the sabbath day holy (speaking specifically of Saturday) = a sign of the Mosaic Covenant; very strict rules for observance; very severe penalty for disobedience = death; Col. 2:16-17 shows that this law no longer applies to us today; Paul is writing as a Jew who understands the nature of Progressive Revelation;

1 Cor. 10:23-33 – Paul repeats this same phrase twice and applies it to eating certain things formerly banned; the old restrictions have been lifted in Christ;

Now in Christ work is lawful on the sabbath; play is lawful; sex is lawful; the Christian life is not intended to be viewed as primarily restrictive; we have been set free for freedom – Gal. 5:1;

Throughout church history various aberrations have developed that failed to grasp this important principle:

- **Asceticism** = harsh treatment of the body as the pathway to spirituality; cf. Col. 2:23 – Paul deals with this error (John the Baptist must be looked at for his unique role – not as normative)

- **Dualism** = everything tangible and visible is evil; crept into the church from Greek philosophy; this system of thought has impacted our thinking today;

The resurrection of Christ’s physical body is an integral part of the gospel message; emphasized more than his substitutionary atonement; likewise our bodies will be raised up from the dead;

We do not want to define Holiness in terms of non-essential external (those who don’t do X, Y or Z).

I need this body; it is God-given and important.

2) But not all things are profitable

Paul is qualifying the first truth; not rebutting it.

Not just talking about outright sin like sexual immorality – that obviously is not profitable; in fact it is destructive. Paul has a wider context in mind.

Translation of same Greek word:

- 2 Cor. 8:10 – *advantageous*

- 2 Cor. 12:1 – *profitable*

- John 18:14 – *expedient*

Some things which are allowed you still should not do because it doesn't profit you; doesn't profit others; doesn't advance the kingdom of God

Cf. Christ fasting for 40 days

We need to apply wisdom to our new freedom

Sometimes where God's law does not constrain us, we need to constrain ourselves.

When and Why?? **3 Principles:**

a) When it is more profitable to express our love for others than to work out our freedoms

1 Cor. 8:1; 10:23; 12:7

Our liberty must be qualified by love – Gal. 5:13-14

b) When it is more profitable to advance the kingdom of Christ than to express my freedoms

1 Cor. 7:35 – our society is basically selfish; we pamper ourselves

c) Same as point #3 below = We are not to be mastered by anything

3) We are not to be mastered by anything

play on words here – concept of authority, right; don't be overpowered; I don't want those things to have supremacy over me!

Paul dealing with becoming enslaved to these pleasurable things;

Tone of Determination! I will not be mastered . . .

Speaking out of confidence in God – not boasting in arrogance or in self reliance;

Psychology calls these addictions; Bible calls them mastery

Prov. 23:19-20 – restrict your freedoms where you need to; importance of accountability to other believers

Rom. 6:14; 8:13; 1 Cor. 9:26-27

Master your appetites; don't be mastered by them

4) Bodily desires are only temporary

God designed both food and stomach and they work well together; good idea; but in the future life this existing relationship will be made inoperable;

Will we still eat in our resurrected bodies? Complicated question – Christ ate in His resurrection body; 1 John 3:2 – we will be like Him; Matt. 8:11; food will be enjoyed but not needed for nourishment and sustenance

5) There are inappropriate uses of the body

One is mentioned here = immorality; like poison when it enters into your system; getting pleasure without the partnership; it is selfish and wrong – Matt. 15:19; Gal. 5:19; Ephes. 5:3 -- Wanting what you want Now; linked to greed;

Col. 3:5 – linked to idolatry; 1 Thess. 4:5; Rev. 2:14; 20; 9:21;
“But it’s my body . . . I’ll live the way I want” – It is not your body – the Creator made it; He will destroy it; your Mom didn’t make it; we are caretakers of our body;
Not that sex is wrong; we are a two-part being = a body and soul = a unit; 1 Cor. 7:2;
Prov. 5 – “rejoice in the wife of your youth”;
Cf. Hollywood headlines – these people are not experts on relationships

6) The body is for the Lord

Dative of Advantage – for the service of the Lord and His purposes; Instrument He uses; a temple consecrated; dedicated to honor and praise of God; God indwells it; what happens in the body affects the soul;
Cf. martyrs = gave their life; cf Paul – suffered greatly for Christ 2 Cor. 11:25; Esther 4:15-16 – putting her life on the line for the kingdom;
Mary: Behold the bondservant . . . may it be done unto me . . .
Christ: giving up His body;
Don’t pamper your body but prepare it for service; Buffet your body; Say No to your body; present your body to the Lord at the beginning of the day; be willing to serve even when the body hurts

7) The Lord is for the body

Especially show in the resurrection; my God cares about my aching body – very comforting; Ex. 33:19 – the Goodness of God; Deut. 30:9; 1 Chron. 16:34; Ps. 34:8; 36:7-9; 52:9; 73:1; 100:5; 145:9; James 1:17
Then why am I sick, injured, suffering?? Because God is against sin – Rom. 8:22-23; pain at present; but the redemption of the body is ahead; God will make all things new

8) There is a glorious future for the body (:14)

Reincarnation is inferior to resurrection – Why would you want that?
Acts 2:27 – the body of Jesus was important to God – He would not let it see decay; Is. 26:19; Dan. 12:1-3 = resurrection in the OT
John 6:39-40; 11:25; Acts 24:14-15; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15: 12-22; 2 Cor. 4:14; Phil. 3:10-11; 1 Thess. 4:16; Heb. 11:17-19; Rev. 1:17-18; 20
Guaranteed resurrection; the Jews took very good care of the body at death; prepared it for waking up at the resurrection
What type of body will it be?
Not perishable, powerful, shine with brightness; be able to move about freely without wings; no decay;
Compare God having to judge the body of some – Lot’s wife; people in Noah’s day; May that not be you! Give Him your body now!
The first resurrection is blessed;
The second is unto damnation = torture in the lake of fire forever;
Please God in our body

Leake: 10 Myths About Sex

Introduction: Nobody likes to be lied to; Satan is the father of lies

1) Sex is purely a private decision

We are joined to Christ; don't dishonor Christ; public implications of this private act

2) God is unconcerned with my sex life

Live and let live; what's the big deal?

Body = temple of Holy Spirit; Sex is a beautiful and powerful drive; designed by our Creator; celebrated in Lev. 18; Song of Solomon;

Even the land is concerned with sexual perversion and knows better and will spew out offenders; note that one of the 10 Commandments = Thou shalt not commit adultery

3) There is nothing wrong with casual sex

Vegas: What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas

But sex creates a special union; not come and go as you please;

You cannot casually have children; sex should follow a promise of a life of commitment

4) We should test sexual compatibility before marriage

If you have the parts and they work, you have compatibility;

Why did arranged marriages in different cultures work so well??

Picture is one of glueing people together – you don't experiment with glue.

5) You can practice safe sex

Only 2 categories = Sanctified sex or immoral sex

Immorality always carries with it spiritual harm; cf. how smug people are who are engaging in these sins; no fear of God

6) Flirting with sex is not bad, just the act

Flee immorality is the only option = Run, keep running, don't look back.

Drastic measures are required; not mild adjustments – Rom. 13:14; 2 Tim. 2:22

Powerful fire – easily lit and hard to extinguish;

Don't try to rationalize your behavior

7) Sexual sins are just like every other sin

Text does not say that it is the worst sin; but it does unique damage; violates your own body; not a sin to be trifled with

Confess; get it out in the open

8) Since others get away with it, so can I

They didn't really get away with it! Gal. 6:7

God knows when someone messes up in His tabernacle

9) Since all my sins are forgiven, no big deal if I commit sexual sin

You are not your own; redeemed with a price; need to be a servant of righteousness

10) I can't help sexual sin – I'm addicted

"Glorify God in your body" would be a cruel command if there was no hope and no

power for obedience

For the Christian, there is a greater Master than the Master of sin;

As we compromise we drift and our conscience is seared; we move away from God;

Luke 15:20 – Prodigal Son = God delights to receive us back; but better not to drift away

Conclusion: The Cure for lies = the Truth

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

TITLE: *CELIBACY OR SEXUAL UNION IN MARRIAGE?*

BIG IDEA:

APART FROM THE GIFT OF CELIBACY, THE CONSISTENT PATTERN OF SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE MARRIAGE UNION PROTECTS FROM TEMPTATION TO IMMORALITY

INTRODUCTION:

Temptation to Immorality is all around us. Apparently this was true for the Corinthians back in Paul's day just as it is true for us today. After the hormones kick in for a young man, the clock starts ticking and the intensity of the temptation and need for self control increase dramatically. Some individuals like the Apostle Paul have been granted the gift of celibacy from God. They still need to exercise self control. But marriage is equally a gift and provides the God-ordained context for sexual relationships – between one man and one woman in a lifelong covenant union. But even that does not make one immune from sexual temptation. There still must be that growth in intimacy and the sharing of one's life with one's partner along with the discipline of self control.

How do you know whether you have the gift of celibacy (or the calling to stay single and minister from that standpoint)? Even if you have not been married for twenty years, do you ever come to that point of conviction where you have confidence that God desires for you to remain single your entire life? *"Each man has his own gift from God."* (I am thankful for my gift!)

I. (:1) CELIBACY CAN BE A GOOD THING – IF THAT IS GOD'S GIFT (CALLING) FOR YOU (CONSISTENT WITH THE MINISTRY HE HAS FOR YOU)

A. Context = Corinthians raising some key questions

"Now concerning the things about which you wrote"

Maybe some were advocating celibacy on much too widespread a basis; taking a legalistic approach – that given the seriousness of sexual immorality, let's just rule sex as taboo and move on ...

Apparently they were not too squeamish to put this question in writing; they were very frank about the need to have clarity regarding sexual issues

Stedman: You will remember from the first part of this letter that there were three young men who had come from the church in Corinth to Ephesus, where Paul was, bringing with them a report on the conditions of the church. (Their names, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, are given to us in the last chapter of this letter.) They also brought with them a letter from the church, asking the apostle certain questions.

B. Characterization of Celibacy as a Good Thing

“It is good for a man not to touch a woman.”

Hard to argue against this – look at the example of Christ

But that is not the end of the discussion; it is a much more involved issue; that only answers the question for those few (usually in the minority) who have been granted this gift from God

II. (:2) MONOGAMOUS MARRIAGE MORE COMMONLY IS GOD’S PROVISION FOR SEXUAL FULFILLMENT AND AVOIDANCE OF IMMORALITY

A. Context = Pervasive Pressure of the Temptation to Immorality

“But because of immoralities”

MacArthur: Marriage cannot be reduced simply to being God’s escape valve for the sex drive. Paul does not suggest that Christians go out and find another Christian to marry only to keep from getting into moral sin. He had a much higher view of marriage than that (see Eph. 5:22-23). His purpose here is to stress the reality of the sexual temptations of singleness and to acknowledge that they have a legitimate outlet in marriage.

B. Characterization of Monogamous Marriage as a Good Thing = God’s Provision

“each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.”

Interesting TV interview this past week – reported embedded in polygamous Mormon community in Arizona. He interviewed all segments of that community. Very disturbing to see how the truth can be twisted and then the biblical roles of husband and wife impugned as a result.

This verse clearly spells out a one-to-one relationship; and that is one husband to one wife; no allowance for same sex unions; no allowance for masturbation or any other sexual perversions

Wayne Mack: Sexual relations within marriage are holy and good (Heb. 13:4). God encourages sexual relations and warns against the temptations that may arise from deprivation or cessation. (principles quoted from **Harry H. McGee**, M.D., in the booklet, *“The Scriptures, Sex and Satisfaction”* – quoted by Mack in Strengthening Your Marriage)

Wayne Mack: Sexual relationships are equal and reciprocal.

III. (:3-5) THE CONSISTENT PATTERN OF SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE MARRIAGE UNION MUST BE MAINTAINED

A. (:3-4) Sexual Relations in Marriage Involve Mutual Obligations and Rights

1. (:3) Both Spouses Have an Obligation to Sexually Satisfy One Another

*“The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife,
and likewise also the wife to her husband.”*

2. (:4) Both Spouses Have a Right Over Each Other’s Body

*“The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband
does
and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own
body, but the wife does.”*

Wayne Mack: Pleasure in sexual relations (like pleasure in eating or in the performance of other bodily functions) is not forbidden but rather assumed when Paul writes that the bodies of both parties belong to one another (cf. also Prov 5:18-19 and Song of Solomon).

Wayne Mack: Sexual pleasure is to be regulated by the key principle that one’s sexuality does not exist for himself or for his own pleasure, but for his partner. . . Every self-oriented manifestation of sex is sinful and lustful rather than holy and loving. Homosexuality and masturbation thereby are condemned along with other self-oriented activities within marriage. In sex as in every other aspect of life, it is *“more blessed to give than to receive.”* The greatest pleasure comes from satisfying one’s spouse.

Wayne Mack: The principle of mutual satisfaction means that each party is to provide the sexual enjoyment which is *“due”* his or her spouse whenever needed. But, of course, other biblical principles (e.g., the principle of moderation), and the principle that one never seeks to satisfy himself but his partner in marriage always regulates the frequency in such a way that no one ever makes unreasonable demands upon another. Requests for sexual satisfaction may never be governed by an idolatrous lust, but neither may such regulation be used as an excuse for failing to sense and satisfy a partner’s genuine need.

B. (:5) Depriving Your Partner of Sexual Relations Only Proper in Special Circumstances

“Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Wayne Mack: Sexual relations are to be regular and continuous. No exact number of times per week is advised, but the principle that both parties are to provide such adequate satisfaction that both *“burning”* (unfulfilled sexual desire) and the temptation to find satisfaction elsewhere are avoided.

Wayne Mack: There is to be no sexual bargaining (“I’ll not have relations unless you . . .”) Neither party has the right to make such bargains.

Deffinbaugh: Unfortunately, I have known of situations in which “prayer” was the excuse of one mate for avoiding sex with the other. Who can be more pious than one who gives up sex for prayer? And who can be so unspiritual as to criticize anyone for neglecting their sex life to enhance their prayer life? It is the ultimate spiritual “lion in the road” (to use an expression from the Book of Proverbs). A “lion in the road” is a compelling reason (excuse) for avoiding what one really doesn’t want to do. If the truth were known, a healthy sexual relationship between a man and his wife may facilitate a richer prayer life. I say this on the basis of Peter’s words in 1 Peter 3:7 “*You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*” Surely “living with one’s wife in an understanding way” includes the sexual relationship. A sexually frustrated and irritated mate is not a good prayer partner.

IV. (:6-7) CELIBACY REMAINS A GOOD THING FOR THOSE WHOM GOD HAS SO GIFTED

MacArthur: “Paul was very aware of the God-ordained advantages of both singleness and marriage, and was not commanding marriage because of the temptation of singleness. Spirituality is not connected at all to marital status, though marriage is God’s good gift (see 1 Pet 3:7, “*the grace of life*”).

A. (:6) Marriage Not Commanded

“But this I say by way of concession, not of command.”

B. (:7a) Celibacy = Paul’s Personal Preference

“Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am.”

C. (:7b) God’s Calling and Giftedness = the Determining Factor

“However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) On what basis do Catholics maintain that their clergy must remain celibate? How would the Apostle Paul have addressed that issue?
- 2) Is Paul saying that marriage was just instituted as a safeguard against immorality?
- 3) Should husbands have a greater right to sexual satisfaction than their wives?
- 4) How does a person who is currently single but desires to be married remain content during this stage of life?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Question #1 on their list seems to be something like this: "In view of the sexual temptations we face in Corinth, is it perhaps better to take a vow of celibacy, to renounce marriage for life, and to withdraw from all contact with the opposite sex?" And Paul's answer is given to us in this very first verse: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman."

Now that question probably arose from the difficulty that some were having with handling their sexual drives. They were living in a sexually-oriented society, very much like what we have in California today. They were facing exposure to temptation in these areas every time they turned around, just as we do today, and some of them were reacting, and saying, "Well, rather than struggle all the time, why not just forget the whole thing and get away from the opposite sex and live as a monk?" (They did not use that term then, perhaps, but that is what it has come to mean.)

You will recognize that this is an attitude that is commonly felt and held. This gave rise to monasticism in the Middle Ages, a very popular practice at that time. People withdrew from all contact in this area, viewing sex itself as defiling, dirty, and unworthy. They viewed the celibate state as a higher level of spirituality. They moved out of the world and built monasteries where men could live among themselves and women could live among themselves in a way that would remove them from all contact, and hopefully (they thought) all struggle in this area. But it did not work, and it never will work. It never is God's intention for the sexes to live separately -- he made them in the beginning to be together. Monasticism proved to be a disaster, as it always proves. You cannot run away from drives that are within you, and Scripture recognizes this.

This question of theirs expressed the idea that, since sex drives create so many problems, it is best to get away and forget it all, and the apostle's answer is that there is nothing wrong with celibacy; it is all right to be single. He stresses that right at the beginning. Nevertheless, he says, because of fornications and the temptations that abound, marriage is preferable in a climate like Corinth. Some have taken that to mean that Paul had a very low view of marriage -- that it was a kind of "second best" state of affairs -- but, when people feel that way, they have missed the whole thrust of this passage; they have ignored the context around it. . .

Here the apostle says **three things about sex within marriage**. They are very important things, and we will take them one by one:

The first one is suggested here in these opening two verses. **Sex within marriage, the apostle says, does permit relief from sexual pressures.** Now he does not suggest that you should get married in order to be free from sex drives. That should not be the major

reason for marriage, and no part of Scripture ever teaches it as such. What the apostle is saying is that, when you are married, it does free you in this area. It helps to be married when you live in a sex-oriented society. . .

Having said that marriage is a way of relieving sexual pressures, Paul now says something else very significant. He says **sex in marriage is designed of God to teach us something about ourselves, and to fulfill a missing need in our partners**. You see this in Verses 3-5: . . .

Not once does he ever suggest that you have the right to demand sex from your mate. What he says is that what you have the right to do is to give him or her, as a gift from you, the fulfillment of these sexual desires -- and the responsibility you have is not to your mate, but to the Lord to do so. It is a matter that Paul puts on the basis of the relationship that a believer has with his or her Lord, and it is the Lord who asks us to give this gift to our mates in marriage, and thus to make it a basis of mutual fulfillment and satisfaction. In other words, sex in marriage is a gift that you are to freely offer to each other. It is not a selfish, self-centered satisfying of your own desire. . .

Now he says a third thing about sex in marriage that is very important, Verses 6 and 7:

I say this by way of concession, not of command. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. {1 Cor 7:6-7 RSV}

In other words, what Paul is saying is that **sex in marriage manifests a special gift of God**. Marriage itself is a gift from God, just as singleness is, and some have one gift and some another, but both express some unique quality about God himself that is intended to be manifested by that state.

Piper: Satan Uses Sexual Desire

1. CELIBACY IS A GIFT TO BE CELEBRATED. . .

Paul was so completely committed to a life of celibacy that he longed for everyone to have it. But the reason he loved the single life is exactly the opposite of why many people today love singleness and will even break up marriages in order to be single again. Today singleness is cherished by many because it brings maximum freedom for self-realization. You pull your own strings. No one cramps your style.

But Paul cherished his singleness because it put him utterly at the disposal of the Lord Jesus. No wife and children had to be taken into account when the mission for Christ was dangerous. No money had to be spent on clothing and educating little Paul junior. No time had to be taken preserving and cultivating his relation to his wife. . .

2. CELIBACY IS NOT FOR EVERYBODY . . .

3. MARRIAGE IS A DAM AGAINST THE FLOOD OF FORNICATION AND ADULTERY. . .

He does not say that getting engaged is the solution to sexual temptation. He does not say that a verbal commitment prior to marriage justifies the act of sexual intercourse. He says, "If your desire for sexual relations with your fiancé is that strong, go ahead, get married. Marriage is God's appointed dam against the flood of fornication in the world. You can't commit fornication after you are married.

But you can commit adultery. Which is why Paul goes on to show that marriage is also meant to be a dam against adultery. Verses 3-5 . . .

Besides frequency of sexual relations and attractiveness to each other, satisfaction also depends, in the third place, on the overall quality of the relationship. If there is anger or bitterness or resentment or hurt feelings, we don't usually touch each other, let alone embrace. . .

4. SATAN USES SEXUAL DESIRE.

There is a very simple truth at work here: the more strongly we feel sexual desire the more susceptible we are to being deceived that it is not wrong to satisfy it through fornication or adultery or masturbation. This same truth holds in all the areas of our lives: the stronger our desire for some satisfaction, the more vulnerable we are to being deceived about what is right and wrong in the way we try to satisfy that desire. . .

The only way to fight the lie of sinful pleasure is with the truth of righteous pleasure. When you come to know God fully -- that "in his presence is fullness of joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore," then you will have conquered Satan once for all. He is a liar and has no power over those who know God in truth.

Zeisler: I believe Paul was once married. It is therefore safe to say that he is not writing here as a theoretical observer, as it were, of marriage. Although it is obvious from this and others of his writings that he was not married during the years of his Christian ministry, as a one-time member of the Sanhedrin of the Jews, marriage would have been a requirement for him. Some have felt that the apostle's wife abandoned him when he came to faith in Christ. He later speaks in this chapter of an unbelieving spouse who will not consent to live with his mate. That, perhaps, was an experience which he himself suffered. In any case, Paul is quite at home writing about sex and marriage. . .

To ensure your mate's sexual fulfillment, it is necessary to talk, to listen, to know, to understand and spend time with him or her. In order to do what the apostle Paul commands here, husbands and wives need to be willing to learn all the other wisdom that makes marriage function and flourish. In this pithy word of advice to married couples, the apostle is opening the door to his readers' learning to be lovers at every level, because one thing is contingent upon the other. Paul's counsel requires one to listen, to communicate, to be sensitive, in order to give the gift that one is commanded to give.

Jeffries: Paul enlarges his consideration of the issue of celibacy in v.3-6 and in so doing must have surely surprised his readers with his frank discussion of married sex. It is clear that some in the church at Corinth were of the opinion that married couples who were completely dedicated to God's service should abstain from sexual relations even within their marriage. Paul can imagine only a very limited role for such abstinence.

Deffinbaugh: Sex and the Spiritual Christian

The ascetics of the Corinthian church have over-reacted to the immorality of that day, concluding that all sex is dirty and should be avoided, even within marriage. When Paul says, "*It is good for a man not to touch a woman,*" I think he is repeating the position held by the Corinthian ascetics. This was their slogan. Paul repeats the statement, not because he agrees with it in its entirety, but because he agrees with it in part. He will shortly set out to clarify the circumstances in which celibacy could serve a beneficial purpose. I am going to advance to verses 6-9 at this point to suggest just how sexual abstinence could be beneficial. I do this because the main thrust of verses 1-7 is to address the role of sex within marriage. Later verses will expand upon the benefits a celibate lifestyle can produce. . .

I understand celibacy to be the conscious choice to control one's sexual desires and to remain single so that one's gifts and calling may be more effectively utilized. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. Apostleship, along with other gifts, was bestowed upon Paul at the time of his conversion. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Paul to carry out his calling if he had been married and the father of a number of children. Can you imagine a family man going from city to city, living in one home and then another, sometimes being self-supporting, and other times living on the gifts of others? Can you see Paul's wife and family being cast into prison with him, or being left alone without any support? Celibacy was the ideal state for a man like Paul, who had his gifts and calling. I think that is what Paul means when he says, "... each man has his own gift, one in this manner, and another in that." We might paraphrase Paul's words in this way: "Each man has his own gifts and calling, which are carried out in one manner or another, some serving God through marriage, and some serving Him through remaining single." Some ministries are conducted much better in the context of marriage and the family. Paul would have trouble, for example, showing hospitality. Whether one chooses to marry or to remain single should be determined on how that person's gift and calling can best be fulfilled. For some, this will mean marriage (and all that comes with it, like the pleasures and responsibilities of sex); for some it may mean celibacy (with the freedom and undistracted life that comes with it).

Staying single (and thus sexually inactive) may be the calling of some. If it is your calling, it is for the glory of God and for the promotion of the gospel. But the single life and sexual abstinence is not the rule, as Paul knows. And so in verses 2-5, we find Paul speaking of the role of sex in marriage. . .

Sexuality and spirituality are very closely related. Paul calls for each of us who knows God through Jesus Christ to elevate our sexuality to the standard God has set, to make sexuality an expression of our spirituality to the glory of God, and ultimately for our

good.

Boyer: To marry, or not to marry, is not a matter of right and wrong, of duty, of commandment. Either state is permissible. God has given no command. . . Some have the gift of foregoing the blessings of married life for the sake of the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 19:10-12). Others have the gift of being married and establishing a home, serving God in that way. The decision as to whether a person should get married or not should be made in the light of the gift which God has given him.

Pastor Thomas Leake: Answering 5 Strategic and Fundamental Questions about Marriage (7:1-16)

Introduction:

Review of the overall argument of the book of 1 Corinthians – Corrections in the Church. 7:1 marks a transition as Paul calms down a bit and the tone changes to less rebuking.

Note: When Paul says certain things came from him rather than as a command from the Lord he does not mean that what he says what not inspired and authoritative. He is only referring to the verbal teaching that Christ gave while on the earth.

Note the repeated use of *peri de* to introduce various sections of the book (7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12)

Context: Dealing with issues of sex and marriage flowing out of the end of chapter 6. It is difficult to pinpoint the specific circumstances to which he was addressing his pastoral counsel; but this is not systematic theology designed to cover all of the aspects of marriage. Maybe the different groups were applying types of pressure on the other groups – married vs. singles. Maybe some of the married were advocating some type of ascetic refraining from sexual relationships even in marriage. Celibacy had certainly become attractive to a certain group.

Major principle: stay as you were called. All states have their place.

Questions for us to try to answer:

- What was Paul teaching them in their situation?
- What underlying principles can we glean?
- How can we apply these principles to our situation today?

Question 1: (:1) Do Christians have to marry?

Cf. pressure from ascetics to stay single vs pressure from Jewish emphasis on the need to marry;

“Good” does not mean the only good or even the highest good;

“suitable, appropriate, pleasing” – It is OK to marry; permissible

From Genesis we learned that it is not good for man to be alone; but it should not be our goal to get every single person married! Apostle Paul testified that he was able to accomplish much as a single man (1 Cor. 9:5).

Question 2: (:2, 9) Why get married?

(For those already married, too late to revisit this question!)

Marriage is the more general condition that applies to most of mankind. Celibacy is more of the exception to the rule. 1 Tim. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:4

Some groups were more ascetic and overly restrictive; some groups were more loose; problem was there was pride in both camps – viewing their state as superior; putting others down; making man-made rules; some were viewing sex as carnal and filthy – even in marriage; legitimate concern for immoralities in Corinth – Prov. 5:15-23; importance of channeling sex into the proper channels

But there are other reasons to get married not covered in this context:

- partnership, companionship – so you think and act as one person
- picture the relationship between Christ and the church – husband must learn to Love; put aside selfishness; wife must learn to submit and obey
- procreation – passing the faith from generation to generation (Ps. 127:3)

Deut. 6:11 – shows how much we should be talking about God’s Word

Note: no legitimacy to claims of homosexuals – biology should be proof enough ... but apparently it is not – marriage is between one man and one woman for life

Question 3: (:3-5) What is God’s Design for Married Partners

Mutual sharing and intimacy; a oneness; celibacy is wrong for married partners; each has a duty to give his/her body to the other partner; not just a good thing but an obligation; an equality of the sexes in terms of how Paul treats the subject – very striking for their culture; radical from the Roman male point of view

Possible Problems that may need to be addressed:

- Physical problems – see a doctor
- Emotional issues – relax; be patient; love conquers fear
- Celebrate physical romantic love (cf. Song of Solomon) – don’t ignore it or treat it as something bad
- Selfishness – often the male partner is just interested in getting what he wants; women can be treated as sex objects
- Some people just treat romance as a waste of time; but it enhances the overall oneness of the marriage relationship
- Some abuse or traumatic experience earlier in life – Can’t keep living as a victim; must realize that God’s instructions are for your good and designed to help you, not hurt you; believe that you are a new Creation in Christ; trust Him in your situation
- All excuses deny God’s power and resist God’s will

The 1 Exception to regular pattern of sexual relationships in marriage:

Prayer – the spiritual pursuit of God; intense focus on God; Ps. 63:1; but only for a time and only by mutual consent; what type of burden would apply here? Ex. 19:9-15 – not for an extended time like months

Concession applies to what antecedent?? “This” I say – what does “this” refer to?

- the time of prayer itself
- more likely = vs 2 – Paul not commanding believers to marry

Question 4: (:7-9) What Factors should I weigh before getting married?

1) How can I best serve God? Married or Unmarried?

Paul probably never married (although some think that he was a widower). But

not anti-marriage. "I wish that you were like me" = in a good state; not an inferior position; Paul certainly got a lot done for the kingdom of God; 7:32 – undistracted devotion to the Lord; Don't just assume you need to be married

- 2) What gift do I have from God? Marriage = the norm
Being single, satisfied and productive = a gift from God
How can I determine this?
- Do I burn with passion?
- Do I have self control over my passions?

Our society puts a lot of pressure on singles to get married.

- 3) What are the times in which I live?
7:26 – persecution in the air at Corinth; would present difficulties for wife and children; times of unrest; cf. Jewish regulation that a man was not allowed to go off to war until after 1 year of marriage

- 4) What about some personal issues?
- How old and mature am I?
- Am I ready as a husband to provide for and take care of a wife?
- Where am I going to live?

Only 1 restriction = vs. 39 – must marry in the Lord; not to an unbeliever; needs to have a clear testimony in word and deed; great freedom within that one constraint; Marry whomever you want! Not some mystical attempt to determine the perfect dot of God's will; Trust God's instructions for marriage

Question 5: (:10) When is Divorce and Remarriage Allowed?

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:8-16

TITLE: *SINGLENESSE . . . MARRIAGE . . . DIVORCE . . . REMARRIAGE*

BIG IDEA:

DIFFERENT SITUATIONS CALL FOR DIFFERENT DIVINE INSTRUCTION REGARDING SINGLENESSE, MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE (AND REMARRIAGE)

3 GROUPS ADDRESSED:

I. (:8-9) INSTRUCTIONS TO THE UNMARRIED AND TO WIDOWS – EITHER SINGLENESSE OR THE MARRIED STATE MAY BE A VIABLE OPTION

A. (:8) Value of Remaining Single and Devoted to the Lord's Service

1. Source of This Instruction

"But I say"

These instructions came from Paul by inspiration rather than merely repeating the earthly teaching of Jesus – but both types of instruction equal in authority

2. Subjects of This Instruction

"to the unmarried and to widows"

Those who had been legitimately divorced would be included here in the general category of the unmarried

"Unmarried" – 2 Possibilities

1) More restricted sense -- **MacArthur** argues that the *"unmarried"* refers only to those formerly married (in contrast to the *"virgins"* of vs 25) and thus would be those who had been legitimately divorced (as distinguished here from *"widows"*) ...

2) Broader application -- but I would agree with **Lenski** here in its broader application: "The term *'unmarried'* really includes all individuals mentioned in this first group, yet *kai* adds *'widows.'* This conjunction is often used thus to single out a part from a whole in order to give it special attention. Widows might, indeed, have special reasons for thinking their state a sad one and thus for desiring to have it changed."

3. Substance of This Instruction

"that it is good for them if they remain even as I."

B. (:9) Freedom to Marry and Protect Against Sexual Temptation

"But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

Again this is not comprehensive teaching or systematic teaching covering all of the reasons to marry; His emphasis in this section has been dealing with sexual temptation and the physical aspect of the relationship

II. (:10-11) INSTRUCTIONS TO THOSE UNITED IN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE – DON'T DIVORCE YOUR SPOUSE

(Both spouses are believers here since their situation is contrasted with the next group which deals with mixed marriages – a believer with an unbeliever)

(Not looking here at the exception clause from Matt 19 – not covering the whole realm of systematic theology regarding marriage.)

A. (:10) Stay Married

1. Source of This Instruction

“I give instructions, not I, but the Lord”

Paul here is repeating and emphasizing (still by inspiration) teaching that the Lord had given personally during His earthly ministry

2. Subjects of This Instruction

“But to the married”

3. Substance of This Instruction

“that the wife should not leave her husband”

“and that the husband should not divorce his wife”

B. (:11) Don't Compound the Sin Problem

“(but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband)”

Otherwise she also commits the sin of adultery ... since she is not legitimately divorced and thus not free to remarry

Reconciliation is only an option if neither has remarried.

III. (:12-16) INSTRUCTIONS TO BELIEVERS WITH UNBELIEVING SPOUSES – MAINTAIN THE MARRIAGE IF POSSIBLE

A. (:12-13) Command: Do Not Initiate (Push for) Divorce

1. Additional Situation not covered By Christ's Teaching

“But to the rest I say, not the Lord”

2. Applies to Both the Believing Husband and the Believing Wife

a. Command to the Believing Husband in Mixed Marriage

“that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.”

b. Command to the Believing Wife in Mixed Marriage

“And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.”

MacArthur: Some believers must have felt that being married to an unbeliever was somehow defiling. However, just the opposite is true.

B. (:14) Cause and Effect Principle: Appreciate the Opportunity for Godly Influence in the Home

1. Application to the Unbelieving Spouse

a. Godly Influence on the Unbelieving Husband

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife”

b. Godly Influence on the Unbelieving Wife

“and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband”

2. Application to the Children of the Mixed Marriage

a. Less Opportunity for Influence in Broken Home

“for otherwise your children are unclean,”

b. Greater Opportunity for Influence in United Home

“but now they are holy.”

C. (:15) Clarification: Divorce Appropriate When Initiated (Pursued) by the Unbeliever

1. Let the Unbeliever Go

“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave;”

2. Called to Peace, not Bondage

a. Not under Bondage

“the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases,”

b. Called to Peace

“but God has called us to peace”

D. (:16) Caution: Don't Presume that Your Influence Will Save Your Spouse

1. Application to the Believing Wife

“For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband?”

2. Application to the Believing Husband

“Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”

Grosheide: Bondage and quarreling which are certain need not be accepted in order to achieve a highly uncertain goal.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why is there so much confusion and disagreement among Bible-believing Christians

in this area?

- 2) What is our attitude towards divorced people in the church?
- 3) Why does Paul neglect the exception clause of Matt 19 in his discussion here?
- 4) How does one maximize their godly influence in a mixed marriage state – trying to impact their spouse and their children?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Instone-Brewer: **What God Has Joined**

What does the Bible really teach about divorce?

David Instone-Brewer | posted 10/05/2007 08:39AM

I was being interviewed for what would be my first church pastorate, and I was nervous and unsure what to expect. The twelve deacons sat in a row in front of me and took turns asking questions, which I answered as clearly as I could. All went smoothly until they posed this question: "What is your position on divorce and remarriage? Would you remarry a divorcée or divorced man?"

I didn't know if this was a trick question or an honest one. There might have been a deep-seated pastoral

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need behind it, or it might have been a test of my orthodoxy. Either way, I didn't think I could summarize my view in one sentence; when I thought about it further, I couldn't decide exactly what my view was. I gave a deliberately vague reply. "Every case should be judged on its own merits."

It worked; I got the job. But I made a mental note to study the subject of divorce, and to do it quickly.

It's a good thing I did. As it turned out, I was surrounded by people who needed answers to questions raised by divorce and remarriage. My Baptist church was located near an Anglican congregation and two Catholic churches. Divorced men and women from these congregations came asking if we would conduct their weddings, having been denied in their local churches. Then I found that some of my deacons had been divorced and remarried. Should I throw them out of church leadership? If I did, I would lose people I considered some of the most spiritual in the church, people with exemplary Christian homes and marriages.

What Does the Bible Say?

The New Testament presents a problem in understanding both what the text says about divorce and its pastoral implications. Jesus appears to say that divorce is allowed only if adultery has occurred: "Whoever divorces a wife, except for sexual indecency, and remarries, commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9). However, this has been interpreted in many different ways. Most say that Jesus allows divorce only for adultery. But some argue that Jesus originally didn't allow even that. Only in Matthew does he offer an out from

marriage: "except for sexual indecency." Beyond what Jesus says, Paul also allows divorce. He permits it for abandonment by a nonbeliever (1 Cor. 7:12-15). Many theologians add this as a second ground for divorce.

Yet some pastors have found this teaching difficult to accept, because it seems so impractical—even cruel in certain situations. It suggests there can be no divorce for physical or emotional abuse, and Paul even seems to forbid separation (1 Cor. 7:10).

As a result, some Christians quietly ignore this seemingly "impractical" biblical teaching or find ways around it. For example, they suggest that when Jesus talked about "sexual immorality," perhaps he included other things like abuse. Or when Paul talked about abandonment by a nonbeliever, perhaps he included any behavior that is not supportive of the marriage or abandonment by anyone who is *acting* like a nonbeliever. Many have welcomed such stretching of Scripture because they couldn't accept what they believed the text apparently said.

But does the literal text mean what we think it does? While doing doctoral studies at Cambridge, I likely read every surviving writing of the rabbis of Jesus' time. I "got inside their heads" enough to begin to understand them. When I began working as a pastor and was confronted almost immediately with divorced men and women who wanted to remarry, my first response was to re-read the Bible. I'd read the biblical texts on divorce many times in the past, but I found something strange as I did so again. They now said something I hadn't heard before I read the rabbis!

'Any Cause' Divorce

The texts hadn't changed, but my knowledge of the language and culture in which they were written had. I was now reading them like a first-century Jew would have read them, and this time those confusing passages made more sense. My book, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church* (InterVarsity Press), is a summary of several academic papers and books I began writing with this new understanding of what Jesus taught.

One of my most dramatic findings concerns a question the Pharisees asked Jesus: "Is it lawful to divorce a wife for any cause?" (Matt. 19:3). This question reminded me that a few decades before Jesus, some rabbis (the Hillelites) had invented a new form of divorce called the "any cause" divorce. By the time of Jesus, this "any cause" divorce had become so popular that almost no one relied on the literal Old Testament grounds for divorce.

The "any cause" divorce was invented from a single word in Deuteronomy 24:1. Moses allowed divorce for "a cause of immorality," or, more literally, "a thing of nakedness." Most Jews recognized that this unusual phrase was talking about adultery. But the Hillelite rabbis wondered why Moses had added the word "thing" or "cause" when he only needed to use the word "immorality." They decided this extra word implied another ground for divorce—divorce for "a cause." They argued that anything, including a burnt meal or wrinkles not there when you married your wife, could be a cause! The text, they said, taught that divorce was allowed both for adultery and for "any cause."

Another group of rabbis (the Shammaites) disagreed with this interpretation. They said Moses' words were a single phrase that referred to no type of divorce "except

immorality"—and therefore the new "any cause" divorces were invalid. These opposing views were well known to all first-century Jews. And the Pharisees wanted to know where Jesus stood. "Is it lawful to divorce your wife for any cause?" they asked. In other words: "Is it lawful for us to use the 'any cause' divorce?"

When Jesus answered with a resounding no, he wasn't condemning "divorce for any cause," but rather the newly invented "any cause" divorce. Jesus agreed firmly with the second group that the phrase didn't mean divorce was allowable for "immorality" and for "any cause," but that Deuteronomy 24:1 referred to no type of divorce "except immorality."

This was a shocking statement for the crowd and for the disciples. It meant they couldn't get a divorce whenever they wanted it—there had to be a lawful cause. It also meant that virtually every divorced man or women was not really divorced, because most of them had "any cause" divorces. Luke and Matthew summarized the whole debate in one sentence: Any divorced person who remarried was committing adultery (Matt. 5:32; Luke 16:18), because they were still married. The fact that they said "any divorced person" instead of "virtually all divorced people" is typical Jewish hyperbole—like Mark saying that "everyone" in Jerusalem came to be baptized by John (Mark 1:5). It may not be obvious to us, but their first readers understood clearly what they meant. Within a few decades, however, no one understood these terms any more. Language often changes quickly (as I found out when my children first heard the Flintstones sing about "a gay old time"). The early church, and even Jewish rabbis, forgot what the "any cause" divorce was, because soon after the days of Jesus, it became the only type of divorce on offer. It was simply called divorce. This meant that when Jesus condemned "divorce for 'any cause,'" later generations thought he meant "divorce for any cause."

Reaffirming marriage

Now that we know what Jesus did reject, we can also see what he *didn't* reject. He wasn't rejecting the Old Testament—he was rejecting a faulty Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament. He defended the true meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1. And there is one other surprising thing he didn't reject: Jesus didn't reject the *other* ground for divorce in the Old Testament, which all Jews accepted.

Although the church forgot the other cause for divorce, every Jew in Jesus' day knew about Exodus 21:10-11, which allowed divorce for neglect. Before rabbis introduced the "any cause" divorce, this was probably the most common type. Exodus says that everyone, even a slave wife, had three rights within marriage—the rights to food, clothing, and love. If these were neglected, the wronged spouse had the right to seek freedom from that marriage. Even women could, and did, get divorces for neglect—though the man still had to write out the divorce certificate. Rabbis said he had to do it voluntarily, so if he resisted, the courts had him beaten till he volunteered!

These three rights became the basis of Jewish marriage vows—we find them listed in marriage certificates discovered near the Dead Sea. In later Jewish and Christian marriages, the language became more formal, such as "love, honor, and keep." These vows, together with a vow of sexual faithfulness, have always been the basis for

marriage. Thus, the vows we make when we marry correspond directly to the biblical grounds for divorce.

The three provisions of food, clothing, and love were understood literally by the Jews. The wife had to cook and sew, while the husband provided food and materials, or money. They both had to provide the emotional support of marital love, though they could abstain from sex for short periods. Paul taught the same thing. He said that married couples owed each other love (1 Cor. 7:3-5) and material support (1 Cor. 7:33-34). He didn't say that neglect of these rights was the basis of divorce because he didn't need to—it was stated on the marriage certificate. Anyone who was neglected, in terms of emotional support or physical support, could legally claim a divorce.

Divorce for neglect included divorce for abuse, because this was extreme neglect. There was no question about that end of the spectrum of neglect, but what about the other end? What about abandonment, which was merely a kind of passive neglect? This was an uncertain matter, so Paul deals with it. He says to all believers that they may not abandon their partners, and if they have done so, they should return (1 Cor. 7:10-11). In the case of someone who is abandoned by an unbeliever—someone who won't obey the command to return—he says that the abandoned person is "no longer bound."

Anyone in first-century Palestine reading this phrase would think immediately of the wording at the end of all Jewish, and most Roman, divorce certificates: "You are free to marry anyone you wish."

Putting all this together gives us a clear and consistent set of rules for divorce and remarriage. Divorce is only allowed for a limited number of grounds that are found in the Old Testament and affirmed in the New Testament:

Adultery (in Deuteronomy 24:1, affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19)

Emotional and physical neglect (in Exodus 21:10-11, affirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7)

Abandonment and abuse (included in neglect, as affirmed in 1 Corinthians 7)

Jewish couples listed these biblical grounds for divorce in their marriage vows. We reiterate them as love, honor, and keep and be faithful to each other. When these vows were broken, it threatened to break up the marriage. As in any broken contract, the wronged party had the right to say, "I forgive you; let's carry on," or, "I can't go on, because this marriage is broken."

Therefore, while divorce *should* never happen, God allows it (and subsequent remarriage) when your partner breaks the marriage vows.

Reading the Bible and ancient Jewish documents side-by-side helped me understand much more of the Bible's teaching about divorce and marriage, not all of which I can summarize here. Dusty scraps of parchment rescued from synagogue rubbish rooms, desert caves, and neglected scholarly collections shone fresh light on the New Testament. Theologians who have long felt that divorce should be allowed for abuse and abandonment may be vindicated. And, more importantly, victims of broken marriages can see that God's law is both practical and loving.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/october/20.26.html>

Craig Keener and William Heth:

Remarriage: Two Views

Two New Testament professors debate whether remarriage is acceptable for Christians.

By Craig Keener and William A. Heth | posted 8/31/00 | posted 8/01/2000 12:00AM

Free to Remarry By Craig Keener

Although the Reformers (like most evangelicals today) allowed the innocent party in a divorce to remarry, many church fathers did not. The real issue is: What did the biblical writers' words mean to their readers in *their* culture? That answer is found in Jesus' stark warning that divorce was not valid in God's sight, and that remarriage was therefore adultery ([Mark 10:11-12](#)). As anyone who does not try to break up remarried couples implicitly recognizes, these words employ the ancient practice of rhetorical overstatement. All ancient listeners recognized that wisdom sayings, laws, and other concise, general statements were principles that needed to be qualified, as Jesus also observed when interpreting the Old Testament ([Matthew 12:2-4](#)). That Jesus' divorce saying was meant to be qualified is clear from the fact that four of the six New Testament texts addressing the issue explicitly qualify it. [Matthew 5:32](#) and [19:9](#) both allow divorce for the cause of infidelity. Other current interpretations of these passages provide novel proposals, but most interpret "infidelity" much more narrowly than ancient readers would have done. Some writers see the clause as a redundant overstatement of the obvious ("in the case of infidelity, infidelity has already been committed"). But in ancient divorce law, "infidelity" was a legal charge covering any kind of sexual unfaithfulness to the marriage, and this is precisely how Matthew's readers would have understood it. The very meaning of "divorce" in ancient law was freedom to remarry. Everyone (not just Jesus) forbade "remarriage" after an invalid divorce, because one's first marriage would not have been dissolved. If, however, the first marriage was unilaterally dissolved by one partner's choice, the marriage covenant was broken ([1 Corinthians 7:16](#)). Paul cites Jesus as forbidding remarriage to the party who "leaves" ([1 Corinthians 7:10-11](#)), but then qualifies this to allow the remaining party remarriage ([7:12-16](#)). That the abandoned believer is "not under bondage" echoes the exact language of ancient divorce contracts, using the technical designation for freedom to remarry. Following his common practice of digression, Paul allows divorcées the same opportunity for marriage as virgins in [7:17-27](#). (NIV's "unmarried" in [7:27](#) is the same Greek word as "divorced" in the preceding line.) Jesus forbade divorce to protect marriage and the innocent party; for us to penalize the innocent party is for us to be as hard of heart as those our Lord opposed.

Why Remarriage Is Wrong By William A. Heth

The most important reason for believing in lifelong marriage is rooted in Jesus' understanding of how God brought the first couple together ([Genesis 1:27; 2:24](#)). Jesus said, "Consequently they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" ([Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:8-9, NASB](#)). He therefore emphasizes the [Genesis 2:24](#) teaching that marriage partners become closely

related, that the marriage union is comparable to the *kinship bond* that exists between parents and children. Husband and wife, joined -by God (Matthew 19:6), become a single kindred, a new family unit. Sin may disrupt the marital love relationship; but sin does not nullify the marital *kinship*. Even though marital separation or legal divorce may be advisable under some circumstances (persistent adultery, abuse, incest), Jesus calls remarriage after any divorce adultery. Mark (10:2-12) and Luke (16:18) seem to be unaware of the permission for remarriage after divorce for sexual sins that evangelicals often find in Matthew (5:32; 19:9). Some argue that Jesus spoke in hyperbole and that Matthew makes explicit Mark and Luke's assumption that Jewish and Roman culture permitted divorce and remarriage for adultery. But this assumes that Matthew has not made it clear Jesus is teaching a different kind of "divorce." Yet Matthew notes that Jesus rejects the Pharisees' proof text for their views (Deuteronomy 24:1). Instead, Jesus appeals to Genesis 2:24 with its kinship understanding of marriage. Further, textual studies now confirm that the original text of both Matthew 19:9 and 5:32 contain Jesus' additional unqualified statement that finalizes his teaching on the subject: "And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Paul's "let them remain unmarried or else be reconciled" (1 Corinthians 7: 10-11) says the same thing, and recent studies show that the likelihood that Paul's teaching on sexuality, marriage, and singleness in 1 Corinthians 6 and 7 stems from the same tradition shown in Matthew. Where Paul specifically mentions the possibility of remarriage, in both instances he notes quite explicitly that one of the spouses has died (1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2-3). Finally, in 1 Corinthians 7:27-28, Paul is not telling divorced individuals to feel free to remarry. He is telling engaged or formerly engaged couples who have come under the ascetic teaching at Corinth to feel free to marry should they so desire (see vv. 33-38). This article originally appeared in the December 14, 1992 issue of Christianity Today .

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/augustweb-only/48.0c.html>

Pastor Thomas Leake: (First 4 Questions addressed in previous message)

Answering Fundamental Questions About Marriage -- (7:10-16)

5) (:10-11) What is God's Will concerning Divorce and Remarriage

Paul's writings are just as inspired as the verbal teachings of Jesus;

Paul knew he was writing scripture; apostles both passed on the teachings of Jesus and received new revelation from the Spirit of Jesus who was now in heaven;

Paul is by no means denigrating his own teaching;

Jesus taught on divorce when he was here – Matt. 19 = commentary on Gen.2 –

Look carefully at this prohibition against divorce in v. 10-11

“*Leave*” = leave the marriage = divorce;

Divorce is not the Christian way to please God; brings division in the marriage; the whole point of marriage is unity;

Divorce is the result of unfaithfulness to a covenant made before God; you must keep your vows;

married couples will have all kinds of problems; sin is preoccupied with self and hurts relationships; but regardless of the problems and challenges, divorce is not the solution.

Permanent union – *glued together*;

at best divorce could only be a concession to a sinful world; not a good thing in itself; don't be surprised by struggles in marriage; You don't need divorce; you need determination and dependence upon God; forgiveness;

Yet the question remains: are there any exceptions to this divine permanence of the marriage relationship. Paul makes an exception in this very context. Must hold to high standard and yet allow for grace.

Matt. 5:31-32 – divorce was rampant among the Jews; exception here is the case of unchastity in the marriage; in the other 2 gospels the exception is not mentioned; don't interpret the more precise passages by the less precise passages; they are not contradictory; just more details are added in one passage; Matthew giving a fuller explanation to the Jewish people in particular; he knew Deut. 24 – What about that bill of divorce??

Two Views that try to explain away the exception clause and leave no room for remarriage:

One View: Speaks to a broken time of Jewish betrothal – Jewish betrothal involved much more than our present day engagement; you were legally married; they just had not come together physically yet; if the woman was found not to be a virgin, the husband was allowed to end that contract; But after they came together physically, there would be no exception –

- But Deut 24 is not discussing the time of betrothal at all – foreign to the entire context – marriage seems to be in view in the context;
- betrothal could not be separated from marriage – same contract;
- even the Jews understood Jesus was speaking about marriage in general, not the betrothal period;
- the verb “*to send away*” refers to divorce

Second View: Speaks to Jews not permitted to marry a near relative – only recognizing that certain marriages were never valid at all;

- But very broad word is used that includes any sexual sin (not a fantasy);

Why would Jesus ever allow for divorce? Because sexual sin stabs at the very heart of what marriage is; never underestimate the damage this sin causes; different sins have different consequences in this life; this sin is far worse in that sense; 1 Cor. 6:16 ultimate unfaithfulness; adultery is the breach of the very contract of marriage; willful desertion as well; other things are not in themselves a destruction of the marriage covenant; divorce had replaced death as the penalty for adultery in the Jewish culture at some time; God Himself divorced the faithless nation of Israel who had broken the covenant – Jer. 3

What about remarrying after divorce? No right to divorce would mean no right to remarry; but what about remarriage for divorce related to the exception clause; if God permitted divorce rather than death ... God showing mercy ... why would He condemn someone to loneliness

Matt. 19:3-9 mentions the exception clause again; Jesus dealing with this rampant type of divorce – Jesus responds and says in 90% of the cases you are wrong to divorce; but He still maintains the exception clause; Moses never commanded ... gave it as a permission; the grammar here is related to the remarriage as well as the divorce; divorce itself is not adultery ... that would only come with remarriage; “You are free to marry any man” = part of the divorce statement; Purpose is not to punish the innocent party along with the guilty; Does not mean God is pleased with divorce; it is only a concession; what should you do if divorced for the wrong reason?? Either stay single or be reconciled to your original wife

6) (:12-16) What Guidance is there for Believers with Unbelieving Spouses?

Unequally yoked; how did this case come to be? Some would believe and some would not; belief was not automatic – just because one partner believed ... We have to follow Christ above all else; God was not purposely splitting the home; just may be the case of what happens; should the believer leave? No Marriage is not just an institution just for saved people; no separation apart from divorce back then; Divorce involves being both legally and physically sent away;

Why should they stay in the marriage?

- *the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse* – setting apart unto God; unusual sense of the term; how does that actually work? Only a possibility that the unbeliever might be saved; you can never get saved by someone else’s faith; doesn’t mean husband somehow turned into a good person; nor that the husband was to be included in church membership; rather than the unbeliever polluting the believer, the opposite happens; even Lot had a preserving influence of some sort in the city of Sodom

- *the holiness of the children is at stake* – what it doesn’t mean: children not necessarily saved; doesn’t guarantee they will be saved; makes it more likely; doesn’t mean they are part of the church until they have been born again; does not mean that they are covenant children anymore than the unsaved husband is a covenant husband; which covenant?? The Mosaic Covenant?? No that was for the nation of Israel; You don’t partake in the New Covenant until you partake by faith; the Spirit of God is present; Word of God can be ministered; Encouragement to stay together because your influencer is needed

But if the unbelieving one leaves; let him leave ;

How do you know they want out? Might say it; might demonstrate that they don’t want the marriage by their actions.

Why?

- believer not under bondage; not bound by God’s law to that marriage
Just as death and adultery breaks the bond of marriage
- God has called us to peace; Rom 12:18
- vs. 16 you can’t really know that your evangelism will work; marriage is not simply an instrument of evangelism

Jay Adams: *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*

The concept of divorce is biblical . . . Joseph (a just man) was not condemned for determining to divorce Mary. . . God himself became involved in divorce proceedings (Jer. 3:8). . . in the Scriptures God acknowledges the existence of divorce and carefully regulates it. . . When examining divorce contracts from extra-biblical literature you can see that the stated intention of the divorce bill was not only to effect the permanent separation of the divorce parties, and thereby relieve them from the obligations of the Covenant of Companionship (marriage is more than a sexual union), but also to expressly give the divorcee the freedom to remarry. . .

Every legitimate effort, therefore, ought to be made to help persons contemplating divorce to reconsider the alternatives, and to assist divorced persons to become reconciled to one another (whenever possible) before they remarry another and it is too late to do so.

Two different groups are addressed in the 1 Cor 7 passage. When dealing with unbelievers, then, there is a genuine possibility of a different outcome that may allow (require) a different response from the believer. That is why Paul distinguishes between the two groups contemplating divorce in 1 Corinthians 7. The outcomes of peace-making, leading toward reconciliation, may differ, calling for differing ultimate resolutions of the problem. . .

Even when a separation by divorce occurs as the result of disobedience, that divorce – though sinful, though obtained on illegitimate grounds – broke the marriage. The grounds may be illegitimate; the divorce itself isn't. Believers who wrongly separate by divorce are said to be "unmarried." This point appears in all the Scriptures. . . The facts are plain – a divorce does break a marriage. Obligations belonging to marriage and rights and privileges of marriage do not pertain to divorced persons. . .

It is one thing to contemplate divorce with a believer: there are resources (the Word and the Spirit) of which both parties may avail themselves, there is a mutually basic commitment to obey Christ and there is the process of church discipline that (in the last resort) may be activated if either one or the other (or both) refuses to deal with problems. There is, therefore, hope for that marriage and every reason for insisting upon reconciliation.

But here is an entirely different situation – a believer contemplating divorce with his/her unbelieving spouse. None of the resources mentioned above are available to the unbeliever except the third, and the third resource (church discipline) is not available to the believer. Thus, there cannot be the same insistence on reconciliation; the same sort of hope does not exist. And, indeed, we do not see Paul requiring it. . . So then, the general principle seems clear enough: where there is no consent (agreement) by the unbeliever to continue the marriage (vv. 12, 13) but (on the contrary) there is a desire to dissolve it, the Christian must not stand in the way of the separation. . . *"God has called you to peace."* Either there is to be a marriage or there isn't; God will not settle

for something in-between. That simply will not do. The matter must be set to rest one way or the other so that there will be *peace*. . .

Today's view of separation-rather-than-divorce is patently unbiblical because it violates this principle. It settles nothing, but keeps everything up in the air, and militates against true peace. This wicked substitute for the biblical solution (peace by reconciliation or by divorce) fights against true peace. All is held in limbo. It deceives by its temporary sense of relief, (often mistaken for peace). But nothing is settled (made truly peaceful) by it.

Charles Hodge: The apostle writes to the Corinthians as he would do to an army about to enter on a most unequal conflict in an enemy's country, and for a protracted period. He tells them, "This is no time for you to think of marriage. You have a right to marry. And in general it is best that all men should marry. But in your circumstances marriage can only lead to embarrassment and increase of suffering." This is the only view of the matter by which we can reconcile the apostle with himself, or with the truth of Scripture and of fact. This must therefore be borne in mind in the interpretation of this whole chapter.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

TITLE: BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED -- SALVATION DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD CHANGE YOUR PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

BIG IDEA:

EMBRACE WITH CONTENTMENT GOD'S SOVEREIGN PROVIDENTIAL DISPENSATION OF YOUR OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES AS YOU FOCUS ON SERVING CHRIST TO THE MAX

CONTEXT: MARITAL STATUS

Paul had been giving instruction in Chapter 7 regarding marital status. Apparently there was some level of discontent among the believers where there was an inordinate desire to change their state from single to married or from married to single. Maybe those who were in mixed marriages were envious of those who were in Christian unions. Maybe those who were married wished that they were single so that they could serve the Lord more devotedly. In any case, Paul feels a need to pause and address the wider problem of contentment with your assigned role in life. Each person must understand that God is providentially working in their circumstances. The priority must be on living by faith and obeying the commandments of Christ. Every person has opportunity to live out their calling from that perspective. *"Godliness with contentment is great gain."* For myself, I have this running joke with my family where when I start feeling sorry for myself or unhappy with my present circumstances I talk about "moving to Kansas" (= some nondescript place that is far away from my present situation). This passage addresses that struggle for contentment.

I. (:17) GENERAL PRINCIPLE: EMBRACE WITH CONTENTMENT GOD'S PARTICULAR CALLING FOR YOUR LIFE

A. Particular Application

(Repeated 2 other times: vv.20, 24 – Present Tense command – *"let him walk"*)

*"Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one,
as God has called each,
in this manner let him walk."*

1. Matter of Priority

"Only"

2. Matter of Providential Calling – applies to every realm of life

"Lord has assigned"

"God has called"

Rugh: Talking about the situation in which you find yourself when God saves you. That effectual call which results in our turning to God in saving faith.

3. Matter of Personal Application – no one can make this happen for you

"each one"

“called each”

“let him walk” = how we live out our Christian life; conduct ourselves

B. Universal Application

“And so I direct in all the churches.”

Still holds true for believers today – Don’t get this wrong!

II. (:18-20) CASE STUDY #1: CULTURAL, ETHNIC IDENTITY

A. (:18) Don’t Despise Your Calling

1. Called as Circumcised

“Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised.”

2. Called as Uncircumcised

“Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.”

You don’t have to remove your tattoos!

B. (:19) Focus on What Really Matters

1. Viewed Negatively

“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing,”

2. Viewed Positively – Serve Christ to the Max by Focused Obedience

“but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.”

Rugh: Not talking here keeping the Mosaic law; Paul recognizes here that the law of Christ is now what is binding for the church. That is how he can say that circumcision is no longer important. Gal. 5:6; 6:15

C. (:20) General Principle Repeated for Emphasis

“Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.”

III. (:21-24) CASE STUDY #2: ECONOMIC, OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY

A. (:21-22) Don’t Despise Your Calling

1. Called as a Slave Man

“Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord’s freedman;”

2. Called as a Free Man

“likewise he who was called while free, is Christ’s slave.”

Piper: He is saying that in the gospel there is an antidote for despair in menial jobs and

an antidote for pride in highly esteemed jobs

B. (:23) Focus on What Really Matters

1. Viewed Positively – Serve Christ to the Max as one who has been redeemed from bondage to sin

“You were bought with a price;”

2. Viewed Negatively

“do not become slaves of men.”

MacArthur: Here Paul does not mean physical slavery but spiritual slavery. He is speaking of becoming slaves of the ways of men, the ways of the world, the ways of the flesh. That is the slavery into which many of the Corinthian believers had fallen, the slavery that caused their divisions and strife and their immaturity and immorality. . . . God allows us to be where we are and to stay where we are for a purpose. Conversion is not the signal for a person to leave his social condition, his marriage or his singleness, his human master, or his other circumstances. We are to leave sin and anything that encourages sin; but otherwise we are to stay where we are until God moves us.

C. (:24) General Principle Repeated for Emphasis

“Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some temptations we face regarding contentment with our outward circumstances? How do we handle that struggle for contentment?
- 2) Are we always comparing how the Lord is working in our life to how the Lord seems to be working in someone else’s situation? Are we jealous for their circumstances?
- 3) What commandments of God require more focus from us? What distracts us from giving our full attention to obedience to God’s commands?
- 4) What are we doing to maximize our service for the Lord Jesus who bought us for Himself with His own precious blood on the cross?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: What Paul was doing was showing that obedience to the commands of God is so much more important than any cultural distinctives, that the mere changing these

distinctives should be of no importance whatever to the Christian. In other words, don't make such a big deal out of whether you are circumcised or not, or whether you are white or black or red or Swedish. But instead make obedience a big deal; make the whole aim of your life to obey the moral law of God. Then and only then may circumcision (as Paul implies in Rom. 2:25) and other cultural distinctives become beautiful, in a very secondary and derivative way as expressions of the obedience of faith. In a word, the application of Paul's principle to cultural distinctives is this: Don't fret and don't boast about your present state of cultural distinctives; they are of little importance to God compared to whether you are devoting yourself, soul and mind and body, to obeying his commandments, which are all fulfilled in this: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). . .

The real contrast, it seems to me, should be expressed as: "don't let your slavery make you anxious, but instead use it." Use it to obey Christ and thus "adorn the doctrine of our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:10). . . . What matters in life and in eternal life is staying close to God and enjoying his presence. What matters is not whether our job is high or low in man's eyes. What matters is whether we are being encouraged and humbled by the presence of God.

Putting the two applications of Paul's principle together, the teaching seems to be this: Obeying the commands of God (v. 19) and enjoying his presence (v. 24) are so vastly more important than what your culture or your job is that you should feel no compulsion to change your position. You should not be driven from one by fear or despair, nor allured to the other by wealth or pride. You should be able to say to your position, "Never mind. You are not my life. My life is to obey God and enjoy his presence."

His concern is not to condemn job changes, but to teach that you can have fulfillment in Christ whatever your job is. This is a very unfashionable teaching in contemporary western society, because it cuts the nerve of worldly ambition. . . This text implies that the job you now have, as long as you are there, is God's assignment to you. Verse 17 says, "Let everyone lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him." God is sovereign. It is no accident that you are where you are.

Stedman: "Well," somebody says, "what about sexual infidelity? I understand that breaks a marriage. Didn't Jesus say that if there is adultery, sexual infidelity, that a marriage would be broken?" And the answer is, "Yes. He does say that." Three times in the Gospels it is recorded that our Lord says that divorce is wrong unless it be for adultery, for sexual infidelity. That does end a marriage. "Well," you ask, "why doesn't Paul mention that here?" I think the reason is because he has just dealt at length with the subject of sex in marriage. He has pointed out how central the sexual union is to marriage. He has even warned couples not to defraud one another, not to refuse it, not to stay away from sexual union very long, because it is central to the working out of God's purposes in marriage. It has valuable lessons to teach us when understood properly and when used according to the Word of God. Therefore, Paul does not dwell on that point because he has just referred to our Lord's teaching on marriage and

divorce. I am sure he felt that this exception that the Lord himself granted was widely understood and known, and so he does not mention it. . .

I have carefully checked all the commentaries available to me on this passage and have found that almost unanimously all the commentators agree that phrase, "*not bound*," means that the marriage has ended and that remarriage is permitted by the Christian involved in that kind of a liaison. The reason the apostle gives is that "*God has called us to peace*." Continual antagonism between two people of different faiths resulting in a constant chafing of one or the other in the marriage is not good. If the unbeliever takes the initiative (that is the qualification that must always be present), and wants to leave, then do not saddle him or her with legal restrictions or economic barriers that prevent him or her from doing so. That is what Paul is saying.

Charles Hodge: This of course is not intended to prohibit a man's endeavoring to better his condition. If he is a laborer when converted, he is not required to always remain a laborer. The meaning of the apostle evidently is, that no man should desire to change his status in life simply because he had become a Christian; as though he could not be a Christian and yet remain as he was. The Gospel is just as well suited to men in one vocation as in another, and its blessings can be enjoyed in all their fullness equally in any condition of life."

Steve Zeisler: The general principle which Paul is seeking to apply is this: people do not have to change their circumstances in order to be happy. It is not due to a mistake that you find yourself in your present circumstances. God knows your situation, and he is not calling upon you to change your circumstances in order to bless you.

Fulfillment in life, freedom in Christ, personal integration, growth and confidence do not depend on whether you are married or not. It doesn't matter whether we have the right job, whether we're making enough money, whether we have the right friends or not. . .

"Do not become slaves of men," is Paul's powerful word of advice. This is what happens—you become a slave--when you give to somebody the power to make you happy or unhappy. If fulfillment for you comes only when your boss promotes you, then you have become a slave of men. If you set your sights on marriage to a particular person, and if that determines your fulfillment or lack of it, you have become a slave of men.

MacArthur: Christians should willingly accept the situation into which God has placed them and be content to serve Him there. It is a principle against which human nature rebels, and Paul states it three times in these 8 verses, so that his readers could not miss his point. We should not be preoccupied with changing our outward circumstances. . .

The unity of the church at Corinth was seriously fractured. Not only were there numerous parties and factions, but some groups were encouraging those with the gift of celibacy to get married, while other groups were encouraging those who were married

to become celibate. Slaves were chafing under their bondage and were trying to find spiritual justification for demanding freedom. Although the gospel is the antithesis of the standards and values of the world, it does not disdain or seek to destroy governments, societies, or families. Rather where the gospel is believed and obeyed, some of the most obvious by-products are better government, better societies, and better families.

But Christians can be Christians in a dictatorship, a democracy, or even under anarchy. We can be Christians whether we are man, woman, child, married, single, divorced, Jew, Gentile, slave, or free. We can be Christians in Russia or the United States, in Cuba or China, in France or Japan. Whatever we are and wherever we are, we can be Christians.

Gil Rugh: What Need Not Change as a Believer

Once someone becomes saved and has a heart to serve the Lord, all sorts of questions tend to arise:

- Should I quit my job and go into the ministry? No
- Should I abstain from sexual relations in my marriage? No
- Should I divorce my unsaved spouse? No
- Should I become circumcised like the Jews? No
- Should I change something in my physical and social circumstances?

The immediate point of the context is when you get saved that doesn't mean that there should necessarily be any change in your marriage relationship. ("If I had known the Lord before, I would never have married this person . . .")

God has been working in your life all along – even before your conversion. When God sovereignly called you, it was in the context of physical circumstances that He had orchestrated. Certain things are inconsistent with being a child of God; but most of our physical circumstances can continue on without negatively impacting our spiritual relationship.

Changing your outward circumstances won't improve your spiritual relationship with God. Submission to the will of God is what is important. These physical matters are important to the world but should not shape our thinking in terms of our relationship with our God.

Pastor Thomas Leake: Eyes on Christ = Lasting Contentment (7:17-40)

Introduction: Testimony of Paul in Philippians: *"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself"*

Refers to your marriage, your job, your social and economic status, the size of your house, the zestiness of your car, etc.

Rom. 8:28; Our goal = Become more Christlike; serve Him more fully; keep focused on Christ

2 Broad Areas of Contentment :

I. In Our Social Status (:17-24)

Don't let your focus be on improving your status in this world;

What are the sinful motives behind being so driven and ambitious in a worldly sense?
Paul said he had *learned* to be content ... and so can we.

Cf. country music song: Little Bitty by Alan Jackson:

Well, it's alright to be little bitty
Little hometown or a big old city
Might as well share, might as well smile
Life goes on for a little bitty while

This life will be over quickly; live passionately right now right where God has placed you;

Don't live *under* your circumstances

Ps. 42:5; 2 Cor. 12:10; Heb. 13:5-6

II. In Our Marital Status (:25-40)

Paul applying the same wisdom and the same principles to virgins and widows;

“Good to remain as you are”

Paul gives even more reasons in these cases

- in view of the present distress (could refer to a number of things)
- marriage brings a certain amount of its own “trouble”
 Marriage doesn't solve all your problems, just brings new problems
- the form of this world is passing away – new age rapidly approaching
 Don't get your mindset all wrapped around the things of this world

Conclusion: Are you a discontent person? Wishing you had different outward circumstances? Refocus on the greatness of the person of Christ; He is our lot; our sufficiency; my portion forever

Ps. 16:11; 84:11-12

God can satisfy me; but I must trust in Him

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7: 25-39

TITLE: WHO SHOULD MARRY? . . . WHO SHOULD STAY SINGLE?

BIG IDEA:

STAYING SINGLE HAS MUCH TO COMMEND ITSELF . . . BUT MARRIAGE IS STILL A GOOD OPTION

(:25) INTRODUCTION – LISTEN TO ME ON THIS SUBJECT

A. Topic: Responding to a Particular Question Regarding Virgins

“Now concerning virgins”

We must understand that Paul was asked a specific question or was addressing particular circumstances that faced the believers of his day in Corinth.

He starts out with his focus on the virgins . . . but then expands his answer since most of the same principles would apply to any unmarried parties – those who had been divorced, widows, etc.

Paul had been answering questions regarding sexual relations in marriage, regarding whether singleness or marriage was appropriate for different groups, and whether conversion requires a change in one’s outward physical circumstances. He now leaves the more general discussion of overall contentment to finish with his discussion of the single state vs. marriage.

B. Tone: Sanctified Guidance vs Authoritative Command

“I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.”

The Lord did not provide teaching in this area and Paul is not trying to command any particular practice. He is led by the Spirit to provide principles that require application depending on the situation.

**SIX CLARIFICATIONS ABOUT GETTING MARRIED VS REMAINING SINGLE
(OR SIX REASONS FAVORING REMAINING SINGLE)**

(Largely following outline of Dr. John MacArthur in this section)

I. (:26-28A) CLARIFICATION #1: PERILOUS TIMES WOULD FAVOR REMAINING SINGLE

A. Basis for Paul’s Argument: Pressure of Immediate Circumstances

“I think then that this is good in view of the present distress,”

Stedman: My own view is that because the apostle is aware of the fact that he is writing Scripture -- that it is for all Christians in all times, as he infers in some of his letters --

that he is not talking about any particular, immediate crisis then, but he is referring to the returning crisis that every generation of Christians have to face. Remember in Second Timothy the apostle says to his son in the faith, "that in the last days perilous times shall come," {2 Tim 3:1 KJV}. I think it is a mistake to read that as though he meant "in these last days," or "in the last days" as a reference only to the time preceding the return of Christ. Actually the church is always living in "these last days." They stretch from the first coming of Christ to his second return, as Hebrews 1 makes clear where it says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," {Heb 1:1-2a KJV}. Therefore, this is a reference to what Paul thinks of as continuing, returning cycles of trouble.

B. Basic Conviction -- Maintain the Status Quo (Applies to everyone)

1. Categorical Judgment

"that it is good for a man to remain as he is."

Immediate group in view was the single man – this is the emphasis

2. Application to both Married and Unmarried – but Paul gives a word to both

a. Application to Married – Stay Married

"Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released."

b. Application to Unmarried – Don't Pursue Marriage

"Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife?"

C. Balancing Perspective: Getting Married is a Valid Option

"But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned."

II. (:28B) CLARIFICATION #2: PRESSURES OF MARRIAGE WOULD FAVOR REMAINING SINGLE

A. Caution of Inevitable Pressures

"Yet such will have trouble in this life,"

B. Compassion of Pastoral Heart

"and I am trying to spare you."

III. (:29-31) CLARIFICATION #3: PASSING OF THE WORLD WOULD FAVOR REMAINING SINGLE

A. Priority of Serving the Lord – Given the Short Window of Opportunity

"But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened,"

Hodge: It is the design of God in allowing us but a brief period in this world, or in this state, that we should set lightly by all earthly things;

B. 5 Applications – Don't be Distracted from Serving the Lord by:

1. Marriage

“so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;”

2. Misery

“and those who weep, as though they did not weep;”

3. Merriment

“and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice;”

4. Material Possessions

“and those who buy, as though they did not possess;”

5. Mundane Pursuits

“and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it;”

C. Reason for Such Urgency

“for the form of this world is passing away.”

IV. (:32-35) CLARIFICATION #4: PREOCCUPATIONS OF MARRIAGE WOULD FAVOR REMAINING SINGLE

A. The Goal = Undistracted Devotion to the Lord

“But I want you to be free from concern.”

B. The Reality = Marriage Complicates the Situation

1. Case of the Single Person

“One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;”

2. Case of the Married Person

“but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided.”

3. Case of the Single Person

“The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit;”

4. Case of the Married Person

“but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”

C. The Motivation Behind This Instruction = to Promote the Goal

“This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote

what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord."

V. (:36-38) CLARIFICATION #5: PERSONAL CONVICTION MAY FAVOR EITHER SINGLENESS OR MARRIAGE

A. The Father May Choose to Marry Off His Virgin Daughter

"But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry."

B. The Father Does Well to Keep His Virgin Daughter

"But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well."

C. Both Options are Good . . . But Singleness Still has More to Commend It

"So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better."

VI. (:39-40) CLARIFICATION #6: PERSEVERANCE IN THE STATUS QUO IS WHAT PAUL RECOMMENDS FOR OLDER WIDOWS

A. Permanence of Marriage Must be Honored

"A wife is bound as long as her husband lives"

B. Freedom to Remarry in Certain Situations

"but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes,"

C. Caveat Regarding Marriage for Any Believer – Must be to another Believer

"only in the Lord"

D. Status Quo Has Much to Commend Itself

"But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God."

Stedman: He is obviously thinking of an older woman, a widow whose husband has died, who is left alone, and facing the declining years of her life. She misses the companionship, she misses the fellowship of her mate, and, in the emptiness of her life, she is tempted to plunge back into marriage just for companionship alone. "Now," Paul says, "be careful there." That is an emotional pressure and many succumb to it without any thought about what the alternatives might be. But, he says, if she does succumb it is all right; it is not a sin to remarry as long as it is to a Christian, someone "in the Lord" -- whom she can share her faith and life with -- "But in my judgment she is happier if she remains unmarried."

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the force of inspiration in this passage since Paul is not speaking a *command of the Lord* but his “*opinion*”?
- 2) How does our cultural situation today and its differences from Paul’s situation impact the application of this section to us today?
- 3) Are we truly living in light of the fact that *the form of this world is passing away*?
- 4) Should fathers today be taking more initiative and responsibility for the marriage decisions of their daughters?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: In this section of First Corinthians, the Apostle Paul has already discussed the place of sex in marriage and the right and wrong of divorce. Now, beginning with Verse 25 of Chapter 7, we come to a section addressed to the unmarried that sets forth both the advantages and the pressures of the single life:

Verses 26-35 set forth three advantages of singleness; and then
Verses 36-40 give us the pressures of single life.

Robert Deffinbaugh: Undistracted Devotion

In our text, Paul seeks to help his readers minimize the distractions which so easily focus our hearts and minds on earthly things, rather than on things eternal. Specifically, Paul wants each of his readers to view their marital status and ambitions in the light of eternity. . .

Christians can be assured of facing trouble in this life. Marriage and a family only multiplies the troubles one may expect; thus those who are single should consider the option of remaining just as they are. If they choose to marry, they have not sinned, but they have increased their troubles in this life. Mark Twain once said something like this: “It’s easier to stay out than to get out.” Paul does not even give us a way out of marriage, but he does say that while “getting out” is not an option, “staying out” is. Paul’s opponents, the ascetics, forbid marriage (1 Timothy 4:3); Paul simply encourages the saints to seriously consider the single life as a lifestyle, for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel. . .

We know that God “*richly supplies us with all things to enjoy*” (1 Timothy 6:17). We also know that while some things the world offers to us are lawful, all of these are not profitable (1 Corinthians 6:12). Some may hinder the gospel or the spiritual walk of a fellow-believer. Some may be detrimental to our walk. This means that we should not

make use of everything which the world offers to let us use. We should use this world thoughtfully and selectively.

The unbeliever's outlook is vastly different. It is summed up by the beer commercial: "You only go around once, so grab all the gusto you can get." Christians know they "go around" in this life only for a short time, and that we "go around" the next life for all eternity. Because everything this world offers to us does not contribute to the kingdom of God, we choose not to grab all the gusto we can get. We choose not to fully use all the world offers. This is the reason Paul later informs the Corinthians of those rights and liberties he has chosen not to use. . .

You will note from these two translations that biblical scholars interpret Paul's words in verses 36-38 in two distinct ways. The problem we face is how to understand Paul's words "his virgin." The NASB translators understand Paul to be referring to a father's virgin daughter, while the translators of the NIV believe Paul is speaking to a young man who is engaged to be married to a virgin. In the East, often the parents choose the marriage partner for their child, and so one can mentally picture a father reading what Paul has written and responding, "Paul, what should I as a father of a young woman do? Should I heed your words by refusing to let my daughter marry? What if she is already engaged?" The young Christian Corinthian man who has already become engaged before Paul's letter arrives might ask, "Should I go ahead and get married, or should I break my commitment to marry?"

In either case, Paul's response is essentially the same as his teaching to those who have not committed themselves to another for marriage: "If you are able to take the heat for standing firm in your convictions not to marry your daughter to another, then do so; if not, do not agonize about it. It is not a matter of sin, but simply a matter of "good" and "better." The same answer is applied to the young man who is engaged to marry a young woman: "If you conclude that marriage is the proper course for your life, then don't agonize over this, do it; you have not sinned in so doing. If, on the other hand, you are able to gracefully reverse your decision, and you have the will power to do so, then release yourself from this commitment and remain single. The one who marries does well; the one who does not marry does even better." . . .

At the beginning of chapter 7, Paul seems to agree with the ascetics. In a sense, he does agree, for he goes on to extol the virtues of remaining single. But his reasons for doing so are so very different from those of the ascetics. The ascetics judge one's spirituality by outward, external appearances. Paul calls for Christians to consider remaining single, so that we might serve God more devotedly and without distraction. Our decision about whether we should marry should not be made solely on the basis of what we are free to do, but on the basis of what course of action best enables us to serve God. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the time is short, and the days are evil. Let us make those choices which best advance the gospel and which enable us to serve God wholeheartedly.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

TITLE: CHRISTIAN LIBERTY MUST NOT VIOLATE CHRISTIAN LOVE

BIG IDEA:

THE CONTROLLING FACTOR IN OUR DECISION MAKING REGARDING DEBATABLE AREAS OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT MUST BE LOVE

INTRODUCTION:

These matters are sometimes called doubtful areas. They are specific issues of Christian conduct where believers debate whether it is appropriate or not to participate. The issues will vary by culture and by generation; but the principles regarding how to address them remain the same. In this chapter we must look beyond the particular area of controversy (“*Is it OK for Christians to eat meat offered to idols?*”) to glean the controlling principles that we must apply to our issues today. Paul is not talking about areas of doctrinal or theological controversy here – issues over which denominations have taken various stands. These are practical areas of Christian living. In our context of liberty-dominated thinking there don’t seem to be as many of these questionable issues as in past generations.

- Can Christians go trick-or-treating on Halloween?
- Is it OK for Christian teenagers to go to a school dance function?
- Can believers drink alcohol? What types? In what contexts?

But these issues, instead of staying small, can rise up to be very divisive in a church.

I. (:1-3) LOVE MUST BE THE GOAL OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

A. (:1A) Specific Doubtful Issue Introduced – Eating meat possibly offered to idols
“*Now concerning things sacrificed to idols*”

For us today it would be range of different issues; same principles will apply

Cf. Acts 15:28-29 This was a major issue in the early church.

1 Timothy 1:5 “*But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*”

Boyer: Some considered such food defiled. They not only refused to eat themselves, but were offended by those who did eat. Others considered meat in the category of “morally indifferent things” and claimed Christian liberty. They considered it right to do so and went ahead.

B. (:1B-2) Knowledge Alone Just Promotes Pride

1. Sarcastic Retort – Everybody is a know-it-all in their natural pride
“*we know that we all have knowledge*”

Boyer: Paul is making reference to some of their own claims, even quoting their very words, when he says, “*We know that we all have knowledge.*” He does so a bit sarcastically, for in verse 7 he says that they did not all have this knowledge.

2. Ultimate Goal is Love, not Knowledge for its own sake
 - a. *“Knowledge makes arrogant”* -- puffs up
 - b. *“but love edifies”* -- builds up

Stedman: knowledge creates pride; it makes you feel superior. You only have to listen to some of the arguments waged in this regard today to see how true that is. It does not make any difference which side you are on, on the liberty side or the restricted side, knowledge tends to create a sense of pride.

3. Self Deception in This Area is Prevalent –
True Knowledge vs False Knowledge
“If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.”

At best, our knowledge is incomplete and limited to our finite view.

- C. (:3) Test of Whether Love has been the Goal of Your Knowledge ---
Do you love God? (with accompanying Word of Assurance)
“but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him”

Stedman: If you love God you are responding to the love of God for you. That is the appeal of the apostle everywhere. Do not try to force yourself to think of somebody else. Give yourself to reviewing what God has already done for you. Think of the thousand times a day he has manifested love and concern and faithfulness for you. It will begin to make you feel humbly grateful. When you do this you will then be able to recognize that other people need to be treated with patience as God treats you. You will begin to be more understanding of their point of view. Therefore, the key to the carrying out of this kind of exhortation is that you learn to love God because he has loved you.

II. (:4-6) KNOWLEDGE LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES IN LOVE

- A. (:4A) Specific Issue Repeated
“Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols,”

Paul gets back to the issue he had raised in 8:1

- B. (:4b) Two Things Believers Know with Certainty
 1. Idols Don't Exist
“we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world”

No reality behind the physical image that man has created

2. Other Gods Don't Exist
"and that there is no God but one."

Epistemology: How do believers know what they know?
Why doesn't everyone have this knowledge?

- C. (:5-6) Uniqueness of the One True God
 1. (:5) Not Negated by the Existence of Lesser Demonic Powers
"For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords"
 2. (:6) Known Personally by All Believers
 - a. One God the Father
"yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him;"
 - b. One Lord Jesus Christ
"and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."

III. (:7-13) SENSITIVITY TO OUR FELLOW BELIEVERS MUST GUIDE THE APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES IN LOVE

- A. (:7) Believers Vary in Their Level of Knowledge and Background – Making some more vulnerable in the area under consideration
"However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled."
- B. (:8) Spirituality is Not the Issue
"But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat."
- C. (:9-13) Sensitivity to Our Fellow Believers is the Issue
 1. (:9) Liberty Requires Caution – Understand the Impact on Fellow Believers
"But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak."
 2. (:10-12) The Non-Moral Issue for You Can Become a Sin Issue for Your Fellow Believer – and Therefore a Sin Issue for You
"For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ."

3. (:13) Liberty Must be Restrained to Protect Fellow Believers

“Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”

Chestnut: We create Christian community when we restrict our freedom for the sake of others

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the practical areas of life that you would classify as debatable or questionable – where Christians would have different convictions on what is permissible?
- 2) How can you tell whether your pursuit of Christian knowledge and doctrine really has love as its goal and outcome? How can you tell whether you are truly loving God?
- 3) Is there some area where you might have a weak conscience?? Or some area where you might look with contempt upon a believer who engages in that practice?
- 4) When have you willingly chosen to restrain your Christian liberty out of consideration for your brother or sister in the Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: What’s Behind Your Influence?

"How much should I let other people's views control my actions?" That is, "Must I limit my liberty by the narrower, more restricted views of other Christians?" . . . The question arose among the Christians: "If a Christian eats meat offered to an idol is he not participating in some way in the worship of that idol?" . . .

Therefore, we are to consider our influence upon others, and weigh the fact that what we want to do may not be very important at all, compared with the possible danger to another's spiritual life. This certainly has a bearing on how we act in public, on whether we are willing to flaunt our freedom in somebody else's face.

Doug Goins: The Loving Limitation of Liberty

In Corinth most of the meat that was sold in the public meat markets came from sacrificial animals that had been slaughtered in ceremonies at pagan temples. So the questions these Corinthians had were as follows: Did these rituals somehow automatically taint the meat? Could Christians buy it from those markets for their use at home? Could they eat it if it was offered to them at non-Christian friends' homes? And

what about the various social events that were regularly scheduled in the banquet halls of the temples? These were the best banqueting places. So if you were invited to a party or a club meeting or a wedding, were you free to participate and eat the food that was served there? What if you were invited by your non-Christian friends to some sort of a ritual in the temple that was overtly pagan? Were you free to participate in something like that? And the immediate concern of these Christians in Corinth was this: If a Christian ate meat offered to an idol, wasn't he participating in some way in the sinful worship of that idol? Some of the Corinthian believers said that the meat was tainted by its idolatrous identification, and it was a sin to eat it. Some of the believers said it wasn't. . .

Think about our love relationship with the Lord. He doesn't ignore us, look down on us, or criticize our immaturity or ignorance. No, he patiently and lovingly brings us along through the process of growing in maturity. So my gratitude to him for first loving me is what frees me to love the other person who may be struggling because they're not where I am in my understanding of certain truth. What Paul wants us to see clearly is that agape love is far more important in the big picture than knowledge or theological sophistication. . .

These new Christians struggled with issues stemming from two things: their past and their conscience. Because of association with idols in the past, every new contact triggered the memory of the former connection. The phrase "being accustomed to" refers to habitual ways of thinking and believing. Old habits are hard to break. Paul calls it weakness, and he's going to make the point that the weakness of a brother or sister must be lovingly considered in all of our relationships. . .

Paul is asking the more mature, knowledgeable Christian, the one who is secure in his freedom in Christ, to substitute for his own knowledge of what is right and wrong, love for the less mature Christian who is insecure about his standing in Christ. More than any other writer in the New Testament, Paul taught Christians to celebrate the freedom that they found in Christ. But in these verses, he is saying that no Christian has a right to exercise his or her freedom in a way that undermines the faith of a weaker brother or sister, somebody who is less mature in their walk with the Lord. Love understands the sinful consequences of deliberately ignoring a weaker Christian's sensitivities. Forcing my freedom onto a believer whose conscience is not yet as strong as mine not only undermines his Christian growth, but violates the body of Christ, of which we are both a part. And Paul goes on to say that such an offense against a weaker Christian is a sin against the Lord Jesus who lives inside that brother. So instead of proving myself to be strong spiritually, I've transgressed the law of love. My Christian freedom must never be used at the expense of a brother or sister who has been redeemed at the great price of the death of the Savior. . .

Paul's whole point in chapter 8 is that as Christians we're meant to act on the basis of love and not stand on our supposed superior knowledge. It's true that idols are not gods, that food is a matter of indifference to the Lord, and by implication we are free to eat and drink what we like. But the universal spiritual principle is that knowledge has to be

tempered by love for the weaker brother or sister who will be harmed if we act on this knowledge with indifference or insensitivity. To put it another way, we don't have to have our rights. We also have the right not to exercise them for the sake of love. What a tremendous freedom and wonderful privilege we have to choose to lovingly limit our liberty.

Zeisler: Liberty, Limits and Love

Be free!, and Be careful! Be free, because there is only one God; be careful, because the wicked one is the force behind idolatry. . .

In our freedom we must be willing to forfeit our rights for the sake of others. We must not exercise our freedom at the expense of others who do not know better yet, those who still fear idols. If our freedom to indulge in what they consider forbidden inclines them to fall under the influence of idols once more, then we of course should deny ourselves. Now you do not have to agree with them. In fact you had better not agree with them. What you are doing rather is giving up your rights for their sake. Choose to act in love, not in arrogance.

Deffinbaugh: The Great Divorce – Separating Truth from Love

While Paul initially appears to grant the premise that eating meat offered to idols is a matter of liberty in chapter 8, this same permissiveness is not found at the end of Paul's argument on the subject.

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. 16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. 18 Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? 19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we? (1 Corinthians 10:14-22). . .

What Paul allows to stand initially in his argument, he may eventually prove to be wrong. This is the case in 1 Corinthians 8-10. In chapter 8, he allows those Corinthians who view themselves as being more spiritual than others to retain this false notion momentarily. But by the end of chapter 10, those who think they have the liberty to eat meat offered to idols are shown up for what they are. The “weaker brethren” of chapter 8 seem to be the “stronger brethren” in chapter 10. Those supposedly “weaker brethren” who refrained from eating meat offered to idols were not only in compliance with the decree of the Jerusalem Council, but with the teaching of Paul. . .

Christians are not to boast in knowing, but to rejoice in being known by God, and this is the result of loving God (verse 3). When Jesus sent His disciples out to proclaim the

coming of the kingdom of God, they returned, rejoicing over the mighty works God had accomplished through them. Jesus gently corrected them saying, "... do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Here, Paul tells Christians that they should not rejoice in knowing, but in being known by God. Salvation surpasses any sheepskin (diploma) we will ever obtain. Moreover, the way that we are known by God is not because of our knowledge, but because of the love which God has produced within us for Himself. Once again, love takes priority over knowledge. What a humbling truth Paul has put before these all-knowing, stronger saints. If knowledge was the most important thing of all, and if they knew more than others, than they were the spiritual elite. But they have sought to excel in a category which is subordinate to love . . .

While neither eating meat nor abstaining from it changes my spiritual status, what I do with this meat can have a great impact on my brother. If something is a true liberty, I can partake of it in good conscience, just as I can abstain from it in good conscience, for I am not doing what I believe to be wrong. But a truly weaker brother does not have the same liberty. He does not see eating this meat as a liberty, but as a sin. If he views me as the stronger brother, then what I do is an example for him to follow. If I am more spiritual by eating idol-meat, then my weaker brother assumes he will be more spiritual for following my example. But since his conscience is not clear with respect to idol-meat, eating of it will be a sin for him.

Pastor Thomas Leake: Not Legalism, Not Liberty, But Love

Introduction:

New section introduced by *peri de*. Disagreements and squabbles should have been minor issues. Believers need to focus on the major doctrines of the faith. Little things should remain little things:

- Can we use drums in the worship service?
- Can the wife of the pastor wear pants?
- What movies are acceptable for the believers to watch?
- How to celebrate or not celebrate different holidays

Such matters don't matter all that much. God gives us a lot of latitude and freedom. (Definition of legalism and Definition of liberty.)

Caution to libertines: Don't love your freedom more than you love Christ and the brethren.

Caution to legalists: Don't orient your relationship to Christ and your fellow believers around structure, rules, regulations where everything has to be spelled out in black and white. Otherwise you can't help judging one another, despising one another ... etc. These issues, while small, have the potential to divide churches.

Understand the Historical Situation:

There were many pagan gods, idols, etc. Food that was brought to the temple to be offered up in worship to these pagan gods was divided into 3 parts:

- one part given back to the worshipper
- one part burned in the temple
- one part given to the temple priest for their use – they had so much they ended

up selling some of that back in the marketplace
You also had the problem of being invited over to a dinner or feast where the origin of the meat served might be in question. Or you might be attending some larger function held in a pagan temple hall. Christians responded strongly with different reactions.

3 Steps to Paul's Wise Counsel about how to deal with these debatable issues

I. (:1-3) Learn the Value of Love Above Knowledge

Every Christian has doctrinal knowledge about God. But by itself knowledge just puffs up – makes you look important and big – if you don't have love.

Look at the arrogant, highly educated people in our society. They have too high a view of themselves. They don't understand their own spiritual blindness.

1 Cor. 13 – study what *agape* love really is all about

Knowledge which puffs up is not true knowledge. It is really ignorance.

Humility involves understanding your place before God.

The true test of knowing is *loving God*. (Pres. Tense) God has that special type of knowing relationship with such believers.

1 John 5:2 – Love God and observe His commands

John 15:10, 21

Rest of 1 John passages about loving the brethren

Love is greater than mere knowledge

II. (:4-8) Apply Your Doctrinal Knowledge to the Issue

Learn what is really true about the issue in question. What is the reality. Paul is not saying that knowledge is bad – he spent his life communicating knowledge to others and to us through the Scriptures. Knowledge is necessary. Paul is not throwing knowledge out.

Certainty of Christian knowledge – we know certain things for sure – not we guess or we hope .. but we know

Knowledge is beneficial when it is rightly expressed.

Love (so-called) without doctrinal understanding is useless.

What do we know?

1) There is no such thing as an idol in the world in reality

That is pretty good information to have! The world does not know this. How do we know? Because there is someone who knows and has told us! Revelation from God is the key. Not because we are so smart and have figured anything out. God has spoken! Go to the one who knows.

The emphasis here is on the nothingness of the idol; there is no god behind those lifeless statues and fancy temples.

Cf. Elijah making fun of the idols of Baal –

Is. 44:8-9; Psalm 115; Is. 41:23-24

There's nobody listening to your prayers!

2) There is no God but one in the real universe

How do we know this? Same way as above. Not through empirical research; not through strictly rational contemplation; but by means of revelations from an ultimate

being who knows everything

Deut. 6:4 – people are too proud to receive the testimony of God; don't let them call you proud for listening to your Creator

1 John 5:9-10 – making God a liar; we can know with certainty

Is. 45:5 – name of God is *YHWH*, not Allah; He is the only one;

Idols don't really exist; however you can have a fallen demon spiritual being operating behind the façade of an idol and inspiring false worship

Deut. 10:17 – God is over all the spiritual beings in the universe;

Revelation is superior to science.

Is. 40:18 – you cannot create anything physical that can compare to God; physical matter can't cause itself; if you don't exist you can't start anything or be the source of something; John 5:26; Rom. 11:36

Did God then create evil ... if He created everything that exists ... Evil is not a thing; but a perversion of a thing; of a twisting of something; evil comes from the moral being that decides to twist a good thing

Look at the switch in prepositions:

- *ex* = out of

- *dia* = through or by means of

The Son is not a second source but the means by which all came into being

John 1:1-3; Complicated to try to understand the eternal relationship of the godhead;

Col. 1:16; Heb 1:10-12; "Lord" = OT name for the Lord God (*kurios*)

Christ cannot be created; He eternally proceeds from the Father; Heb. 1:6; John 5:21;

Rev. 22:13; no beginning or end

Not all believers understand these difficult truths in the area of Christology

- they think there are still lesser gods existing out there

- they don't understand certain things about food – create man-made dietary

Laws; Mark 7:18-19; 1 Cor. 6:13; Rom. 14:17

All of this knowledge should help us

III. (:9-13) Put your Knowledge with Love Into Action

(:9) Overall Concern – restrict your liberty because of love

(:10-12) 3 Reasons you need to restrict your liberty in certain circumstances:

- (:10) you don't want to mess up your brother

- (:11) He is the brother for whom Christ died; Rom. 14:23

- (:12) You would ultimately be sinning against Christ Himself

You must give up your freedoms out of loving consideration for your brother.

(:13) Conclusion to the matter:

You don't want to be a stumbling block to your brother;

Apply these same principles to other issues; you also don't want to be paralyzed so that your fear of offending everyone prohibits you from doing anything ...

Ask 3 Questions :

- How important is this issue to my weaker brother – Will it really mess up his faith?

- How important is my example to that person – this criteria becomes more important as you become a public leader

- Is there a way to help them along with doctrinal knowledge?

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 9:1-14

TITLE: FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN THE MINISTRY

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL MINISTERS DESERVE TO BE ADEQUATELY SUPPORTED BUT ALSO HAVE THE FREEDOM TO REFRAIN FROM DEMANDING SUCH RIGHTS

INTRODUCTION:

Some people imagine that Christian ministers should serve at their own expense. This passage clearly gives a number of reasons why the flock needs to take very seriously its responsibility to financially support its ministers in proportion to their labor and effectiveness. The general rule is simple: *“the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.”* But how can we explain the Apostle Paul’s tent-making practice in this light? Some people always want to demand that their rights be respected and fulfilled. This passage gives some principles regarding higher objectives which might guide someone to refrain from insisting upon exercising all of their rights. In this pastoral example, Paul demonstrates how believers can refrain from the exercise of their Christian liberties in cases such as the context of the previous chapter = meat offered to idols. Sometimes the exercise of a right can actually be a wrong.

I. (:1-6) THE FRUIT OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY IMPLIES THE RIGHT TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

A. (:1-2) The Credentials of Authentic Christian Ministry (Especially of Apostles)

1. Voluntary Service

“Am I not free?”

MacArthur: In their letter to Paul (see 7:1) the Corinthians must have made much of their liberty in Christ – a liberty they had been taught largely by Paul himself. Now he states his own freedom and his own rights. “I have no less freedom than you do,” he implies. “And I cherish my freedom no less than you do. But I cherish some other things even more.”

2. Gifted Calling

“Am I not an apostle?”

“Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”

Qualification for apostleship = Acts 1:21-22

3. Spiritual Fruit

“Are you not my work in the Lord?”

“If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”

MacArthur: In ancient times seals were used on containers of merchandise, on letters, and on other things to indicate the authenticity of what was inside and to prevent the contents from being substituted or altered. The seal was the official representation of the authority of the one who sent the merchandise or letter. What was under the seal was guaranteed to be genuine. The Corinthian church was a living **seal** of Paul's apostleship, the proof of his genuineness.

B. (:3-6) Delineation of Rights of All Christian Workers (Especially Apostles)

"My defense to those who examine me is this:"

Some people might look at a gospel minister who is supporting himself via secular work and argue that his ministry is not approved by God since he is not supported full-time in the ministry. Paul's apostleship was under attack in Corinth. Others were exalting themselves as somehow more worthy of recognition and of a following than the Apostle Paul.

1. The Right to Basic Material Support

"Do we not have a right to eat and drink?"

2. The Right to Christian Marriage

"Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?"

3. The Right to be Freed Up From Secular Labor to Devote Time to Ministry

"Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?"

II. (:7) THE COMMON PATTERN OF WAGES APPROPRIATE FOR LABOR IMPLIES THE RIGHT TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN SPIRITUAL MINISTRY – 3 FAMILIAR ANALOGIES FROM COMMON OCCUPATIONS:

A. Soldiers who Risk Their Lives Deserve Support

"Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense?"

B. Farmers Who Produce Crops Deserve Support

"Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it?"

C. Shepherds Who Tend Herds Deserve Support

"Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?"

III. (:8-10) THE OLD TESTAMENT FARMING ANALOGY IMPLIES THE RIGHT TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

A. (:8A) Not a Matter of Subjective, Personal Opinion

"I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I?"

- B. (:8B-9A) Supported by God's Law = Authoritative OT Quotation
"Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.'"

David Guzik: In Deuteronomy 25:4, God commanded You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. This law simply commanded the humane treatment of a working animal. In those days, grain would be broken away from his husk by having an ox walk on it repeatedly (usually around a circle). It would be cruel for force the ox to walk on all the grain, yet to muzzle him so he couldn't eat of it.

- C. (:9B-10A) Application to all Spiritual Ministers of the Gospel
"God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written,"
- D. (:10B) Fundamental Principle: The Laborer Should Share the Fruits
"because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops."

IV. (:11-14) VOLUNTARILY FOREGOING THE RIGHT TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT DOES NOT UNDERMINE THE VALIDITY OF THAT RIGHT

- A. (:11-12A) Rationale for Reaping Financial Support
1. Material Support is a Small Compensation for Spiritual Ministry
"If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?"
 2. Argument from the Lesser to the Greater
"If others share the right over you, do we not more?"
- B. (:12B) Reason for Refraining from Demanding Such Support
"Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ."

There are special circumstances where the wiser course of action is to refrain.

Adam Clarke: Though we had this right, we have not availed ourselves of it, but have worked with our hands to bear our own charges, lest any of you should think that we preached the Gospel merely to procure a temporal support, and so be prejudiced against us, and thus prevent our success in the salvation of your souls.

- C. (:13-14) Reinforcement of the Right to Support and its Validity
1. (:13) Reinforced by Appeal to Common Sense and Historical Practice
"Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?"

2. (:14) Reinforced by Direct Command from the Head of the Church
“So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.”

“The laborer is worthy of his hire” – Luke 10:7; Matt. 10:10
This should be the normal expectation and the normal practice.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is the responsibility for Christian ministers with regards to their financial support more upon their own shoulders to demand the right to such support or upon the shoulders of those to whom they are ministering to take the initiative to provide it?
- 2) What type of hope or expectation should Christian ministers have?
- 3) In what ways do Christian ministers today give up some of their rights for the advancement of the gospel and the healthy growth of their flock?
- 4) Which should come first, the performance of ministry or the seeking of material support?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: This [*context of Chap. 8*] raises the whole issue of, "How far must I insist on my rights?" We all wrestle with this very pertinent question. In fact, this is much before us today. You cannot turn on the television without seeing scenes almost every day of some crowd of people demanding their rights. This is the spirit of the age. Somehow or another, if you have a right you have to demand it.

I am getting so tired of hearing the word "demand," as though the existence of a right makes it necessary that someone demand that he be given that right. The question every Christian has to face is, "How far should this affect me? Do I have the right to demand my rights, especially with regard to the limitations on my personal liberty, because of the scruples of someone else?" . . .

He says, "If I am an apostle, and I have this knowledge that is greater than yours" (as he will now go on to say in the next twenty verses), "nevertheless I do not exercise all my rights. You object to giving up some rights for the sake of others. Well, I want you to know that is what I have been doing for you for a long time." . . .

I want to point out something here, and it is very necessary to add this. In Paul's case, as it should be in every case of someone wanting support, the ministry comes first and

then the support – not the other way around. In the New Testament you never read of anybody going out to raise support in order to go out to take on a ministry that he has not done anything in yet. It is the demonstration of a ministry that is the basis for the raising of support, and we need to apply this today. Many young people have come to us asking to be supported to go out into a foreign field. They have been rightly challenged in their lives; they see the opportunity and they want to respond. It is sincere and earnest on their part, and God bless them for it. They are willing to give up certain advantages of living here in the United States and deprive themselves and their families to go out to difficult places. That is a marvelous thing, but what they ought also to understand is that there is a need to demonstrate before they go that they can do something in a ministry. It does not have to be teaching always. Sometimes just to show a helpful spirit, a willingness to help clean up some older person's backyard or help them with some difficulty they are having indicates that here is someone who is willing to minister and not to be ministered unto. That is the basis, then, for asking for support.

Zeisler: Paul's questions in verses 1,2 of chapter 9 raise the query which those who work in the ministry should first ask: Is this position one which the Lord has called into being? As far as he is concerned, Paul is certain of his calling. Why, the Corinthians themselves above all others were incontrovertible evidence of his apostleship. Through ignorance of the facts, others may well have had questions concerning his calling, but not the Corinthians. Paul himself had led most of them to Christ. He had founded their church. There were legitimate criteria by which he could be measured, and upon which they could conclude that he had indeed been called to the proclamation of the gospel. . .

Hard work and productivity, in other words, should be rewarded by allowing the worker to partake of the harvest accruing to such work.

But implicit in Paul's illustrations is the question, "Is anything being accomplished? Is anything growing." The results do not have to be high profile and striking. We are speaking of a heart condition. Real prayer, real encouragement, teaching, counseling, evangelism, etc., are in question here. There are some who have God-given gifts and opportunities who are unwilling to work hard. Just because one has graduated from seminary does not mean that a Christian bureaucracy must now find a position in the ministry for that person so that his needs are fully met. A mere degree, title, dream or whatever does not qualify one for support by the Body of Christ.

Having raised these questions then, Paul's response as he views his own ministry is, "I qualify." Jesus said so. Reason, history, the Scriptures, all agree that it is right and proper that Paul and others like him be supported in the ministry to which God had called him. . .

What an extraordinary and compelling illustration of giving up one's rights! The rights he so clearly enunciates in verses 1 through 14 he denies himself, so overcome is he by something else-his compulsion to preach the gospel-which supersedes his rights and his freedom. He did not find laboring for the cause of Christ so heavy a burden to bear that he needed to be reimbursed by having his needs met. On the contrary, it was his joy and

his compelling reason for living.

MacArthur: Paul gives six reasons why he had the right to be supported by the churches to whom he ministered:

- (1) he was an apostle
- (2) it is customary to pay workers
- (3) it is according to God's law
- (4) other leaders exercise the right
- (5) it is the universal pattern
- (6) and Jesus ordained it

Deffinbaugh: Some of the Corinthians have several problems with Paul's apostleship. The first is Paul's message. Paul's message is simplistic (Christ crucified), and it is one that does not find general acceptance. Second, Paul's methods are unappealing. He does not (indeed, he will not) use the persuasive techniques of some, which many find appealing. His speech is far from eloquent, and this is by choice. Finally, Paul does not charge for his services. They think that no one worth their salt would teach and preach for nothing, because after all, you get what you pay for! . . .

Now, in chapter 9, Paul presses further this option of refraining from one's rights by illustrating it from his own life and ministry. He first sets out to prove, without a doubt, that he is an apostle and that as such, he has the right to eat and drink at the expense of those to whom he ministers. Having done so, he then explains why he has chosen to refuse this right, at great personal cost. Not being supported at the expense of those to whom Paul ministers is 1) the basis for anticipated rewards related to his ministry and, (2) a means by which the gospel can be proclaimed more effectively. . .

Being an apostle then is having the right to be supported by those to whom he ministers. His right to "refrain from working" (at a secular job) enables him to devote himself to those to whom he ministers, his "work in the Lord" (verse 1). All of the other apostles except Barnabas have chosen to exercise the right to be supported and to lead about a wife. Paul and Barnabas have gone above and beyond the call of duty. They have chosen not to exercise their rights in these matters. . .

How does declining financial support remove a hindrance to the advance of the gospel of Christ? For one thing, Paul's work as a tent-maker puts him in touch with the lost. Preachers often live in a kind of seclusion, finding it difficult to get close enough to the lost to be a testimony. Working in the secular work place puts one in contact with people, heathen people who need to hear the gospel. Working in the secular work place gives one the opportunity to be a witness by the quality of our work and of our relationships. Not seeking or taking funds from people is something which takes the world by surprise. We all know that many unbelievers, not to mention many Christians (including most of us), roll our eyes when we hear the televangelists on television asking over and over for money. Paul is a man who not only refuses to exercise his right to be supported by the Corinthians, but often labors so that he can support the needy. In doing this, Paul sets himself apart from many of the religious charlatans of his day and

causes people to look upon him and his message with a measure of respect.

Matthew Henry: And, if the Jewish priesthood was maintained out of the holy things that were then offered, shall not Christ's ministers have a maintenance out of their ministry? Is there not as much reason that we should be maintained as they?" He asserts it to be the institution of Christ: "*Even so hath the Lord ordained that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14), should have a right to a maintenance, though not bound to demand it, and insist upon it.*" It is the people's duty to maintain their minister, by Christ's appointment, though it be not a duty bound on every minister to call for or accept it. He may waive his right, as Paul did, without being a sinner; but those transgress an appointment of Christ who deny or withhold it. Those who preach the gospel have a right to live by it; and those who attend on their ministry, and yet take no thought about their subsistence, fail very much in their duty to Christ, and respect owing to them.

Paul Decker: This is not the easiest job in the world.

And there seems to be a lot of expectations for a person that gets accused of only working one day a week.

So when I am asked, "What do you do Monday through Saturday anyway?"...

I can say I play the role of...

- ...teacher
- ...healer
- ...lawyer
- ...judge
- ...social worker
- ...writer
- ...editor
- ...philosopher
- ...ethicist
- ...entertainer
- ...salesman
- ...manager
- ...planner
- ...visionary
- ...leader
- ...peacemaker
- ...servant
- ...counselor
- ...scholar.

And in the midst of all these roles, the pastor must stay sweet to those that chide him for not doing it correctly.

Pastor Thomas Leake: (:1-6) **A Spiritual Leader Must Be a Genuine Example**

Introduction:

Problem of Hypocrisy in the church; outward show driven by pride; Leaders cannot

make excuses for their own sins or try to cover them. In some cases, leaders need to step down. Only a genuine example on the part of spiritual leaders validates the Word of God. Context of Chap. 8 = need to place love for brethren above the exercise of our liberty in Christ; Did Paul practice what he preached? Chap. 9 shows that he did. Paul is not a perfect example, but he is a worthy example by God's grace.

Main Principle: 1 Cor. 8:9 – Liberty is not the freedom to do whatever we please; but the freedom to do the will of God. The Corinthians had misinterpreted Paul's actions in not demanding his right to financial support. They looked down at his apostleship – partly because he was not being paid full-time but was supporting himself in a tent-making capacity. Paul maintains that he (of all people) certainly has a right to financial support from the Corinthian church which he founded.

Paul was not one of the original 12 Apostles; he had to defend his apostleship on numerous occasions; not out of pride, but in order to defend the truth.

3 Reasons Why the Apostle Paul is Worthy of Financial Support

I. Free in Christ

Followed by 4 rhetorical questions

Paul had freedoms like any other believer; includes freedom from sin; freedom from the Law of Moses; he understood his freedoms better than any believer; knew that he was not under the dietary laws involved with Chap. 8 discussion; but primarily he was a man of love

II. Apostle of Christ

What is an Apostle? More than a Disciple

Some people today think that their church has apostles. But nobody today can meet the NT criteria and description of an apostle.

Def: "Sent one" by another to represent them; like an ambassador or an envoy.

Paul had been personally sent out by Jesus Christ with His authority to proclaim His words. Paul spoke with the authority of his Lord and Master.

Review of NT teaching regarding the apostles:

Mark 3:13-14 – the choosing and appointing of the 12; hand-picked by Christ;

Luke 6:12-13 – Christ probably praying about whom to select; very important; very special;

Acts 9:15 – Paul = "chosen instrument of mine" = Apostle to the Gentiles – not one of the 12 (Matthias was the legitimate replacement for Judas);

2 Tim. 1:11; 1 Tim. 2:7; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Cor. 14:37 – Paul spoke and wrote with the authority of Christ

1 Thess. 2:5-6 – Paul refrained from always exerting his authority;

1 Cor. 15:7; Rev. 21:14; Acts 5:12-13 – How did the church treat the apostles? Special regard; they performed "signs and miracles" – not performed by all believers; people listened to their teaching in a special sense – Acts 2:42; 2 Pet. 3:2;

Peter and Paul finished their epistles with exhortation: "You had better listen to the words we wrote"

2 Cor. 12:12 – Paul defending his apostleship – authenticating signs were important; Eph. 2:20 – apostles were foundational to the churches (so we would not expect to see them now during the finishing of the structure)

We certainly have false apostles present today; very strong words – Rev. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:13 – Paul should have been revered in church at Corinth; Acts 4:33 – must be a witness of the resurrection of Christ; Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:8-10 – “last of all” = there will not be any more apostles coming after Paul – pretty clear statement; had to have seen Jesus in the flesh – 2 Cor. 11:5

If anyone in the world should understand this, it should be the Corinthian church; tone of sadness on the part of Paul; notes of sarcasm in his questions; the very existence of the Corinthian church authenticated his apostleship

III. Worker of Christ

Corinthians must have argued that Paul could not be very important since he was not being paid; Paul points to his humbling of himself out of love for them; I sacrificed for you; Follow my example

The issue was not whether the apostles like Paul could be married; that was understood; but whether their right to financial support extended to provision to take along their wife on the missionary travels. She was an important supporter of the ministry in many ways.

[Some interesting points in this short passage that contradict traditional Roman Catholic teaching]

Peter was married (Matt. 8:15)

Jesus had earthly brethren from Mary; Mary did not remain a virgin; did not remain sinless;

Conclusion / Applications:

- Good to have a genuine example of Christian leadership – go out and find one
- Practice what you preach; importance of involvement in small groups
- Don't cover up your sins
- Other people are watching how you live; our example matters
- Jesus gave up His rights and humbled Himself to take on human flesh

Pastor Thomas Leake: (:7-15) 7 Reasons Why Spiritual Leaders Should Be Supported Financially

Introduction:

Problem of shameless appeals for money by those religious hucksters who enjoy such a high standard of living; 2 Pet 2:3 – using religion for financial gain; Your use of money reveals your spiritual priorities and level of thankfulness; Contentment of our elder wives; should give to those who have impacted your life spiritually

1) (:7) Normal Human Employment Pays Their Workers

No one questions its appropriateness; what kind of army would expect its soldiers to maintain their secular job and be self-supporting?

2 Tim. 2:6 – not only are you entitled to support, but to the first fruits;
This is basic care ... not exceptional

2) (:8-10) Scripture Teaches This is God's Law

Deut. 25:4; look at the justice embedded in this verse; God does care about animals and makes sure that they are fed; we are far more important; we need to be wise in our giving; not all causes pleading for money are worthy of the money

1 Tim. 5:17-18 – same OT quote coupled with quote from Luke – both are treated as equal Scripture;

Implication: Christian workers expected to work hard; don't be a lazy pastor

3) (:11) Material Support is the Least a Church Can Do

Paul gets very specific in applying the principles to his relationship to the Corinthian church. Spiritual things are of greater priority than material things; cf. being saved by firemen and policemen and considering them worthy of support; how much more those that save us from spiritual ruin;

Must understand the importance of spiritual life – 1 Thess 5:12-13; world looks down on pastors and missionaries and makes fun of them; we need to exalt them

4) (:12) Our Example was Exemplary

Paul's practice was not to ask for financial support for his apostolic ministry; His key motive = No hindrance to the gospel; no road blocks to the smooth advancement of the gospel; He was willing to sacrifice and not use his rights; so often we fight for our rights

5) (:13) It is Right in Sacred Duties to be Paid From the Offerings

Some people might have objected to money being offered up to the Lord being used for the physical sustenance of God's workers; Lev. 7:5-6 – good example: offering to the Lord, but the priests benefited from it for food; v. 8-9 – also received shelter and clothing; cf. Abraham tithing to Melchizedek – 10% is not a legalistic amount required in the church age . . . but it is a worthy amount and an excellent guideline – Why would people react against this guideline?

Giving must be consistent and reliable

6) (:14) Jesus Himself Commanded Support of Full-Time Christian Workers

To neglect the messenger was to neglect the message and the one sending the messenger (the source of the message); very important for us as a church to support missionaries

7) (:15) My Motive is Right in Teaching You This Now

“But I” = emphatic – as for me, let me remind you what I have done . . .

My Boast = to offer the gospel without charge.

Did not mean Paul never received an offering; Jesus was supported in His itinerant missionary work; But Paul sacrificed in an exceptional way in this area; so much emotion in these statements;

No one could ever accuse him of preaching for financial gain.

Why are so many people so naïve regarding their giving – give lots of money to very poor causes and very suspect preachers.

The Corinthians should have been forcing their money on Paul – if he had too much, certainly no one would do better than him who needed support.

Conclusion: 2 Cor. 11:18ff. – Nobody sacrificed for the ministry like the Apostle Paul.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 9:15-18

TITLE: *PREACHING WITHOUT PAY*

BIG IDEA:

SOMETIMES GOSPEL MINISTRY INVOLVES YIELDING ONE'S RIGHT TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT

FOUR CONSIDERATIONS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL REGARDING PREACHING THE GOSPEL WITHOUT DEMANDING HIS RIGHT TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT

INTRODUCTION:

The immediate context has already established the right of those who preach the gospel (including the Apostle Paul) to receive appropriate material support for their labors. This point is no longer open for debate. Paul moves beyond that foundational truth to speak to his own personal strategy of offering the gospel without charge to those to whom he ministered. You do not find Paul making pleas for financial support. You do not see him making the deputation rounds to line up sufficient guaranteed support before stepping out into the ministry. You do not find Paul spending enormous amounts of money on fund-raising efforts – knowing that if he just turns the crank, a substantial amount of money will flow to his ministry. (This does not mean that he refused all gifts that were offered. Although often those funds went to the needs of others as well.) Instead, you see the ultimate type of self sacrifice as Paul labors with his own hands in his tent making occupation to support himself and even others in the gospel ministry. Was it because Paul had some type of inner drive to fulfill his calling to be an excellent tent maker? Was it because he took some great satisfaction in spending tireless hours at that craft? Not at all – it was because Paul deemed self support essential to his personal strategy of both earning him a better reward and establishing the integrity of his ministry and ensuring that the gospel would go forth without any unnecessary criticism. Paul knew that there was special reward for going the extra mile. (Illustration: at work we have a program that rewards employees for “Going the extra mile.”) What a remarkable example! Yet where do you hear this message preached? Where do you see this example emulated? You will search long and far to find anything comparable. This section which seems so foreign to our Christian ministry model deserves our extra study and meditation. Paul gives two reasons for preaching without pay: the first is covered in this paragraph. The second will be covered in vv. 19-23 – he wanted nothing to hinder the progress of the gospel through his ministry.

I. (:15) PAUL'S COMMITMENT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL WITHOUT DEMANDING HIS RIGHT TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT

A. Testimony Regarding Paul's Historical Practice

“But I have used none of these things.”

Note use of pronoun “I” in this section – Paul speaking of his own personal practice – not speaking for all of the apostles here.

Perfect Tense – Continues to be true for the Apostle Paul

Hodge: the right of a recompense for labour, v.7; the right to an equivalent for benefits conferred, v.11; the right to be treated as other ministers were, v.12; the right to be dealt with according to the law of God in the Old Testament, and of Christ in the New.

B. Resolve to Maintain that Same Example of Self Support

1. Not Lobbying for Financial Support

“And I am not writing these things that it may be done so in my case”

How very different from most of the ministry letters we receive.

2. Extreme Importance Placed on Maintaining the Current Practice

“for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.”

Paul is going to explain exactly what that boast of his was. Apparently this approach to finances in his ministry is not some minor issue, but a matter of highest priority.

II. (:16) PAUL’S OBLIGATION TO PREACH THE GOSPEL – IRREGARDLESS OF ANY FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Preaching By Itself (Fulfilling one’s calling) Carries No Special Reward

“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of”

B. Preaching (for one so gifted and called) Constitutes an Obligation

“for I am under compulsion”

C. Failure to Fulfill One’s Calling Brings Judgment

“for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”

Lenski: Calamity, dire punishment from God would overtake Paul if he ceased to preach. This is surely astounding, and Paul intends that it shall be so.

III. (:17) PAUL’S STEWARDSHIP TO PREACH THE GOSPEL -- IRREGARDLESS OF ANY FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Paul’s Preaching Ministry Was Not Initiated by His Choice

“For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward”

B. Paul’s Preaching Ministry Was Divinely Entrusted to Him as a Stewardship

“but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.”

Hodge: The difference expressed between willing and unwilling is not the difference between cheerfully and reluctantly, but between optional and obligatory.

MacArthur: This does not indicate that Paul was unwilling to obey but that his will had no part in the call itself. Since it was God’s sovereign choice and call, he received not a “reward,” but a “stewardship” (a valuable responsibility or duty to be carefully managed).

Lenski: In order to understand Paul’s statement we should remember that the *oikonomoi* (4:1,2) were slaves, whose masters simply gave certain goods or property into their hands to be administered in trust. The entire matter rested on the decision of the master to whom the slave in question belonged. The master did not ask: “Will you take this stewardship?” He only gave the order: “Take it!” The slave took it – woe to him if he was obstinate and refused! But when a slave, who had nothing to say in the matter, was put in charge of such a trust he had no claim to wages for administering this trust.

IV. (:18) PAUL’S STRATEGY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL WITHOUT DEMANDING HIS RIGHT TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Why then did Paul choose to minister in this mode of self support? What was his motive? How did he feel that this approach would benefit his ministry?

A. The **Motivation** is for Special Reward, Special Boasting
“*What then is my reward?*”

B. The **Method** Involves Not Demanding Financial Support
“*That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge*”

Lenski: free of expense to the congregations concerned

C. The **Mindset** Involves Voluntarily Giving Up Certain Rights
“*so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.*”

Lenski: not to use at all – the negation of “not to use fully or completely” ??

- nothing said in this passage denies the legitimacy of these rights to financial support

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Can we even imagine such a situation where the most respected Apostle to the Gentiles, charged with such a tremendous burden of ministry, church planting duties,

leadership training responsibilities, itinerant preaching schedule, etc. does not seek compensation from those to whom he is ministering? This is one of the most shocking examples of self sacrifice and humble love in all of Scripture.

2) Would we treat unpaid, but gifted and diligent preachers of the Word with the same respect as those who are pulling down big salaries? Would we tend to devalue the ministry of those who are not supported full time in the church?

3) Should anyone today even consider following Paul's example in this regard, or was his situation unique for his calling and his circumstances?

4) How faithful are we in carrying out the stewardship of the ministry entrusted to us, based on our giftedness and opportunities?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Boyer: Paul has in mind a higher reward than the benefit of material support. Indeed, his sense of responsibility toward the gospel was too strong to allow thinking of it as a way of making a living. Pay for preaching the gospel? Never! That was a stewardship laid on him. To do it earned no credit, deserved no pay. He was but a slave doing his duty (cf. Luke 17:7-10). But there was one thing Paul could do to please his Master and gain a basis for pride in his work. He could voluntarily renounce his right to support, support himself, and make the gospel without cost to those he served! "If I were volunteering my services of my own free will, then the Lord would give me a special reward; but that is not the situation, for God has picked me out and given me this sacred trust and I have no choice. Under this circumstance, what is my pay? It is the special joy I get from preaching the Good News without expense to anyone, never demanding my rights."

Morris: Re vs 17 – There is more than one way of understanding this difficult verse. Paul may mean that the man who preaches with a willing spirit merits a reward, whereas if he is unwilling he is not excused. He must still discharge his stewardship. Or he may be starting from the premise of verse 16 that "*necessity presses upon me*". If he preached of his own free choice he would merit a reward. As it is, it is not his own choice. He must preach. The next verse would then be understood as, "What reward is possible under these circumstances?" There is nothing of grace in *misthos*, *reward*, which rather signifies "*wages*", "the payment of what is due."

Hodge: Re vs. 16 – The reason why it was so important to him to refuse all remuneration as a minister was, that although he preached the gospel that was no (*kauxema*), ground of boasting to him. That he was bound to do, yea, woe was denounced against him unless he did preach it. Nothing could be a ground of boasting, but something which he was free to do, or not to do. He was free to receive or to refuse a remuneration for preaching; and therefore his refusing to do so was a ground of

glorying, that is, a proof of integrity to which he could with confidence appeal. . .

A physician may attend the sick from the highest motives, though he receives a remuneration for his services. But when he attends the poor gratuitously, though the motives may be no higher, the evidence of their purity is placed beyond question. Paul's ground of glorying, therefore, was not preaching, for that was a matter of obligation; but his preaching gratuitously, which was altogether optional. . . The principle on which the apostle's argument is founded is recognized by our Lord, when he said, "*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do,*" Luke 17, 10. . . Paul's reward was to sacrifice himself for others.

Stedman: But now Paul comes to his point. All this has just been building up to what he has been wanting to say. He proves that he had the right to be supported, but he did not always exercise that. When he came to Corinth he had deliberately chosen not to, although he did receive support at times from other churches, as he tells us in his letter to the Philippians and so on. But at Corinth he did not.

Look at verse 15. He feels very strongly about this. He says to these people, "Look, I would rather die than have you take away my right to give up my rights. That is a right I insist on having." The right to give up his rights, that is the greatest right a Christian has. Paul says, "This means everything to me." "Well," you say, "why did he feel so strongly about it?" . . .

He did make use of his right sometimes, but not in Corinth. There he made the gospel free of charge. What he is saying is simply that the thing that motivated him, the thing that drove him to work late hours at night making tents so he would earn a living and would not have to be supported by anybody in the church in Corinth, was the sheer delight it gave him to bless and enrich someone else without taking a penny in return. It was the joy of giving that Paul was experiencing.

Zeisler: We have in this passage a remarkable insight into the heart of this great servant of God, this man who later will say, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." Paul shares with us this picture of himself so that we may grow to be like the One whom he himself imitated. He is saying that if he were indeed to exercise his rights as a Christian minister in this area, a certain boast which he held would no longer be his.

Certainly, the apostle is not talking about boasting as we commonly understand that word. He is not saying what a great man he is, but rather is using this word about himself in the sense that it is a badge of distinction; this is how he thinks of himself, in other words. . .

Having described his compulsion- "woe is me if I do not preach the gospel"-Paul now goes on to say what is his reward, what is there about him that he can approve of as he carries out his ministry. The one thing he can do, he says, is adorn the glorious message of the gospel by making it available free of charge. Having preached all day he could

make tents at night, sacrificing something of himself in order to make an offering to the Lord by adorning the ministry he had been given. Supporting him for his work among them would rob him of the one choice which he had in life, which was to beautify the gospel by the free offer of it. He did not have the option of not preaching. That choice was no longer available to him. What he could choose to do, however, was to give something of himself for the sake of the gospel. He did not want to lose that privilege.

At times, of course, he was supported. Different circumstances-his health, his surroundings, the needs of fellow-believers, etc.-indicated that he be supported, and he was. But his heart was inclined to make free of charge the offer of the gospel. That was his contribution toward what he was doing, and he did not want to lose it, especially as far as the Corinthians were concerned.

What an extraordinary and compelling illustration of giving up one's rights! The rights he so clearly enunciates in verses 1 through 14 he denies himself, so overcome is he by something else-his compulsion to preach the gospel-which supersedes his rights and his freedom. He did not find laboring for the cause of Christ so heavy a burden to bear that he needed to be reimbursed by having his needs met. On the contrary, it was his joy and his compelling reason for living.

Deffinbaugh: It may be needless to say, but I will nonetheless say it again as I conclude this message: This passage proves that Paul has the right to be supported in his ministry, and that he also has the privilege of not exercising it, for his own benefit (his reward) and for the advance of the gospel. This text does not teach that individuals or churches have the right not to support those who preach.

In our text, Paul has spent a great deal of time defending his right as an apostle to be supported (to eat and drink) by those to whom he ministers. He has spent no time attempting to defend his status as a free man (not a slave). Why is there this emphasis on his rights as an apostle? First, because his apostleship is being challenged by some in Corinth, especially by those who are false apostles (see 2 Corinthians 11). Paul will not give ground on the matter of his apostleship, because he will not surrender the truth of the gospel to those who would change it. Second, Paul emphasizes his rights as an apostle because these rights are the most evident and least disputed. Aside from Paul and Barnabas, all of the other apostles not only support these rights, they exercise them in their ministries. If anyone wishes to challenge Paul on the matter of being supported, they will also have to take on Peter and all the rest of the 11. The "liberty" to eat idol-meats, claimed by some Corinthians and exposed by Paul in chapter 8, is based on very thin reasoning, which is directly opposed to the decree of the Jerusalem Council (which includes the apostles). Paul wants his "right" to be understood as indisputable, before he goes on to decline it for the sake of the gospel. . .

Paul's words also challenge the current mindset that those who are spiritual are those who have a "full-time ministry." I cannot tell you how many times I have seen and heard words and actions which betray the presence of a two-story spirituality. Those who are really spiritual go to seminary or devote themselves to full-time ministry. If

this is so, then Paul must not be all that spiritual. No wonder some Corinthians challenge his spirituality (2 Corinthians 10:1-2). Paul's spirituality is evidenced by his willingness to sacrifice his rights for the sake of the gospel. One such right is that of having a full-time ministry. Let us beware of false standards of spirituality. Let those who think they will be more effective by ministering "full-time" pause to reflect on Paul's "part-time" ministry, for the sake of the gospel.

Doug Goins: The Reward of Doing Something for Nothing

Paul's reward turns out to be, in part, his total freedom from all merely human pressure or constraint on his ministry, which accepting support from the Corinthians, with their mixed motives, would have invariably brought. Now, it's true that at times Paul did accept financial support from some churches, but he never asked for it and never expected it. He was committed to offering the gospel free of charge.

Another reward that drove him to work late hours into the night making tents so he could minister for free was the sheer delight it gave him to bless and enrich someone else without taking a penny in return. Through my years in para-church and church ministry, I've known people who followed Paul's example, who laid aside the financial privileges to which they were entitled for the sake of the gospel. They were volunteers in the body of Christ and underpaid Christian workers who rejoiced in the inherent spiritual reward for spiritual service.

MacArthur: Paul's refusal to accept wages from those he was serving was the result of a deep conviction. ***It would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.*** He would rather have been dead than have anyone think he preached and taught for money. He was not a prophet for hire, as was Balaam (Num. 22), or in the ministry "for sordid gain" (1 Pet. 5:2). It is this commitment that he declares to the Ephesian elders: "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 18:33-35). . .

The gospel was thrust on Paul; he was under compulsion to preach it, and would have been in serious trouble with the Lord if he had not. But he was not under compulsion in regard to payment for it. In that he was entirely free to expect support from those he served. He chose not to be paid because he wanted it that way, not because it was necessary. In that choice he found great satisfaction and joy, and for that choice he knew he would receive a reward.

Pastor Thomas Leake: Woe is Me if I Preach Not the Gospel (:16-18)

Introduction: Paul's passion and obligation to devote himself to Evangelism;

2 Ways Paul approached his Evangelism Ministry:

I. (:16-17) Paul Viewed His Evangelism Ministry as an Obligation

Paul went on 4 missionary journeys; very involved with preaching the gospel = "to announce the good news" – Pres Tense – continuous, ongoing calling

Evangelism was his job; not all things are identical with Evangelism; e.g. Apologetics by itself technically is not Evangelism; you have to actually tell someone the good news about Jesus Christ

Def. of Gospel Message – 1 Cor. 15:1-4 – Paul defines it for us; are we competent in our understanding of the message and in our ability to communicate it to others?
Must include: death, burial, resurrection of Christ – Rom. 1:16; Luke 17:7-10;

Nothing to boast of when slaves are obedient to their masters; Paul was under compulsion; had a direct commission from Jesus; This is what you are going to do with your life; Paul had no choice; Acts 26:19 – he accepted that calling willingly; He viewed himself as under threat of punishment and pain and displeasure if he did not fulfill that calling; God reserves His severest judgments for unfaithful ministers; 2 Cor. 5:11 – not according to his own will; talking about his calling, not his feelings; he loved to preach; Eph. 3:8 – his human will had nothing to do with his calling; God imposed His own will on Paul – who was exercising his will and persecuting the church at that time; need to understand how the human will is prevailed upon by the divine will

Stewardship entrusted to him; gospel = valuable commodity to God; Paul felt a great privilege in being chosen – Col. 1:25; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Rom. 1:14-15 – eager to preach; 1 Tim. 1:12-13

Application to us today:

We are not charged to do exactly the same thing as Paul – don't have his commission to be the apostle to the Gentiles; but we are all charged to be followers of Christ and that involves being fishers of men and preaching the gospel; as well we are charged with ministering in the context of a local church; we must do our part in the Great Commission; we have been entrusted with the same gospel message

We can become better evangelists by:

- 1) striving to live a godly and Spirit-filled life
- 2) Know the gospel well; master the message; be able to explain it well
- 3) Don't be fearful in witnessing – there is a tremendous open door in the U.S.; take a step of faith and just go do it; be Nike Christians
- 4) Start where God has placed you – neighbors; co-workers; God has providentially put you there
- 5) Pray for opportunities
- 6) Don't feel that you have to give out the entire message every time – are they willing to hear? Don't be obnoxious; be sensitive to your audience
- 7) Use helpful resources = tracts, etc.; invite them to church, etc.

II. (:18) Paul Viewed His Evangelism Ministry as a Way to Excel in Ministry and Seek Special Reward from God

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

TITLE: IDENTIFYING WITH THE LOST FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

BIG IDEA:

THE GOAL OF WINNING SOULS DRIVES US TO RESTRICT OUR FREEDOM IN WAYS THAT WOULD SERVE OTHERS IN LOVE RATHER THAN OFFEND THEM

INTRODUCTION:

Voluntarily restricting our rights and freedoms is no small matter. But a person who has been genuinely converted and filled with the love of Christ will have a heart of compassion for reaching the lost. The main method of evangelism is not some specific program or crusade, but a servant heart that ministers to others in love. We never compromise the message, the commands of Christ or the priority of preaching the gospel (even in confrontational ways). But we make every effort not to unnecessarily offend others as we understand the behavioral and cultural issues that are important in whatever context we are ministering and adapt our behavior accordingly.

I. (:19) THESIS STATED -- THE GOAL OF WINNING SOULS DRIVES US TO RESTRICT OUR FREEDOM IN WAYS THAT WOULD SERVE OTHERS IN LOVE RATHER THAN OFFEND THEM

A. Freedom in Christ Understood

“For though I am free from all men,”

No man or no cultural group has Paul as a puppet on a string where they can dictate his behavior. He is free to personally respond to Christ and live in a way that is pleasing to His master.

B. Voluntary Personal Restrictions Regulating Ministry Approach

“I have made myself a slave to all,”

Quite an extraordinary condescension and limitation

C. Goal in Ministry of Maximum Evangelism

“so that I may win more.”

Paul’s heart and priority for soul winning is the key to the passage. Not just people have to adjust to who I am with all of my personal preferences. Instead Paul was willing to be the one to make every necessary adjustment. He was flexible where possible to win others to Christ. He didn’t want anything to unnecessarily hinder the gospel.

II. (:20-22) THESIS ILLUSTRATED – PAUL’S EXAMPLE OF IDENTIFYING WITH THE TARGET GROUP HE IS TRYING TO EVANGELIZE

A. Identifying with Cultural Jews (no matter how serious they were religiously)

1. Target Group

“To the Jews”

2. Strategy of Identification

“I became as a Jew”

3. No Clarification Necessary – Paul still was a cultural Jew

4. Goal in Ministry of Maximum Evangelism

“so that I might win Jews”

B. Identifying with Religious Jews (scrupulous about obeying the Law)

1. Target Group

“to those who are under the Law”

Most commentators take this as just further explanation of the same Jewish category above. I have broken it out because of the parallelism as a somewhat separate emphasis. Some take this to be Gentile converts to Judaism. I would apply it to all Jews who were very scrupulous about the requirements of the Law.

Maclaren: The category which he names next is not composed of different persons from the first, but of the same persons regarded from a somewhat different point of view. ‘Them that are under the law’ describes Jews, not by their race, but by their religion; and Paul was willing to take his place among them, as we have just observed.

2. Strategy of Identification

“as under the Law”

3. Clarification

“though not being myself under the Law”

4. Goal in Ministry of Maximum Evangelism

“so that I might win those who are under the Law”

C. Identifying with Gentiles

1. Target Group

“to those who are without law”

2. Strategy of Identification

“as without law”

3. Clarification

“though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ”

4. Goal in Ministry of Maximum Evangelism

“so that I might win those who are without law.”

MacArthur: In other than moral matters, however, Paul identified as closely as possible with Gentile customs. He ate what they ate, went where they went, and dressed as they dressed.

D.. Identifying with the Weak

1. Target Group

“To the weak”

This illustration seems somewhat ambiguous. The immediate context has been talking of trying to win different cultural groups to Christ . . . so from that perspective this does not sound here like the contrast between the weaker and stronger brother (such as in the example in Chap. 8 of eating meat). This group is weak in the eyes of the world: whether in terms of social status, economic position, educational background, intellectual ability, etc. However, the larger context of the weaker brother from Chap. 8 certainly fits the general thrust of what Paul is trying to communicate about regulating his liberty and modifying his conduct. In that case one would have to modify the meaning of “win” the weak to have the broader connotation of impact them positively for Christ, improving their spiritual position, or gaining a hearing for the teaching Paul is providing.

2. Strategy of Identification

“I became weak”

3. No Clarification Given = Paul’s Humility

4. Goal in Ministry of Maximum Evangelism

“that I might win the weak”

E. Lesson From These Illustrations = Thesis Repeated

1. Target Group

“to all men”

2. Strategy of Identification

“I have become all things”

3. No Clarification Necessary

4. Goal in Ministry of Maximum Evangelism

“so that I may by all means save some.”

III. (:23) THESIS EXTENDED – LIVING A GOSPEL-FOCUSED LIFE

ENSURES MY OWN PARTICIPATION IN GOSPEL BENEFITS

- A. Freedom in Christ Implied
- B. Voluntary Personal Restrictions Regulating Ministry Approach
“I do all things for the sake of the gospel”
- C. Goal in Ministry of Maximum Evangelism
“so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”

The gospel is all about denying self, taking up our cross and following after our Lord Jesus Christ who promised to make us “fishers of men.” If we live selfishly and do not have any gospel focus we give evidence that our lives have never been transformed. An authentic Christian will serve others in love for the sake of the gospel and thus demonstrate the fruit of genuine conversion. Only those who live for the gospel actually participate in the benefits of the gospel.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What groups have we targeted for evangelism and how are we regulating our ministry approach to identify with them for the sake of the gospel?
- 2) What can we do to cultivate Paul’s heart for evangelism?
- 3) Where do we draw the line in our attempts at identification so that we do not compromise our standing in Christ? The seeker church model would use this passage as justification for their methodology. What should we learn from their approach? What should give us caution?
- 4) What is the benefit of our freedom in Christ if we need to restrict the exercise of those freedoms in certain contexts?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: The first question to ask is whether this remarkable testimony of Paul is something we should imitate, or is this just something that apostles did -- or that missionaries do who must adapt to other cultures?

The answer comes from one of the clearest commentaries on these words that Paul himself wrote in the next chapter. Look at 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1. Here the issue is exactly the same as in 9:19ff., namely, how to relate to Jews and Greeks so as to win them for Christ. He says,

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32) Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; [in other words, adapt as much as you can in non-sinful ways] 33) just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. [That's the same as 9:22, "I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." Then comes the answer to our question, in 11:1] Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

So that answer is: No, this is not a specifically apostolic or missionary way of life. It is something that he meant for all the Corinthian believers to imitate. He was imitating Christ, and he wants us to imitate him. So hear this message this morning a Word from God for you particularly and not just for someone else. Ask how you, in your sphere of life can use your freedom the way Paul and Jesus did, if by any means you might save some.

Now the second question to ask in this text is what Paul's aim is. Why has he made himself a slave to all? Why is he becoming "as a Jew" to the Jews? Why did he make himself as a "lawless one" to the lawless, and weak to the weak? Which is the same now as asking, Why should we?

It's a tremendously important question. Paul is telling us to live and act in ways that are different from the way we would act if we didn't share his aim in life. So it makes a big difference if we have the same aim Paul does here. What was his aim?

Five times he says that his aim is to win people.

Verse 19: "that I might win the more."

Verse 20: " that I might win the Jews . . . that I might win those under the law."

Verse 21: "That might win those who are without law."

Verse 22: "That I might win the weak."

So five times he says that his aim in adapting to the way people live is to win them. Then at the end of verse 22 in his summary statement he says, " I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." So he says his aim differently here. Five times it was "to win" people; and now it is "to save" people.

Then in verse 23 he gives one last aim: "And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it." I believe this means exactly what R. H. Lenski says it means. Paul is saying, "If I omit this concern of love for others, although through my work, devoid of such love, many others may be saved, yet I myself would not be saved." In other words, Paul knew that his faith in Christ would be utterly inauthentic and false, if he abandoned the pattern of life set by Jesus and no longer cared for other people.

So Paul tells us his aim in three ways: 1) to win others; 2) to save others; 3) to be partaker in the benefits of the gospel himself. Now what does this mean? Win others for what? Save others from what? Partake in what benefits of the gospel?

The most straightforward answer is given in Romans 5:9: "Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath [of God] through Him." Of all Paul's uses of the word "save" in his letters this is the one place where he tells us explicitly what we are saved from. When we put our trust in Christ, we are saved from "the wrath of God."

So that is the aim of Paul in becoming all things to all people. Verse 22: "I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" -- from the wrath of God. The gospel is the good news that God has made a way to save us from his own wrath. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 Paul says that "Jesus delivers us (=saves us) from the wrath to come." . . .

In 1520 **Martin Luther**, the great Reformer in Germany wrote a treatise called "The Freedom of the Christian." He began it with this paradox:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

Then he explained:

These two theses seem to contradict each other . . . [But] both are Paul's own statements, who says in 1 Corinthians 9:19, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all," and in Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Love, by its very nature, is ready to serve and be subject to him who is loved.

So Paul's strategy is love. It's exactly what he said in Galatians 5:13, "You were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Use your liberty to love by serving. That's what Paul says he is doing here in verse 19: "Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave (or servant) to all." That's what Paul -- and Jesus -- mean by love.

You can see this even more clearly in the three things Paul says about his relation to the law in these verses. Notice: First, verse 20b: "To those who are under the Law, [I became] as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law." So he says he is NOT under law. Second, verse 21: "To those who are without law, [I became] as without law, though not being without the law of God." So he says, in the second place, that he is not without the law of God. First, he is not under the law, but, secondly, he is not without the law of God. Third, Verse 21b: "But [I am] under the law of Christ."

So there are three statements about his relation to the law: 1) I am not under law; 2) I am not without the law of God; 3) I am under the law of Christ.

You might say, "That sure sounds involved." But life is involved. This is the sort of

careful thinking you must do if you are going to take the risks involved in adapting to all kinds of people so that you might save some. As soon as you say, "I have made myself slave to all" (v. 19), and "I have become all things to all men" (v. 23), you are on the brink of idolatry and compromise and worldliness and sin. You are walking the razor's edge between fruitless separatism and unprincipled expediency. If you fall one way you are of no use because you have no connection with the world; if you fall the other way you are of no use because you are just like the world.

How do you keep your faith and your freedom and your radical zeal to win people and not just copy people? The answer is that you think hard about your relation to the law of God -- the way Paul did. And what you come to is this:

1) As a Christian, I am not "under law" (v. 20) -- that is, I am not bound to earn my salvation by the law, nor am I bound to live by the ceremonial, dietary, separation laws of the Old Testament (for example, circumcision, holy days, no ham and cat fish, no mixed fibers, no meat offered to idols, and so on). I am free to go to the home of an animist and humanist and eat whatever they put before me in order to win them for Christ (1 Corinthians 10:27).

2) As a Christian I am nevertheless not without God's law (v. 21). In 1 Corinthians 7:19 Paul says, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God." This is a remarkable verse! It says that circumcision, which was a commandment of God in the Old Testament is negligible for Christians, but the commandments of God are not negligible. This is why we distinguish between the ceremonial law and the moral law. As Christians we submit to the moral law of God. We are not without the law of God, as Paul says.

3) Which is defined for us in verse 21 as "the law of Christ." We are under the law of Christ. This is the law of love. In Galatians 6:2 Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ." The law of Christ is the law that fulfills all laws: Galatians 5:14, "The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" This is called in James 2:8 the "royal law" and "the law of liberty" (1:25; 2:12). It's the law that free people submit to gladly because they are led by the Holy Spirit. That's what Paul means when he says in Galatians 5:18, "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law." Instead, you bear the fruit of love, and so submit gladly to the law of Christ, the law of love.

And what does it look like.

In freedom, for love's sake, you try to overcome unnecessary, alienating differences that cut you off from unbelievers.. In freedom, for love's sake, you learn the Manike language and translate the Bible. In freedom, for love's sake, you eat dinner together the way they eat dinner. In freedom, for love's sake, you dress pretty much like the middle class American natives. In freedom, for love's sake, you get into their politics and their sports and their businesses.

And all the while you keep a vigilant watch over your heart to see if you are in the law of Christ. Here are two tests of how you are doing in this delicate balancing act. I close with these:

1. Are you becoming more worldly minded than they are becoming spiritually minded? If so, you have probably crossed the line of the law of Christ. Christ does not call you to lose your holiness, but to gain theirs.

2. Is your passion for winning your friends and family growing, or is it shrinking as you become all things to them? If it is shrinking, then you are not in the law of Christ at that point.

Here is the sum of the matter: Christ died to set us free. Free from the wrath of God, and free from the loveless limits of the law. Free for love and eternal life. Are we using our freedom to make this good news plain? Or are we so separatistic that we have no connection with unbelievers; or are we so worldly they don't know we have anything radically different to offer?

O may the Lord grant us to use our freedom to become the servants of all, that we might by all means save some!

Stedman: He was willing to go back under the old restrictions that he had been brought up in, all the old limitations of ritual and ceremony and outlook, in order to move back in alongside his Jewish brethren and be understood by them. He was willing to live again as a Jew when he was with them. . .

To those who were still under dietary restrictions and various limitations on their activity, Paul says he was willing to do the same, though, he says, he was not himself under the law. . .

"I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."
{1 Cor 9:22b RSV}

That is the great verse in which the apostle declares this spirit of selfless accommodation to where people are. That is what ought to characterize the Christian approach. We should be willing to set aside our own personal desires in order that we might win a hearing and open a door for a witness about the Lord. He never denied principle, never compromised in the realm of immorality, but nevertheless adjusted to the outlook of those with whom he was. . .

I want to close with these words of **C. S. Lewis**. I think they are significant, and pertinent to this issue:

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be rung, and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and

little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The only place outside heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is hell.

MacArthur: He would modify his habits, his preferences, his entire life-style if any of those things caused someone to stumble, to be offended, or to be hindered from faith in the Lord. Again we are reminded that in the gray areas of living, those that involve practices about which the Bible does not speak, Paul, as all believers, was free to do as his conscience allowed. But love would not let him do anything that the consciences of weaker believers would not allow. Love would not even allow him to do things that would be offensive to unbelievers to whom he witnessed. He would put every questionable thing in his life under the control of love.

Hodge: By the weak many understand the Jews and Gentiles considered under another aspect, i.e. as destitute of the power to comprehend and appreciate the gospel. The only reason for this interpretation is the assumption that *to gain* in this connection must mean to convert, or make Christians of and therefore, those to be gained must be those who were not Christians. But the word means merely *to win over*, to bring to proper views, and therefore may be used in reference to weak and superstitious believers as well as of unconverted Jews and Gentiles. As in the preceding chapter the weak mean weak Christians, men who were not clear and decided in their views, and as the very design of the whole discussion was to induce the more enlightened Corinthian Christians to accommodate themselves to those weaker brethren, it is altogether more natural to understand it in the same way here. Paul holds himself up as an example. To the weak he became as weak; he accommodated himself to their prejudices that he might win them over to better views. And he wished the Corinthians to do the same.

Deffinbaugh: It is vitally important for you to understand that in verses 19-23 Paul is not teaching: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." Paul is not speaking about the sins of others with which he is willing to participate. Paul is talking about accommodating himself to the weaknesses of the lost, by surrendering any liberties which might prove offensive to them and thus hinder his preaching of the gospel. One might be invited to make a gospel presentation in a retirement home. One could go with drums, guitars, and an electronic keyboard. But it is possible that an organ or piano accompaniment would be received more readily. Why insist on your rights, when practicing them might needlessly alienate someone who is lost, keeping them from hearing the gospel? Paul is willing to sacrifice the free exercise of any liberty if doing so will further the gospel. Never will Paul think of committing a sin in order to identify with the lost. One does not need to win an alcoholic to Christ by getting drunk with him, or to convert a drug addict by getting high with him. It is one thing to commit a sin in the name of furthering the gospel; it is quite another to sacrifice a liberty for the sake of the gospel.

Fee: This passage has often been looked to for the idea of 'accommodation' in

evangelism, that is, of adapting the message to the language and perspective of the recipients. Unfortunately, despite the need for that discussion to be carried on, this passage does not speak directly to it. This has to do with how one lives or behaves among those whom wishes to evangelize.

Alexander Maclaren: We can do no good by standing aloof on a height and flinging down the Gospel to the people below. They must feel that we enter into their circumstances, prejudices, ways of thinking, and the like, if our words are to have power. That is true about all Christian teachers, whether of old or young. You must be a boy among boys, and try to show that you enter into the boy's nature, or you may lecture till doomsday and do no good.

Dr. David Silversides: Selfless Evangelism

Context: Chap. 8 – weaker Christians who had scruples against eating meat possibly offered to idols; the more enlightened should bear with and adjust their behavior to help rather than hinder other Christians in their walk with God. The Apostle Paul had sought to follow this principle of loving flexibility in matters that were not required. The command of loving one's neighbor should take priority. Paul had set aside in Corinth that normal entitlement to receive pay for his preaching ministry.

He was the servant of Christ in terms of the content of his message and fixed moral requirements. But in non-regulated areas he made himself the servant of all men to be flexible in his conduct so as not to offend.

I. The Flexibility that is Not Intended

This text has been frequently used to justify a wrong course of action ... so I will explain how it has been widely misused – especially vs. 22. This text has been used to justify a wide range of evangelistic methods that the Scriptures do not endorse. This text has nothing to do with methods of evangelism. The Apostle did not use any and every method. He employed a remarkable uniformity of method – not evangelistic music, drama, etc. The apostles preached. The believers bore testimony in the course of their godly lives. 2 Cor. 4:1-2 summarizes their approach. No tricks, no entertainment focus; but the open manifestation of the church. Simple, straightforward approach. The church must be the pillar and ground of the truth.

II. The Flexibility that Honors God – Apostle gives 3 examples

- A. The Jews and the Ceremonial Law
- B. The Gentiles
- C. The Weak

Paul's behavior governed by desire to seek their spiritual welfare. The same approach to non-believers and to weak believers.

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Pastor Thomas F. Leake: Adapting to Advance the Gospel

Introduction: Review of the simple Gospel message itself; The tough part is getting unbelievers to recognize they really need salvation and Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Men would rather chart their own course or follow man-made religions because of their hard hearts, proud minds and stubborn wills.

Present Cultural Obstacles to the Gospel Message :

- 1) No sense of sinfulness before a Holy God; they don't sense impending judgment of a God of Wrath. Self esteem and Feel-Good theology insulate people from the gospel. That type of message never confronts man with their failures.
- 2) Prevalence of Hedonism and materialistic pursuits – people's thinking dominated by what they will earn; how they will play; etc.
- 3) Pluralism – people feel they are free to choose whatever path they want
- 4) Wrong understanding of Christianity – View it as just vague moralism that has confused people; Can the Bible even be read and understood

Various Wrong Responses of Today's Church = Their Strategy and Approach to the Mission of Evangelism:

- 1) Some have given up on any type of aggressive evangelism strategy; maybe God has written off this American culture because of its moral decay
- 2) Some have lost sight of the ancient gospel. They have switched their focus to practical areas of the social gospel agenda where they think they can have some impact. They are mum on Jesus.
- 3) Some are quite zealous and put a lot of emphasis on making a decision for Christ. They espouse an easy believism message. They have fantastic success stories; but produce many false converts who have a false sense of security.
- 4) Friendship Evangelism – this is a long and slow process where you earn the right to present a few close individuals with the gospel message. Often such love is needed; but there is also a sense of urgency that cannot just rely on this method alone. Look at how aggressive John the Baptist, Christ, and the apostles were.
- 5) Confrontational Tough Evangelism – such as open air preaching, etc. This can be bold and commendable; but it can also unnecessarily turn people off. Contrast this with the patient teaching of Christ.
- 6) One dominant approach today = Market Driven Seeker Approach – The premise is that you need to use surveys and polls to figure out what the sincere mass of unchurched seekers are looking for in their spiritual journey and then just deliver that in as pleasant an environment as possible. The result is molding the Sunday morning service and even the entire church experience to market Christianity as relevant to what this group claims to want. But there are 2 negative effects:
 - Produces a weaker, less mature church
 - the doctrinal message and sound teaching are compromisedSeekers are still lost sinners who don't know what church should be.

What is Hope Bible Church's Outreach Strategy? We need to be following an effective and biblical approach.

Are you personally committed to the work of evangelism?

This paragraph in 1 Cor. is still about the ministry of the Apostle Paul and his strategy for advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul speaks about the need to adapt the way

we behave to fit in with different groups to advance the gospel. This text has been misunderstood to become a favorite for seeker churches; a favorite for missionaries who talk in terms of contextualization; a favorite for the justification of Messianic oriented assemblies; some see here a reliance on human methodology rather than divine sovereignty and election. We must understand it correctly and extract the timeless principles that we can apply. Church people by nature are uncomfortable with change. What type of change is talked about here?

LOOKING AT PAUL'S OUTREACH STRATEGY FROM THREE ANGLES:

I. PAUL'S ACCOMMODATION

What did Paul do? "I made myself a slave to everyone." This was an act of Paul's will; no one forced him to do this; he did it himself. Remember that Paul was free; he did not have to do this.

What was Paul's motivation? For the sake of ministry. Love is a greater priority than liberty; not doing it out of legalism.

Writes about 3 different groups of people as an example of adapting for the sake of ministry:

A. To the Jews – but Paul was already a Jew; what did he have to change to accommodate them? He was no longer under the Mosaic Law. That law must be viewed in its entirety; you cannot break it up into various components (ceremonial, moral and civil). Moses was the mediator of the covenant. 2 Cor. 3:5-6; Heb. 8:6-8; Gal. 3:23-26; Rom. 10:4; Rom. 6:14

Paul did not get any righteousness from his keeping of the law.

Paul acted out of a principle of love to guide him (the law of love). Col. 2:16-17; Mark 7:19; When with the Jews Paul practiced some OT behavior – his motivation is the key. Was that deceptive? Paul was trying to gain a hearing. Acts 16:3 – Paul had Timothy circumcised so as not to be a stumbling block; but Paul never acted in this fashion if compromising the gospel of grace was the issue. Acts 18:8; 21:20-26 – when the situation changed in Gal. 2 Paul would not accommodate the Judaizers. Accommodation had to be for the right reason.

Paul still committed to obeying God morally. The Law of Christ = the Law of Love was his guide. That is an overwhelming and all-encompassing law. Gal. 6:2; James 2:8 – a new commandment from Christ

B. To the Gentiles

C. To the Weak – 2 possibilities

- saved believers who did not fully understand their freedoms in Christ – sense of the word "won" would then be more influenced towards growth and maturity
- still speaking to the unsaved

In either case, Paul's motive is clear = he became more like them in certain behavior respects to help reach them and improve them. Love will do anything God allows to win that person to Christ

II. PAUL'S AIM / PURPOSE – 3 words with same idea

A. “*Win*” more – Paul had already won some; (more than any of us); “to gain” – word is used 5 times in these 4 verses here; they are lost and need to be won to Christ.

Concept of “I'm OK, you're OK” is a killer to evangelism. Whether they understood they were lost or not, Paul was seeking their salvation.

B. “*Save*” – here in the sense of spiritual deliverance (not just physical). 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15; Paul knew from personal experience what it meant to be saved. Ultimately God does the saving; but Paul was in the saving business. Assumes there must be some type of grave danger out there = eternal destruction, divine wrath, second death, lake of fire that burns forever

C. “*Partaker*” of the gospel = share with; work alongside of; This is Paul's passion; not just witnessing once in awhile; this drove his engine; this is why he disrupted his life to move around and preach in different cities. He who is wise wins souls. Paul loved people. Do you have a commitment to get out the gospel? Why aren't more people responding and believing?

III. PRESENT APPLICATION

A. Negatively: What Paul was NOT saying to do:

1) Paul never changed the gospel message; never compromised; never reduced the message or left out unpopular parts; Gal. 1:9; did not accommodate the Judaizers or legalists; made no apologies for the gospel; was not ashamed of the gospel; Did not adopt the stance of some: “I believe it all but just preach certain parts”; he preached the whole counsel of God; exclusivity = there is only one way to God – did not back down from this message which is hard for people to stomach

2) Paul never joined anyone in sinful practices – Rom. 14:14-17

Talking about gray areas of behavior; not areas of compromise with sin.

Paul never said “become like a thief to win thieves”

You can't win the world by imitating it.

Not the end justifies the means. Not a people pleaser. Gal. 5:11; not relying on marketing savvy

B. Positively: What Paul WAS saying to do:

1) Don't put a stumbling block before others (except for the gospel message itself)

Don't be Seeker insensitive

2) Know your culture – remain engaged

Don't become an isolationist like the Amish; how people dress; type of music; etc. we make too big of a deal about certain things

3) Don't be fearful to make changes; Act in Faith

Ask for counsel about whether a particular approach would be wise

Conclusion: Success of our evangelism is not due to our methodology; God is sovereign
Love wedded to truth will rescue the perishing

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

TITLE: TWO MOTIVATIONS FOR DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN LIVING

BIG IDEA:

THE VALUE OF THE ETERNAL PRIZE AND THE DANGER OF DISQUALIFICATION MOTIVATE DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN THE WARFARE AGAINST SIN

APPROACH:

- Are we talking in this passage about rewards that will differentiate between believers based on the quality of their Christian service . . . OR
- Are we talking about gaining or being disqualified from the same prize that awaits each believer = eternal life and fellowship with God

Issues to deal with:

- says that **only one** receives the prize – how can this be a reference to salvation?
- Apostle Paul views himself as in danger of disqualification – What to make of this?

MacArthur takes the view that it may refer to disqualification “from preaching and leading the church, particularly being blameless and above reproach in the sexual area, since such sin is a disqualification.”

But what does the text say?

CONTEXT:

A. Preceding context – 9:23 “*that I may be a fellow partaker of it*” [the gospel]

Seems to be talking about fellowship in the eternal life that is in the Son in the same sense that fellowship is spoken of in **1 John 1:1-4**

B. Following context – 10:5 “*Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.*”

Paul uses this historical example to exhort the Corinthians not to crave evil things; not to be idolaters; not to act immorally; not to try the Lord; not to grumble; etc.; This usage does not seem to lend a lot of weight in either direction.

Start at the end – word study of “*disqualified*” in v. 27 – NT usage is decisive:

2 Cor. 13:5-7 -- used of *reprobates*

Heb. 6:8 – “*worthless and in danger of being cursed*”

Rom. 1:28 – “*disapproved mind*”

2 Tim. 3:8 – “*Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.*”

Titus 1:16 – “*They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.*”

INTRODUCTION :

The Corinthian believers exhibited a carelessness in their Christian living and a casualness that did not recognize the reality of their ongoing warfare with sin. The Apostle Paul shakes them out of their lethargy with this motivational plea for disciplined Christian living.

Nicoll: Paul pursues this line of warning, addressed to men who were imperiling their own souls by self-indulgence and worldly conformity. Of the danger of missing the prize of life through indiscipline Paul is keenly sensible in his own case; he conveys his apprehension under the picture, so familiar to the Corinthians, of the Isthmian Games.

Paul uses both the carrot and the stick and dresses up his appeal in the familiar athletic pictures of two different types of contests: an Olympic style marathon race and an intense boxing match.

These two analogies from the realm of sports should be self evident:

“Do you not know that”

I. (:24-25) THE CARROT – RUNNING ANALOGY THE VALUE OF THE ETERNAL PRIZE MOTIVATES DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN THE WARFARE AGAINST SIN

A. Participation Does Not Equate to Victory

1. The Christian Life is a Marathon ... not a Sprint

“in a race”

(Although the figure used here for a stadion was only a furlong long, a little more than 200 yards)

2. Participation is Not the Same as Perseverance and Victory

“the runners all compete”

3. Receiving the Prize is What Matters

“but only one receives the prize?”

B. Pursue the Prize Diligently and Zealously

“Run in such a way that you may win it.”

Why else would you train and participate? The possibility of running and not obtaining is very real to the Apostle Paul.

The Goal of the Christian life is Victory

How is victory defined here?

Piper: The point here is not that only one Christian wins the prize of the upward call of

God. As a matter of fact in the Christian race one of the rules is that you must help others finish (Hebrews 3:13). Finishing the race is a community project. The point is not that there is only one winner. The point is: run the way the winner runs. How does the winner run? He runs hard. He gives the race everything he has. In another place Paul says, "*Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord*" (Romans 12:10). This is the way we are to run in our service for Christ: with zeal and fervent in the Spirit. Not lazy or idle or sluggish or unconcerned.

C. Disciplined Living (Exercising Self Control by the Spirit) is the Key to Victory
"Athletes exercise self-control in all things"

What type of discipline and training do we see from athletes?

How would you describe disciplined Christian living?

Why must the scope of this discipline be "*in all things*"?:

Morris: Notice that the athlete denies himself many lawful pleasures. The Christian must avoid not only definite sin, but anything that hinders his complete effectiveness.

D. Earthly Prizes Cannot Compare to the Eternal Prize

1. Earthly Prizes are Perishable

"they do it to receive a perishable wreath"

2. The Eternal Prize is Imperishable

"but we an imperishable one."

Lenski: The argument from the less to the greater is overwhelming: if those athletes practice such self-control merely to obtain a slight and fading earthly crown, shall we do less for a heavenly crown of glory that lasts forever?

II. (:26-27) THE STICK – BOXING ANALOGY THE DANGER OF DISQUALIFICATION MOTIVATES DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN THE WARFARE AGAINST SIN

A. (:26) Key Elements of Disciplined Christian Living

1. Discipline Involves Purposeful Dedication

a. Transition: Race Analogy – Purposeful Running

"So I do not run aimlessly"

b. Boxing Analogy – Purposeful Boxing

"nor do I box as though beating the air"

2. Discipline Involves Hardship and Mastery

a. Hardship / Suffering

"but I punish my body"

b. Mastery / Dominion
“and enslave it”

MacArthur: Most people, including many Christians, are instead slaves to their bodies. Their bodies tell their minds what to do. Their bodies decide when to eat, what to eat, how much to eat, when to sleep and get up, and so on. An athlete cannot allow that. He follows the training rules, not his body. He runs when he would rather be resting, he eats a balanced meal when he would rather have a chocolate sundae, he goes to bed when he would rather stay up, and he gets up early to train when he would rather stay in bed. An athlete leads his body; he does not follow it. It is his slave, not the other way around.

B. (:27) Ever Present Danger of Ultimate Disqualification

1. Christian Service No Guarantee of Ultimate Victory

“so that after proclaiming to others”

2. Disqualification Would be a Terrible Tragedy

“I myself should not be disqualified.”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would I characterize the level of my effort and zeal in living for Christ?
- 2) What specific examples of self control and the exercise of spiritual discipline mark my Christian life?
- 3) Do I view myself as exempt from the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to take care in how I live the Christian life lest I end up outside the camp of heaven?
- 4) How does this paragraph support the doctrine of the Perseverance of the saints?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Lenski: Now there follows the final negative purpose clause, which explains the purpose clause used in v. 23, in which Paul states that he himself may be a joint partaker in the gospel. At the same time this purpose clause, which is found at the very end of the chapter, illumines the entire chapter, it reaches back to the desire to eat idol meats, continues on through the self-denials which Paul practiced, and culminates in Paul’s determination to preserve his own share in the gospel: *“lest in any way, after having preached to others, I myself should be rejected,”* the aorist denotes a final,

decisive act: “*should be a castaway,*” A.V. . .

What a calamity when a professing Christian finds himself “rejected” in the end! How much worse when one of the lord’s own heralds has this experience! Paul regards his work and even the way in which he does his work with extreme seriousness. The fact that he is an apostle is not yet proof to him that he will be saved. He knows the test that he must face. He applies that test to himself in this chapter and so attains both the subjective and the objective certainty that he will indeed not be a castaway.

Grosheide: His great antagonist is sin, which always drives him in the wrong direction (cf. Rom. 7). Paul does not refer to fasting and bodily chastisement but to his struggle against sin. And the apostle summons the Corinthians to do the same. In his final words Paul also refers to his apostleship. It is that apostleship which compels him to preach the gospel and to train himself as a Christian. Knowing the way of salvation so eminently himself, he makes a special effort to go that way that he *should not be rejected*, i.e., to be one of those who did not stand the test of God (3:13f.; 4:4f.). As previously (vs. 23) Paul brings in the matter of his own salvation. Paul’s life is a unity: his apostolic work as well as his Christian life concern his whole personality.

Hodge: The reckless and listless Corinthians thought they could safely indulge themselves to the very verge of sin, while this devoted apostle considered himself as engaged in a life-struggle for his salvation. This same apostle, however, who evidently acted on the principle that the righteous scarcely are saved, and that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, at other times breaks out in the most joyful assurance of salvation, and says that he was persuaded that nothing in heaven, earth or hell could ever separate him from the love of God. Rom. 8, 38. 39. The one state of mind is the necessary condition of the other. It is only those who are conscious of this constant and deadly struggle with sin, to whom this assurance is given. In the very same breath Paul says, “O wretched man that I am;” and “Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory,” Rom. 7, 24. 25. It is the indolent and self-indulgent Christian who is always in doubt.

Piper: What's at Stake in This Race?

Paul gives the answer to this question in four different ways in four different verses. In two of them he talks about what is at stake in the way he runs his own race. And in two of them he talks about what's at stake in the way the Corinthians run the race. It's the same thing for both. He wants them to see what's at stake is the prize. And he uses himself as an example. He is in the race with them.

1. Becoming a Fellow-Partaker of the Gospel

First, in verse 23 he comes to the end of his description (in verses 19–22) of how he is willing to become all things to all men in order to save some (v. 22), and he sums up this passion for people and for the gospel like this: (v. 23) *"And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow-partaker of it."*

There's the first description of what is at stake in the way Paul runs the race of his life. " . . . *that I may become a fellow-partaker of the gospel.*" " . . . *that I might have a share*

in the gospel." ". . . that I might obtain what the gospel promises."

Now what the gospel promises is salvation—salvation from sin and death and hell. "*The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe*" (Romans 1:16; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1–2). So what Paul is saying is this: "I live for the sake of the gospel—I preach it and become all things to all people, not only that they might be saved, but that I might inherit the same salvation with them." He said the same thing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:16, "*Take heed to yourself and to your teaching, hold fast to that; for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*"

God has called Paul to preach the gospel. Whether he does or not is evidence of his living relationship to Christ. It is evidence of whether he has been born of God and given a new heart of love to Christ. And therefore what hangs on Paul's running in the path of obedience and his fighting the fight of faith is the reality of his own standing in grace, his own participation in the gospel.

If he quit running, if he said, "I've had enough of this life of service; I'm through with following the path of obedience to my heavenly call; I'll try to hang on to Christ for the forgiveness of my sins, but I'm done with doing what he says,"—if Paul quit like that, and never came back, he would be lost. He would not get the prize of salvation. He would be disqualified from the race and sent away in shame—like a sprinter guilty of unlawful steroids.

2. Disqualification

That's what Paul says in verse 27, which is the second way he describes what is at stake in the race of life. He says, "*I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.*"

"Disqualified!"

Paul will warn the Corinthians in the next chapter (10:12), "*Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*" Now Paul applies it to himself. "If I do not take heed, if I give way to some of the impulses of my body, I could find myself on the slippery slope of disobedience away from Christ, and get to the end of my life and hear the judge of the race say, 'Disqualified! Yes, you prophesied in my name. Yes, you cast out demons in my name. Yes, you did many mighty works in my name. But you left the racetrack of faith and love and righteousness. You are disqualified. Depart from me. I never knew you (Matthew 7:22–23).'"

The best evidence perhaps that this is what Paul means is the use of the word "disqualified" (*adokimos*) in 2 Corinthians 13:5. Paul says, "*Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you are disqualified.*" The word is exactly the same one from 1 Corinthians 9:27.

To be disqualified means that Christ is not in you. The race has been run in vain. It was a sham.

How Paul Viewed His Own Life

Now Paul does not believe that is true about his own heart. And he means to make his whole life a living demonstration that Christ is in him and Christ is mighty to save. The way he runs and the way he fights is not because he doesn't have Christ and hopes to have him, but because he does have Christ and means to show it to the world.

The beautiful way he puts it in Philippians 3:12 is, *"Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."*

The running and the fighting of the Christian life is a running and fighting for eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12—*"Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of eternal life"*). But it is a race and a fight in the confidence that we have been taken hold of by Christ for that very life. Our running and our fighting, with all its pain, is proof that the Christ who ran his race and fought his fight and endured his cross for the joy (the prize) set before him is alive and real in our hearts.

So Paul uses himself and his own race twice to show what is at stake in the way we run and fight. Now he says the same thing when he mentions twice what is at stake in the way the Corinthians run their race.

3. The Prize of Heaven

Verse 24: *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may seize it."* Run to win the prize.

The word for "prize" is used one other time in the New Testament, namely, in Philippians 3:14. *"I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* Not to get the prize is not to go to heaven.

So when Paul says, *"Run in such a way as to win the prize,"* heaven hangs on this running. That's why next week's message is so crucial. What is it? How do we do it?

4. The Imperishable Crown of Righteousness

The fourth description of what is at stake in our running is mentioned in verse 25.

"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable." The prize is an "imperishable wreath."

The word is *stephanos*, crown, and the closest parallel to this use of crown is 2 Timothy 4:7–8 where Paul mentions the race and the fight just like he does here in verse 26. *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course [race], I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing."*

The "imperishable crown" is the righteousness that finally fits us for heaven. We don't have it yet. We still sin. We repent. God forgives. But we fight and we run in the pursuit

of righteousness (Hebrews 12:14). We hunger and thirst for righteousness with the confidence, Jesus says, that "we shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). We do not run in vain!

Conclusion

And so the conclusion this morning is this: the Christian life is an awesomely serious affair and the stakes are infinitely high. What you do with your life—the way you run your race and fight your fight—will make the difference between sharing in the promises of the gospel or being disqualified. It will make the difference between attaining the prize of the upward call of God in Christ, or not. It will make the difference between receiving the unfading crown of righteousness or not. Life is serious business.

http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/19/802_Olympic_Spirituality_Part_1/

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

TITLE: TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL – PERSEVERE TO THE END

BIG IDEA:

INCLUSION IN SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGE NO GUARANTEE OF PARTICIPATION IN SPIRITUAL SALVATION

INTRODUCTION:

We must remember everything said earlier about Paul's desire to persevere in his Christian life and ministry so as to be a *"fellow partaker"* of the gospel benefits (9:23) and not to be *"disqualified"* (9:27). [*adokimos* is the key determining word in this whole section = "rejected, worthless"] He has **salvation** in mind in both of those references – consistent with the Calvinistic doctrine of the **perseverance of the saints**. Some might argue that salvation cannot be in view because that would call into question the doctrine of assurance of salvation. How can you have any confidence of your salvation if you need to wait to see if you persevere to the end? Isn't that adding an element of works to assurance? But the Book of 1 John teaches that there are multiple tracks of assurance. Someone can have assurance on the **basis of their faith** as soon as they are saved. But there is also another growing track of assurance that is based on your living out a **changed life** by the grace of God. Assurance on that track can fluctuate some and we are exhorted to make our calling and election secure. So any objections on those grounds would constitute objections against the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints as well.

The difficulty is that there are multiple tracks of application that grow out of the one thread of interpretation. In 9:24-27 as well as 10:1-13, there are different groups of people listening to this message and needing to make different applications. There are certainly the self-deceived and false professors of Christianity who need to be challenged to move on to genuine repentance and faith so as to not miss out on the blessing of God's rest (Hebrews 3-4). We know that no one whose life is characterized by idolatry or immorality or unbelief or rebellion can enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yet are we going to argue that all of those who died in the wilderness missed out on salvation? Certainly not! Moses was one of those who died in the wilderness. So there are also the large numbers in the audience Paul is addressing who are genuinely saved and need to be challenged to live a disciplined Christian life to the end, not to abuse their Christian freedoms and liberty in Christ, and to beware lest they fall as well. My point is that we do not want to strip away one of the main threats of the passage which is that it is possible for someone to have all types of intimate contact with spiritual privilege and the best Bible teaching and Christian fellowship and yet still miss out on salvation. We need to drive home that warning while still making the application to Christians of the need for careful and diligent pursuit of holiness.

We need more teaching on the important doctrine of the perseverance of the saints so that we don't shy away from this truth where it is referenced in the passage. (See doctrinal statement below.) Certainly in our day with the prevalence of "easy

believism” and many people who have a false sense of security in their salvation, they need to be shaken from their spiritual lethargy with these challenging words and OT examples.

I. (:1-5) THESIS PROVED: GOD’S REJECTION OF THE UNBELIEVING GENERATION OF EXODUS WILDERNESS WANDERERS

Transition

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren”

(Rom. 1:13; 1 Cor. 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:13)

Grosheide: a litotes, which always introduces an important matter.

A. Tremendous Inclusion in Spiritual Privileges

1. (:1) Privilege of Divine Guidance and Deliverance

a. Divine Guidance

“that our fathers were all under the cloud”

Guzik: The cloud of Shekinah glory overshadowed Israel throughout their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. During the day, the cloud sheltered them from the brutal desert sun, and during the night, it burned as a pillar of fire. It was a constant, ready reminder of God’s glory and presence (Exodus 13:21-22).

b. Divine Deliverance – Tremendous miracles experienced

“and all passed through the sea”

Grosheide: All Israelites enjoyed that favor of God [being led by the pillar]. Even so when they passed through the Red Sea there was no distinction between believers and unbelievers: the entire nation safely reached the other shore.

2. (:2) Privilege of Union with Moses

“and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”

Significance of “baptism” – immersed, identification, union – symbolic

To bring in close relationship with Moses; his ministry and leadership

3. (:3-4a) Privilege of Spiritual Nourishment – spiritual source – Supernatural Provision

a. (:3) Spiritual Food

“and all ate the same spiritual food”

b. (:4a) Spiritual Drink

“and all drank the same spiritual drink”

4. (:4b) Spiritual Types Fulfilled in Christ

“for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and

the rock was Christ.”

Here Paul makes the connection between the OT experiences and the spiritual reality involved and the NT experience of the Corinthian believers as the OT types are fulfilled in Christ.

Gil Rugh: Ex. 17 and Num 20 – two instances – at the beginning of their journey in the wilderness and at the end; perhaps the rock was an ongoing source of water

Guzik: Paul is building on a Rabbinical tradition which said Israel was supplied with water by the same rock all through the wilderness, a rock which followed them.

Hodge: This view of the passage makes the apostle responsible for a Jewish fable, and is inconsistent with his divine authority. . . It is not necessary, however, to assume that either the rock or the water out of the rock followed them. The rock that followed them was Christ. The Logos, the manifested Jehovah, who attended the Israelites in their journey, was the Son of God who assumed our nature, and was the Christ.

B. Shocking Rejection of Participation in Spiritual Blessing

1. Extent of the Failure

“Nevertheless, with most of them”

Classic understatement – all but 2 men! Vs. millions

2. Evaluation of Their Spiritual Condition

“God was not well-pleased”

Gil Rugh: God’s sovereign pleasure; context of God’s sovereign work of divine election; Look at word usage in NT:

Ephes. 1:5,9 *“kind intention”* – according to what pleased His will

Phil. 2:12b *“for His good pleasure”* – according to what pleases Him

Heb. 10:36-39 *“you have need of endurance”* – If you don’t do the will of God you won’t receive what is promised; *“and if he shrinks back my soul has no pleasure in him”*

3. Execution of Severe Judgment

“for they were laid low in the wilderness”

“Spread out; scattered”

Hodge: Would God permit those to perish for whom he had wrought so signal a deliverance, and for whose sake he sacrificed the hosts of Egypt? Yet their carcasses were strewn in the wilderness. It is not enough, therefore, to be recipients of extraordinary favours; it is not enough to begin well. It is only by constant self-denial and vigilance, that the promised reward can be obtained. This is the lesson the apostle intends to inculcate.

II. (:6) THESIS APPLIED BY WAY OF WARNING: GUARD AGAINST THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH = MAJOR PITFALL

A. Value of OT Examples

“Now these things happened as examples for us”

B. Purpose of OT Examples – Guard Against the Lusts of the Flesh

“so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.”

II. (:7-10) THESIS ILLUSTRATED FURTHER: FOUR OT EXAMPLES OF MORAL FAILURE AND DEVASTATING JUDGMENT (UNGODLY BEHAVIOR ON THE PART OF THE SPIRITUALLY PRIVILEGED . . . FOLLOWED BY DIVINE JUDGMENT)

(Examine how Unbelief lies at the core of each of these manifestations of Rebellion)

A. (:7) Guard Against Idolatry (Ex. 32:1-6)

“Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.’”

Cole: The verb translated *play* suggests sex-play in Hebrew . . . and therefore we are probably to understand drunken orgies.” (commentary on Exodus)

J. Scott Lindsay: Exodus 32 talks about this incident. And it is interesting that of all the things that Paul *might* have quoted from Ex 32, the one thing he chooses to quote is verse 6, “And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play”. Now why quote this? Because of the parallels with the Corinthian situation. The people of Israel were engaging in blatant idolatry, *eating and drinking in the presence of a golden calf* - an idol - and doing other things as well. God’s anger and judgment against them on that occasion were great. And what were the Corinthians doing? They were *insisting* on their “right” and freedom to eat and drink food, in an idol temple.

B. (:8) Guard Against Immorality (Num. 25 or Ex. 32?)

“Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.”

Possible answers to apparent discrepancy in numbers here with 24,000 of Numbers 25:9: (*“those who died by the plague were 24,000”*)

Hodge: Moses and Paul were accustomed, like most other men, to use round numbers; and they used them when under the influence of inspiration just as they used other familiar forms of statement. Neither intended to speak with numerical exactness, which the occasion did not require. What a wonderful book is the Bible, written at intervals during a period of fifteen hundred years, when such apparitions of inaccuracy as this must be seized upon to impeach its infallibility!

MacArthur: Having just quoted from Ex 32 in vs. 7, this very likely also refers to the

incident in **Ex 32**, not to the incident at Shittim in Nu 25. Apparently 3,000 were killed by the Levites (Ex 32:28) and 20,000 died in the plague (Ex 32:35).

C. (:9) Guard Against Presumption (Num. 21:5-6)

“Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.”

D. (:10) Guard Against Discontent (Num. 16:3-41)

“Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.”

Look at how this common sin is thrown in here at the same level of importance with the others. Grumbling, murmuring, discontent are huge problems. Don't minimize these. It is an attack of unbelief against the Goodness and Wisdom of God.

Hodge: To murmur is to complain in a rebellious spirit.

II. (:11-13) THESIS APPLIED BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT: WATCH OUT! BUT WITH AN ATTITUDE OF HOPE NOT DISCOURAGEMENT . . . NO EXCEPTIONS . . . NO EXCUSES

A. (:11) Relevance of These OT Examples

1. History Has a Purpose for Us

“Now these things happened to them as an example”

2. Scripture Provides Authoritative Instruction for Us

“and they were written for our instruction”

3. Time Is Running Out for Us

“upon whom the ends of the ages have come”

B. (:12) Central Application – Warning Against Spiritual Overconfidence – Need for Careful, Diligent Pursuit of Holiness

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.”

1. Primary Application to the Unsaved

2. Secondary Application to the Saved

C. (:13) Faithfulness of God Provides for the Perseverance of the Saints

1. No Unique Temptation that God Cannot Defeat = Provides Hope

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man”

2. Character of God Provides Hope

“God is Faithful”

3. Limitation of Man No Excuse

“who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able”

4. Endurance is Possible and Sovereignly Enabled

“but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

Boyer: If Christians once learn the meaning of I Corinthians 10:13 they never again will say, “I couldn’t help it.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What spiritual privileges have our children been exposed to? Do we understand that this is not a guarantee of salvation?
- 2) Are we surprised to find that the source of all spiritual blessings for OT saints was Jesus Christ – just as it is for us in NT times?
- 3) Did the Apostle Paul consider himself to be under the same admonition of needing to *“take heed lest he fall”*? What does this say about those who are overconfident and complacent in their Christian experience?
- 4) Are we encouraged or discouraged by this need to persevere and finish the race?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hope Bible Church: Doctrinal Statement: **Security, Perseverance, and Assurance**

1. All the redeemed once saved are kept by God’s power and are thus secure in Christ forever. No truly saved person can or will lose his salvation. [John 10:28-29; 17:12; Romans 8:30,35-39; 11:29; Ephesians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 2:1; 5:13,18]
2. All real believers endure in their faith to the end. Their continuance in the Christian walk and Christian doctrine is the mark that distinguishes them from those who merely profess Christianity. [Matthew 24:13; Luke 22:31-32; John 15:1-6; Romans 8:17; Galatians 5:4; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 10:38; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 1 John 2:18-19,28]
3. A special providence of God cares for the saved and keeps them from falling away permanently. Therefore, perseverance is guaranteed by God’s provision of new life in Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the intercessory work of Christ at the right hand of the Father. [Luke 22:31- 32; John 17:9-12; Hebrews 1:3; 4:14; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 2:1; 5:13]
4. It is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God’s word and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, which however,

clearly forbids the use of Christian security and liberty as an occasion for sinful living. [John 3:16-17; Romans 8:16; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Peter 1:3-4; 1 John 2:3-4; 3:1; 4:1-4; 5:13,19]

http://hopebiblechurch.org/files/documents/HBC_WhatWeTeach.pdf

MacArthur: It is interesting that Dr. MacArthur takes the position that the 1 Corinthians passage deals with the danger not “*of falling from salvation but of falling from holiness and from usefulness in service.*” But then look at what he says about the Hebrews (chap 3-4) passage (admittedly a different context) where the same OT illustrations are used:

“It describes Israel’s disobedience and rejection of God in the Exodus wanderings.” . . . Addressed to “the Hebrews who are on the edge of decision but have never made a commitment.” . . .

“After they arrived for the trial in the wilderness, God continued to bless them with miracles – travel direction by pillars of cloud and of fire (for night travel) and provision of food and good water. After each blessing they were satisfied only for a brief time. They soon started again to complain and to doubt God. They became the classic illustration of unbelief in the face of overwhelming evidence. God had clearly and miraculously revealed Himself; they knew He had revealed Himself; they knew what He expected them to do; and they saw evidence after evidence of His power and His blessing. But they never really believed. Just as the Egyptians quickly got over their fear of God, the Israelites quickly got over their trust of Him. They would not commit themselves to Him in faith. As a result, they had to wander and wander and wander – until all of the ungrateful, untrusting, unbelieving generation had died. For some forty years they wandered around in circles in a barren, desolate, and oppressive land – because of their unbelief. . . The rest was Canaan, where the toil of wandering would end. As we shall see in the next chapter [4], it is a symbol of salvation. . . The greatest proof of salvation is continuance in the Christian life.”

John Calvin: What he had previously taught by two similitudes, he now confirms by examples. The Corinthians grew wanton, and gloried, as if they had served out their time or at least had finished their course, when they had scarcely left the starting-point. This vain exultation and confidence he represses in this manner — “As I see that you are quietly taking your ease at the very outset of your course, I would not have you ignorant of what befell the people of Israel in consequence of this, that their example may arouse you.” As, however, on examples being adduced, any point of difference destroys the force of the comparison, Paul premises, that there is no such dissimilarity between us and the Israelites, as to make our condition different from theirs. Having it, therefore, in view to threaten the Corinthians with the same vengeance as had overtaken them, he begins in this manner — “Beware of glorying in any peculiar privilege, as if you were in higher esteem than they were in the sight of God.” For they were favored with the same benefits as we at this day enjoy; there was a Church of God among them, as there is at this day among us; they had the same sacraments, to be tokens to them of the grace of God; but, on their abusing their privileges, they did not escape the

judgment of God. Be afraid, therefore; for the same thing is impending over you. Jude makes use of the same argument in his Epistle. (Jude 1:5.)

Mark Copeland: EXAMPLES OF ISRAEL'S APOSTASY (1-14)

A. APOSTASY IN SPITE OF BLESSINGS (1-5)

1. Blessings received in the crossing of the Red Sea (1-2)
2. Blessings received as they sojourned in the wilderness (3-4)
3. Still, with most of them God was not pleased, and they died in the wilderness (5)

B. THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL SHOULD SERVE TO WARN CHRISTIANS (6-14)

1. Their example of apostasy to warn us (6)
 - a. Not to become idolaters (7)
 - b. Not to commit sexual immorality (8)
 - c. Not to tempt Christ (9)
 - d. Not to murmur (10)
2. Their history recorded to admonish us (11)
 - a. For we can just as easily fall (12)
 - b. Though God is faithful to provide help in dealing with temptation (13)
3. Therefore, flee from idolatry! (14)

Grosheide: Three things thus stand out: 1) the entire nation received the benefits of God; 2) those benefits had a spiritual character; 3) those benefits came from Christ. The apostle has now established two things: first, that we must distinguish between an enjoyment of the genuine benefits of God and a continuance in God's favor till the end (cf. vs. 5). Second, Paul has made it impossible for the Corinthians to say that all those things only applied to old Israel but that they no longer applied to them in the new dispensation. By recording past history the apostle is able to show that God punishes sinners more clearly than by direct admonition.

Gil Rugh: True Believers Stay the Course (:1-5)

True salvation changes a life radically. The Bible compares the change to death. You are raised as a new creation in Christ. That change and transformation controls your life until your life comes to an end. The Bible knows nothing of a salvation that works just part way (not a cure for just a short time). Importance of finishing the race. Cf. Hebrews 6:7-8 same word *adokimos* from 1 Cor. 9:27 used here; Rom. 15:4-5; Note the word "all" – refers 5 times in first 4 verses. There are spiritual blessings that every Jew coming out of Egypt experienced. Those with whom God is not "well-pleased" will end up experiencing destruction. Both the Church in the NT and Israel in the OT get all of their spiritual blessings from Christ. Forty years wilderness wandering was a Death March; only an 11 day journey. Only Joshua and Caleb went into the land. That doesn't mean they were the only believers. Those who are truly saved will stay the course.

Heb. 3 – Superiority of Christ to Moses – uses the same type of OT examples; they passed through the Red Sea and ate the manna – so what! Not about impressive testimonies but a changed life. “*We have become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.*” You must finish the race or you prove yourself worthless. Being disobedient is a manifestation of unbelief. That is the root problem.

Heb. 5 – You’re not saved by persevering; but if you are saved you will persevere. “*You have become dull of hearing*” – *nothroi* – 6:12 – “*sluggish*” – same word; context is the need to *show diligence until the end*; those *do not inherit the promises*; even though they all have experienced great spiritual blessings; the Word preached to them did not profit them

I’m glad that my salvation is complete until the end. The passion of my life is to obey and serve Jesus Christ. The goal is to finish well.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=83106155944>

J. Scott Lindsay: And so, it is in *that* vein that Paul continues with his words of warning to the Corinthians. Whereas in 9:24-27 he used himself as an example of someone who - just like them - needed to take care that he did not disqualify himself in the “Christian race”; he now turns to another source to drive home his point - the example of God’s people in Israel in the days of Moses. To be sure, while the majority of Paul’s Greek audience were not *ethnic* descendants of the Hebrew people, they were nevertheless, the *spiritual* descendants of them. As a result, the Israelites were very much “their people” and so what happened to them was perfectly relevant to the Corinthians, many years later.

Now, in order to get any mileage out of what happened to God’s people in Moses’ day, Paul has to make some connections. He has to draw some parallels between their situation and that of the Corinthians. The more parallels he can draw, the more similarities he can point out - the stronger his point will be. And the reason *why* Paul even bothers to take this sort of approach in the first place is grounded in his understanding of the person and character of God. In short, Paul understood that because God never changes then we can expect some consistency in how He responds to certain things - even if the circumstances are separated by a great deal of time. God is always holy, He is always just, He is always good - and because of that there will be some recognizable pattern in His responses to situations of similar natures. Even more to the point, Paul not only believed that God responded to things in these ways because of His *consistent character* but also because of his *sovereign purposes*.

<http://www.sbrpres.org/pdf/1cor10v1s.pdf>

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

TITLE: *DON'T MESS WITH FALSE RELIGIONS*

BIG IDEA:

MEMBERS OF THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST CAN HAVE NO ASSOCIATION WITH IDOLATRY (FALSE RELIGION)

INTRODUCTION:

Paul continues his general discussion about the propriety of believers eating meats offered to idols. This was the subject introduced back in 8:1 “*Now concerning things sacrificed to idols.*” The context in this paragraph (10:14-21) relates to participation or at the least association with the culture of false, man-made worship. Instead of actively confronting the evil and the contradictions to biblical truth and practice, the individual adopts a very careless and ecumenical spirit of indifference towards the upholding of truth regarding the One True God. Christianity is a narrow, exclusivistic approach to the worship of God. We need Paul’s strong admonition here to “*Flee from idolatry.*” Once we understand the danger of the demonic activity behind false religions and the jealousy we will provoke from a holy and powerful God we should act sensibly in this area.

I. (:14-15) THE COMMAND – PADDLE THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION -- KEEP YOUR DISTANCE FROM FALSE RELIGIONS

Picture getting sucked into the fast-flowing current and tumbling over a waterfall

A. (:14) Separation from Idolatry Must be a Top Priority

1. Separation from Idolatry is Essential to our Faith and our Testimony
“*Therefore*” -- connective to previous sections in chaps. 9-10

a. Connection to our own endurance in the faith

b. Connection to our testimony to win many to Christ

2. Separation from Idolatry Presupposes a Loving Family Connection within the Body of Christ
“*my beloved*”

Hodge: Paul addresses them in terms of affection, although his epistle is so full of serious admonition and warning.

3. Separation from Idolatry Involves Immediate and Drastic Action
“*flee from idolatry*”

a. Must be able to Identify False Religions

b. Must Respond Aggressively and Urgently

B. (:15) Separation from Idolatry Should Make Sense to Believers

1. Separation from Idolatry is the Path of Wisdom

“I speak as to wise men”

This issue is not an easy one; not for the immature; requires great wisdom to sort out how to conduct oneself

2. Separation from Idolatry is the Path of Discernment

“you judge what I say.”

Where are the people of discernment today? Believers are so easily duped. Have we developed our critical thinking skills under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

Lenski: The questions which Paul now asks bring out the vital facts. All of them are plain, and all of them are undisputed. On the basis of these Paul wants the Corinthians to make a definite decision on their own account. Sensible Christian people will not only at once give the self-evident answers to these questions but will also perceive the force of these answers as far as conduct is concerned.

II. (:16-21) THE CONTRAST -- UNDERSTAND THAT PARTICIPATION INVOLVES IDENTIFICATION

A. (:16-18) Positive Example of Identification with the True God

1. (:16-17) NT Example – Centering around the Lord’s Supper

a. Sharing in the Blood of Christ

“Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ?”

b. Sharing in the Body of Christ

“Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?”

c. Unity in One Body

“Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.”

2. (:18) OT Example – Centering around the sacrifices

“Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?”

B. (:19-21) Negative Example of Identification with the Demons Behind False Religions

1. (:19) Don’t Miss the Point of the Contrast – Not talking about Inanimate Objects

“What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?”

2. (:20) Participation in False Religion Involves Identification with the Demons Behind the Idols – Talking about very real and very powerful evil spirits

“No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.”

Rugh: “Gentiles” not in the earlier texts

Piper: So here is the key word again: *sharers*. What does it mean? Again it does not mean that we eat demons when we eat meat offered to idols. It means that we get entangled in their power. We submit to them. We become vulnerable to them. We enter into some kind of fellowship. We affirm them in some way and give them leeway in our lives.

3. (:21) Identification with the Lord is Mutually Exclusive from Idolatry

a. The Cup of the Lord vs. the Cup of Demons

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons”

b. The Table of the Lord vs the Table of Demons

“You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”

III. (:22) THE CAVEAT – PROVOKING GOD WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE -- FEAR THE JEALOUS, OMNIPOTENT GOD

Very solemn warning – Don’t mess with God – He is extremely jealous and powerful

A. Don’t Mess with a God Who is Extremely Jealous

“Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”

B. Don’t Mess with a God Who is Extremely Powerful

“We are not stronger than He, are we?”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What is the relationship between verse 13 and this paragraph?

2) Where is an ecumenical spirit creeping into our thinking and compromising our loyalty to God’s narrow truth?

3) In what ways do we act as if we think that we are stronger than the Lord?

4) Do believers today take the threat of demonic activity seriously?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: What he has in mind is not bowing and scraping before an image, but succumbing to the temptation to enjoy again the atmosphere found at the idol temple. There were a lot of fun things going on with regard to idolatry that some of the Corinthians, at least, were hoping to be able to hang on to. If you had lived in Corinth in that 1st century you would have recognized that the whole Roman and Greek citizenry of the city regarded the temple as the most exciting place in town. There you could get the best food, served up in the open-air restaurant. There they had the wildest music and all the seductive pleasures of wine, women and song. If you wanted to enjoy yourself in Corinth, therefore, you went out to the temple.

I believe the apostle is concerned lest these Corinthians, in seeking to enjoy what would be normal pleasures of life, would be tempted to go back into it to such a degree that, ultimately, they would find themselves lured back into belief in these idols and their power. Idolatry is not something you do outwardly with your body. Idolatry basically occurs whenever anyone or anything becomes more important to you than the living God. . .

Any form of idolatry awakens the jealousy of God. All through the Old Testament we are told that God is "a jealous God," {Exod 20:5, 34:14, Deut 4:24, 5:9, 6:15, Josh 24:19}. What does Paul mean by that? Is God subject to capricious whims in which he gets angry if anybody looks at anything else? No, God's jealousy is a proper jealousy; it is a love so intense for the object of his love that he is angry when something threatens it, and he will act. He will not stand idly by and let you drift away into some idolatrous preoccupation with something of the world. He will strike at it; he will destroy it. And if your affections are so entwined with it, you are going to get hurt in the process; you will find yourself crushed and hurt and crying out to God, "Why do you do this to me?" But it is an act of love from a jealous God who will not allow you to drift into that kind of preoccupation.

<http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/4867/3592.html>

Boyer: Paul appeals to them as sensible, reasonable men to draw their own conclusions (v. 15). The communion of the bread and the cup, instituted by our Lord on the eve of His sacrificial death, was a familiar practice to them. They understood well that the partaking of the communion elements was a communing with, a partaking of, Christ. So also it was in Israel. Those who ate of the sacrifices were partakers of the altar. So also, Paul reasons, is it in paganism. Those who partook of the idol sacrifices were communing with the idols. Not that the stone or wood image was anything, but it represented a false religious system which was in actuality the worship of demons (vv. 19, 20). Such a mixing of the table of the Lord with the table of demons was a monstrous thought and a moral impossibility. God is a jealous God, and to provoke His

jealousy by playing around with idolatry is the utmost in foolishness; unless, of course, you are greater than He is! (v. 22),

Piper: Idolatry, The Lord's Supper and the Body of Christ

What 1 Corinthians 10 is about is the way the Corinthians had overestimated the power of the Lord's Supper as sacramental food, and had underestimated the purpose of the Lord's Supper as spiritual fellowship with Christ.

In other words, they saw eating the bread and drinking the cup as a kind of sacramental antidote to any ill effects that might come from tasting the poison of idolatry. And so they overestimated the power of the Lord's Supper.

And they failed to see that the purpose of eating the bread and drinking the cup was to share in the life of Christ and to fellowship with him as one body. And so they underestimated the purpose of the Lord's Supper, and thus its true power in the fight against idolatry and sin.

And both their overestimation of its power to immunize, and their underestimation of its purpose to nourish fellowship with Christ, made them vulnerable to sin. And not only to sin, but to entanglement with demons . . .

In verse 18 Paul says, "Look at the nation of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?" Now this does not mean that they eat the altar. It means that they share in the benefits of what happens on the altar. On the altar God removes guilt and forgives sin and makes peace and establishes a fellowship of thanksgiving and love. So to be a sharer in the altar is to share in all those things that God is doing at the altar. This is probably what Paul means in verse 16 when he says that the bread is a sharing in the body of Christ and the cup is a sharing in the blood of Christ. When Christ was sacrificed on the cross and shed his blood and gave his body for us, God was removing guilt and forgiving sin and making peace and establishing fellowship with all who believe. And the purpose of the Lord's Supper is to receive from Christ the nourishment and strength and hope and joy that come from feasting our souls on all that he purchased for us on the cross, especially his own fellowship. We share in the body and the blood by sharing in the benefits that they bought—including, as verse 17 says, our unity in the body of Christ.

http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/19/811_Idolatry_the_Lords_Supper_and_the_Body_of_Christ/

Gil Rugh: Flee From Idolatry

Introduction: We live in a pluralistic society. Christianity claims to be an exclusive religion; the only way to heaven; the only way to know God. This passage still has great relevance. The Hellenistic world was a great religious melting pot; tolerant of other beliefs as long as they didn't claim to be the only way. We are charged with being narrow, self-righteous, arrogant. Don't soften our message of narrowness.

Paul is concerned that the Corinthians may be indulging in things that would exclude them from saving faith and ultimate salvation. You can have a false sense of security

and be lost. Your faith must be in Christ. That will manifest itself in a life that evidences you have become partaker of the divine nature.

Corinthians were thinking they could dabble in parts of false worship – eating meat offered to false idols, etc. **1 John 5:21** “*Guard yourselves from idols*” – all kind of false worship of every kind must be avoided. Don’t tolerate things that are unbiblical and untrue. Paul believes they have the wisdom to sort through what he says and respond to his corrections. Paul not being sarcastic in vs. 15.

We become sharers in Christ; partakers of Christ in the communion service. 1 John 1:1-4 – the fellowship goes both ways – with Christ and with fellow believers. In OT a portion of what was sacrificed was given back to the people bringing the offering and they would make a meal together out of that. What’s the point? Cf. 8:4 An idol is just a block of wood or a piece of stone; there is only one God. Then food offered to nothing is still just plain food. But there is more to the picture than that.

There are evil spirit beings operating in the world that stand in opposition to God. They attempt to lure the people of world to worship them in contrast to the living God. I don’t want you to become sharers in demons. What would you think of someone who was baptized one day in the name of Christ and then a week later in the name of Mohammed or another god? There can be no mixing. Deut. 32:15ff Israel became prosperous and would then forsake their God; *sacrificed to demons* ... Johnny-come-lately gods; Matt. 4:9 What did the devil offer Christ when he tempted Him? All about falling down and worshipping Satan instead of the true God. 1 Tim. 3:15; 4:1ff “*some will fall away from the faith*” ... “*doctrines of demons*” – some people who had professed faith in Christ will now follow demons; We don’t take this seriously today. Is. 8 – if they don’t speak in accordance with this book, they have no truth in them. We want to be as narrow-minded as God is. James 3:14 “*demonic wisdom*” Rev. 2:14,20 – 2 churches condemned for tolerating idolatrous teachings in the church; What do we tolerate? You can’t be broad and open to everything. Same types of issues in view here. Rev. 9:20 worshiping demons in the tribulation period; refused to repent; “If I get saved, do I have to leave the Roman Catholic Church? Yes!” You cannot be a Roman Catholic and be joined in demonic worship and be a child of God. We cannot tolerate teaching that we know to be false. Is. 45:9

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=9150613622>

Deffinbaugh: Verses 14-33 spell out Paul’s bottom line in the matter of idol-meats. In these closing words of instruction and counsel, Paul practically applies what he has been teaching in principle by addressing three situations which the Corinthians would face: (1) The question of whether a Corinthian Christian should eat idol-meat at a meal that is a part of a heathen worship ritual (verses 14-22). (2) The question of whether a Corinthian should eat meat purchased at the meat market, the origins of which are not known (verses 25-26). (3) The question of whether a Corinthian Christian should accept a dinner invitation from an unbeliever (verses 27-28). . .

(1) *To partake of the cup at the Lord’s table is to symbolically partake of what the cup*

represents. To partake of the cup is to symbolically commemorate the fact that we have become partakers in the shed blood of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins which it accomplished, through faith in His atoning death on the cross of Calvary. This is what Jesus taught before His death.

(2) *To partake of the bread at communion is to symbolically proclaim that we have identified with our Lord's body.* We have identified with Christ, not only in His incarnation, and in His bodily death, burial, and resurrection, but we have identified ourselves with His "body," the church. The one loaf symbolizes one body, of which all Christians have partaken and are thus a part. When we partake of the bread, we remind ourselves of our union with His body, but also in His incarnation, and in His spiritual presence now, through the church.

(3) *Communion commemorates our union with the person and work of Jesus Christ.* It commemorates our union with Christ by faith at the time of our salvation and for all eternity. It commemorates our union with Him in His bodily death, burial, and resurrection. It signifies our union with the church, His body. Communion symbolizes our union with Christ, then (at the cross of Calvary) and now (in His body, the church).

(4) *There is more than one "communion."* The Old Testament saints had communion, too. Eating of what has been sacrificed on the altar not only unites the one eating with the sacrifice, it unites him with those who share in the meal with him. The Old Testament saints had their own form of communion at which they ate a portion of what had been sacrificed. The sacrificial meal joined the participant to the sacrifice and to those who shared with him in eating of it.

(5) *The pagan ritual of eating a meal, of which a portion is that which was sacrificed in heathen worship, was a "communion service" as well.* The heathen worshipper is celebrating a communion service when he eats of what was sacrificed to an idol. In eating the things sacrificed to the idol, he is identifying himself with the pagan sacrifice and all that it means. Those who eat the meal together identify not only with the pagan sacrifice, but also identify themselves with all those sitting at the table with them.

(6) *When the pagans worship idols by sacrificing to them, they are worshipping demons. Here is an amazing fact, which the Corinthians had overlooked.* There are no other gods. Idols are nothing, because they represent gods which don't exist. But false worship is not thereby rendered harmless and insignificant. This is where the Corinthians went wrong. Paul says that the worship of idols is the worship of demons. Is this some new truth, a mystery not revealed until Paul's writing? Far from it!

7 *"And they shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations"* (Leviticus 17:7).

7) *When Christians participate in the pagan sacrificial meal by eating the idol-meats, they unite themselves with the pagan sacrifice and with the heathen with whom they are*

eating. Just as biblical communion unites the meal-sharer with the sacrifice, and with those sharing in the meal, so the one who participates in a pagan festive meal becomes a sharer in the heathen sacrificial altar, and a co-participant with those eating the meal. One does far more than have dinner when one attends a pagan sacrificial meal.

(8) *Christians cannot become partakers of two tables, for one is the table of the Lord and the other is the table of demons*. Just as no man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24), neither can a Christian participate at two religious tables or partake of two sacrificial meals. The Lord's Supper, and all that it symbolizes, is diametrically opposed to the "table of demons." It is amazing that some Corinthians could so casually explain away their presence at the table of demons, while at the same time regularly observing the Lord's table. The inconsistency is intolerable.

(9) *When the Corinthians eat idol-meats while participating in pagan idol worship, they provoke the Lord to jealousy*. Paul has instructed the Corinthians to "flee idolatry" in verse 14. Now we know exactly what he means. To sit at the table of demons and to participate in this pagan worship by eating idol-meats is to practice idolatry. This is exactly the way the ancient Israelites fell into idolatry, by joining themselves with the pagans at their "table." No wonder God gave the Israelites such strict food laws; this kept the Jews from eating with the Gentiles, and thus from participating in their idolatry.

J. C. Ryle: Idolatry

I say then, that Idolatry is a worship, in which the honor due to the Triune God, and to God only, is given to some of His creatures, or to some invention of His creatures.

It may vary. It may assume different forms, according to the ignorance or the knowledge—the civilization or the barbarism, of those who offer it. It may be grossly absurd and ludicrous, or it may closely border on truth, and being most superficially defended. But whether in the adoration of the idol of Juggernaut, or in the adoration of the Pope in St. Peter's at Rome, the principle of idolatry is in reality the same. In either case the honor due to God is turned aside from Him, and bestowed on that which is not God. And whenever this is done, whether in heathen temples or in professedly Christian Churches, there is an act of idolatry. . .

No man, I think, need wonder at the rise of idolatry in the Early Church who considers calmly the excessive reverence which it paid, from the very first, to the visible parts of religion. I believe that no impartial man can read the language used by nearly all the Fathers about the Church, the bishops, the ministry, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the martyrs, and the dead saints, generally—no man can read it without being struck with the wide difference between their language and the language of Scripture on such subjects. You seem at once to be in a new atmosphere. You feel that you are no longer treading on holy ground. You find that things, which in the Bible are evidently of second-rate importance, are here made of first-rate importance.

I feel no hesitation in affirming that idolatry never yet assumed a more glaring form

than it does in the Roman Catholic Church in this present day.

And here I come to a subject on which it is hard to speak, because of the times we live in. But the whole truth ought to be spoken by ministers of Christ, without respect of times and prejudices. And I could not lie down in peace, after preaching on idolatry, if I did not declare my solemn conviction that idolatry is one of the crying sins of which the Roman Catholic Church is guilty. I say this in all sadness. I say it, acknowledging fully that we have our faults in the Protestant Church; and practically, perhaps, in some quarters, a little idolatry. But from formal, recognized, systematic idolatry, I believe we are almost entirely free. While, as for the Roman Catholic Church, if there is not in her worship, an enormous quantity of systematic, organized idolatry, I frankly confess then I do not know what idolatry is.

(a) To my mind, it is idolatry to have images and pictures of saints in churches, and to give them a reverence for which there is no warrant or precedent in Scripture. And if this is so, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(b) To my mind, it is idolatry to invoke the Virgin Mary and the saints in glory, and to address them in language never addressed in Scripture except to the Holy Trinity. And if this be so, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(c) To my mind, it is idolatry to bow down to mere material things, and attribute to them a power and sanctity far exceeding that attached to the ark or altar of the Old Testament dispensation; and a power and sanctity, too, for which there is not a speck of foundation in the Word of God. And if this be so, with the holy coat of Treves, and the wonderfully-multiplied wood of the true cross, and a thousand other so-called relics in my mind's eye, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(d) To my mind, it is idolatry to worship that which man's hands have made—to call it God, and adore it when lifted up before our eyes. And if this be so, with the notorious doctrine of transubstantiation, and the elevation of the host in my recollection, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(e) To my mind, it is idolatry to make ordained men mediators between ourselves and God, robbing, as it were, our Lord Jesus Christ of His office, and giving them an honor which even Apostles and angels in Scripture flatly repudiate. And if this is so, with the honor paid to Popes and Priests before my eyes, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

I know well that language like this jars the minds of many. Men love to shut their eyes against evils which is disagreeable. They will not see things which involve unpleasant consequences. That the Roman Catholic Church is an erring church, they will acknowledge. That she is idolatrous, they will deny.

They tell us that the reverence which the Roman Catholic Church gives to saints and images does not amount to idolatry. They inform us that there are distinctions between

the kinds of worship—that God deserves the “strong worship” and the saints and images get a lesser worship. That there is a distinction between a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession, which clear the church of the charge of idolatry. My answer is, that the Bible knows nothing of such distinctions; and that, in the actual practice of the great bulk of Roman Catholics, there is no distinction at all.

They tell us, that it is a mistake to suppose that Roman Catholics really worship the images and pictures before which they perform acts of adoration; that they only use them as helps to devotion, and in reality look far beyond them. My answer is, that many a heathen could say just as much for his idolatry—that it is well-known, in former days, they did say so—and that in Hindu religion many idol-worshippers do say the same even in the present day. But the apology does not help. The terms of the second commandment are too stringent. It prohibits "bowing down," as well as worshipping. And the very anxiety which the Roman Catholic Church has often displayed to exclude that second commandment from her catechisms, is of itself a great fact which speaks volumes to a candid observer.

They tell us that we have no evidence for the assertions we make on this subject; that we found our charges on the abuses which prevail among the ignorant members of the Roman Catholic Church; and that it is absurd to say that a Church containing so many wise and learned men, is guilty of idolatry. My answer is, that the devotional books in common use among Roman Catholics supply us with unmistakable evidence. Let any one examine that well known Catholic book, "The Garden of the Soul," if he doubts my assertion, and read the language there addressed to the Virgin Mary. Let him remember that this language is addressed to a woman, who, though highly favored, and the mother of our Lord, was yet one of our fellow-sinners—to a woman, who actually confesses her need of a Savior for herself. She says, "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47).

Let him examine this language in the light of the New Testament, and then let him tell us fairly, whether the charge of idolatry is not correctly made. But I answer, beside this, that we need no better evidence than that which is supplied in the city of Rome itself. What do men and women do under the light of the Pope's own countenance? What is the religion that prevails around St. Peter's and under the walls of the Vatican? What is Romanism at Rome, unfettered, unshackled, and free to develop itself in full perfection? Let a man honestly answer these questions, and I ask no more. Let him read such a book as Seymour's "Pilgrimage to Rome," or "Alford's Letters," and ask any visitor to Rome if the picture is too highly colored. Let him do this, I say, and I believe he cannot avoid the conclusion, that Romanism in perfection is a gigantic system of Church-worship, Sacrament-worship, Mary-worship, saint-worship, image-worship, relic-worship, and priest-worship—that it is, in one word, a huge organized idolatry.

I know how painful these things sound to many ears. To me it is no pleasure to dwell on the shortcomings of any who profess and call themselves Christians. I can truly say, that I have said what I have said with pain and sorrow.

I draw a wide distinction between the accredited dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church and the private opinions of many of her members. I believe and hope that many a Roman Catholic is in his heart inconsistent with his profession, and is better than the Church to which he belongs. I believe that many a poor Italian at this day is worshipping with an idolatrous worship, simply because he knows no better. He has no Bible to instruct him. He has no faithful minister to teach him. He has the fear of the priest before his eyes, if he dares to think for himself. He has no money to enable him to get away from the bondage he lives under, even if he feels a desire. I remember all this, and I say that the Italian eminently deserves our sympathy and compassion. But all this must not prevent my saying that the Roman Catholic Church is an idolatrous Church.

<http://www.biblebb.com/files/ryle/WARN8.HTM>

MacArthur: Idolatry includes much more than bowing down or burning incense to a physical image. Idolatry is having any false god – any object, idea, philosophy, habit, occupation, sport, or whatever that has one's primary concern and loyalty or that to any degree decreases one's trust in and loyalty to the Lord. . .

False gods may be either material objects or mythical, supernatural beings. Material gods may be worshiped even without the conscious thought that they are deities. Job wrote:

*If I have put my confidence in gold,
And called fine gold my trust,
If I have gloated because my wealth was great,
And because my hand had secured so much;
If I have looked at the sun when it shone,
Or the moon going in splendor,
And my heart become secretly enticed,
And my hand threw a kiss from my mouth,
That too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment,
For I would have denied God above. (Job 31:24-28)*

Idolatry has many forms . . .

- Libeling the character of God is idolatry
- Worshiping the true God in the wrong way is idolatry (Ex. 32:7-9)
- Worshiping any image is idolatry (Is. 44:17; John 4:24)
- Worshiping angels is idolatry (Col. 2:18)
- Worshiping demons is idolatry (Rev. 9:20)
- Worshiping dead men is idolatry (Ps. 106:28-29)
- Supreme loyalty in our heart to anything other than God is idolatry (Matt. 6:21)
- Covetousness is idolatry (Eph. 5:5)
- Inordinate desire or lust is idolatry (Phil. 3:18-19)

In verses 16-22 Paul gives three reasons for fleeing from idolatry: it is inconsistent; it is

demonic; and it is offensive to God.

Hodge: The heathen certainly did not intend to worship evil spirits. Nevertheless they did it. Men of the world do not intend to serve Satan, when they break the laws of God in the pursuit of their objects of desire. Still in so doing they are really obeying the will of the great adversary, yielding to his impulses, and fulfilling his designs. He is therefore said to be the god of this world. To him all sin is an offering and an homage. We are shut up to the necessity of worshipping God or Satan; for all refusing or neglecting to worship the true God, or giving to any other the worship which is due to him alone, is the worshipping of Satan and his angels. It is true therefore, in the highest sense, that what the heathen offer they offer to devils. Although their gods have not existence, yet there are real beings, the rulers of the darkness of this world, wicked spirits in heavenly places (Eph. 6, 12), on whom their worship terminates.

Doug Goins: A Balanced Life

Any form of idolatrous involvement provokes the jealousy of God. All through the Old Testament he identifies himself as a "jealous God." But his jealousy is not like ours. His is pure. It's totally committed to what's best for us. It's the jealousy that comes from his loving ownership of us. He loves us too much for us to get away with whatever rebellion or idolatry we're pursuing. He will intervene; he will crash into our life and it will be painful. He will do whatever it takes to get our attention, because the answer to the question is, we are not stronger than he is. No matter what the rebellion is or how entrenched it is, he is more powerful.

Now these three warnings are very clear: Idolatry contradicts our identity in Christ. It is driven by demonic evil. And it provokes the holy wrath of God. We need to hear this today, because we live in a religious climate that is increasingly pluralistic or syncretistic. There are world religions that have been created to combine the table of the Lord and the table of demons. The best example is the Bahai religion, which tries to combine the best of all the world's ideologies. The apostle thunders, "You cannot!" In our own country, more and more people are creating their own patchwork quilt of religious beliefs, trusting that by combining the essential doctrines of different faiths, they will come to know the true God of the universe and live with him eternally.

<http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/6446/4527.html>

Pastor Thomas Leake: (10:14 – 11:1) What God Thinks of Man's Religion

Introduction: There are 2 main approaches to how people view the other religions of the world:

- 1) Historical approach for evangelical Christianity: View Christianity as exclusive truth; one must hear the gospel about Christ and personally put their faith in Christ; no other way to approach God; other religions have nothing to offer
- 2) Newer and growing view – even among some evangelicals: Other religions can be viewed as lesser lights with Christianity being the brightest light; thus you can gain some insight and value from other religions; this is the path of pluralism and religious syncretism; you can somehow learn something of Christ from religions that don't even

talk about Christ

Context: Paul still talking about overall subject of a Christian's boundaries for liberties and freedoms in Christ

5 Instructions About a Christian's Relationship to Other Religions

I. (:14-15) Flee Idolatry

Strong connective used to point back to the overall context; strong warning that Paul gave earlier in chap. 10;

The faster and farther you flee from idolatry, the better; cf. similar command to Flee Immorality;

Don't wrestle with either Idolatry or Immorality or spend any time contemplating the; Guard yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21);

Situation = being invited to pagan idol feasts; a believer might reason: "Idols don't exist; I am free in Christ; I don't want to offend my friends; I want to win others to Christ; so I should just participate with them"

Participation crossed the line; believers need to use their Spirit-guided mind

II. (:16-21) Christ Can't Be Mixed with Other Gods

A. 2 Illustrations of Religious Communion

1. Communion / Lord's Supper – understand the different views:

- a. Roman Catholic = transubstantiation
- b. Lutheran = consubstantiation
- c. Reformed = spiritual participation with Christ present
- d. Symbolic = the elements are only symbols

This text does not argue for or against any of these views; you must go to other passages to decide.

Point: in partaking we share with Christ; the kind or type of communion is not taught here; we are sharing with Christ; But a few points to argue for the Symbolic view:

- at the institution of the Lord's Supper, His blood had not even been shed yet
- Christ still refers to the cup as wine
- Christ's presence is mediated via the indwelling Holy Spirit
- Nothing special about the elements

But: don't take communion lightly either

2. 2nd Illustration = OT Levitical System

Priest and those who brought the offering might share in a meal from the meat of that offering;

B. Idols vs. Demons

cf. 8:4 – No such thing as an idol really exists in the world; e.g. gods like Zeus do not actually exist; so it is impossible to fellowship with a non-existent deity; But Demons (fallen angels) are real; the strictly materialistic view of the universe is wrong; Demons are behind all of the worship of false idols and false gods; Deut. 32:16-17; Ps. 106:36-

Application: Don't synchronize our beliefs with any false views of gods or false religious systems; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; No room for compromise here

We should have no visual conception of God; idolatry starts in the mind with a wrong concept of God; Rev. 9:20-21 – not just incomplete ways of worshipping the true Christ; God hates idolatry; Rom. 1: 20-23; idolatry can never be a pathway to God; 2 Cor. 4:4;

1 Cor. 10:21 is key verse – You are not able to partake from both tables; God will not commune with anyone who communes with idols

III. (:22) Idolatry Provokes God's Jealousy

You have to choose sides; no middle ground

Ex. 34:12 ff.; Is. 48:11; Don't incite God to Jealousy (zealous for the relationship) unless you are stronger than God

IV. (:23-30) 2 Principles About How to Use Our Christian Liberties

A. Principle of Expediency (:23)

Only make the better decisions; those that are helpful and profitable

B. Principle of Edification

Love should control all of your decisions; Will this decision help my brother in Christ? You restrict yourself by your love for others

Paul looks at 2 very specific situations and how these principles apply:

1. You can eat any meat that is sold in the meat market – just don't ask questions; the Jews had been very scrupulous in investigating the source of the meat; Paul takes the opposite approach – just don't ask; all meat ultimately comes from God and can be received with thanksgiving; source of the meat is an irrelevant question

2. When invited into someone's house for dinner – 2 possibilities

a. If the issue is not raised, go ahead and eat

b. If someone makes a point that the meat comes from idol worship, then

refrain – don't cause your weaker brother to stumble or give occasion for the unsaved to have accusations against you; Be careful and sensitive of the conscience of others

V. (10:31 – 11:1) 3 Commands for Believers Living in This Pluralistic Culture

A. Live for the Glory of God

You have one life; make it count by making it always your one ambition to live in such a way as to glorify God

1st Commandment = Love God supremely

B. Give No Offense

Paul was not a man-pleaser in the wrong sense; but he was flexible in the non-essentials so as to accommodate others and win as many as possible to Christ;

2nd Commandment = Love your neighbor as yourself

C. Imitate Godly Examples – like that of the Apostle Paul who was imitating Christ

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:23 – 11:1

TITLE: *SITUATIONAL ETHICS – WHEN CAN I EAT MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS?*

BIG IDEA:

THE EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY MUST BE GOVERNED BY LOVING SENSITIVITY AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE SPECIFIC SITUATION

INTRODUCTION:

According to *Wikipedia*:

Situational ethics, or situation ethics, is a Christian ethical theory that was principally developed in the 1960s by the Episcopal priest Joseph Fletcher. It basically states that sometimes other moral principles can be cast aside in certain situations if love is best served; as Paul Tillich once put it: 'Love is the ultimate law'. The moral principles Fletcher is specifically referring to are the moral codes of Christianity and the type of love he is specifically referring to is 'Agape' love. Agape is a term which comes from Greek which means absolute, universal, unchanging and unconditional love for all people. Fletcher believed that in forming an ethical system based on love, he was best expressing the notion of '*love thy neighbour*', which Jesus Christ taught in the Gospels of the New Testament of the Bible. Through situational ethics, Fletcher attempted to find a 'middle road' between legalistic and antinomian ethics. Fletcher developed situational ethics in his books: *The Classic Treatment* and *Situation Ethics*.

Fletcher believed that there are no absolute laws other than the law of Agape love and all the other laws were laid down in order to achieve the greatest amount of this love. This means that all the other laws are only guidelines to how to achieve this love, and thus they may be broken if the other course of action would result in more love.

Christians have reacted against the tenets of Fletcher's proposed ethical system because the law of Christ and the moral principles laid out in the Scriptures should not be set aside for subjective interpretation of what is the most loving and expedient thing to do. That is true for situations where there is a clear moral right and wrong position. But as the Apostle Paul explains in this passage which concludes his teaching on the issue of eating meat offered to idols, there are occasions where situational ethics must be employed in light of the reality of the Christian's liberties.

I. (:23-24) THREE GOVERNING PRINCIPLES IN DETERMINING APPROPRIATE CONDUCT IN AREAS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

A. (:23a) The Principle of Expediency

"All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable."

B. (:23b) The Principle of Edification
“All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

C. (:24) The Principle of Unselfish Love
“Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.”

II. (:25-30) TWO CASE STUDIES APPLYING SITUATIONAL ETHICS TO THE ISSUE OF EATING MEAT POTENTIALLY OFFERED TO IDOLS

A. (:25-26) Case Study #1 – Buying Meat in the Open Market – Avoid the Issue and Exercise Your Freedom

1. (:25) Simple Guideline – If the question is not raised it is a moot point
“Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience’ sake.”

2. (:26) Universal Principle – Source of the meat ultimately is a Gift from God
“For the earth is the Lord’s, and everything that is in it.”

B. (:27-30) Case Study #2 – Eating Meat Served by an Unbeliever at a Private Dinner Party

1. (:27) If the Issue is not Raised, Go ahead and Eat – Still a Moot Point
“If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience’ sake.”

2. (:28-30) If the Issue is Raised, Refrain from Eating
“But if anyone should say to you, ‘This is meat sacrificed to idols,’ do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience’ sake; I mean not your own conscience, but the other man’s; for why is my freedom judged by another’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?”

Deffinbaugh: Paul now asks two questions in the second half of verse 29 and in verse 30. First, Paul asks why his freedom should be scrutinized and restricted by the conscience of another. Second, he seems to ask why, even though he can partake of the meal with thankfulness, he should be spoken against as though he were doing wrong. I am inclined to understand these as the questions which prompt Paul not to partake of idol-meats, after their presence at the table has been pointed out. He does not wish to offend the conscience of another, and so any indication that another guest would have his conscience wounded by his eating is sufficient reason not to eat the idol-meat. Even though he could eat that meat with thanksgiving, he will not do so because he would be evil spoken of for having done so by another. In either case, Paul stands to lose much more by eating than he could possibly gain by eating.

III. (10:31 – 11:1) THREE GOVERNING PRINCIPLES IN DETERMINING

APPROPRIATE CONDUCT IN AREAS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

A. (10:31) Glorify God in All You Do

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

B. (10:32-33) Give No Unnecessary Offense that Would Hinder the Gospel

1. Principle Stated

“Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God”

2. Reason – Seeking the Benefit of Others – Especially Their Salvation

“just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.”

Not talking about being a “man-pleaser” in a selfish, ambitious sense

C. (:11:1) Imitate Godly Examples

“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

Goins: Paul is asking every one of us through this entire passage, "Do you want to know what it means to live a consistent Christian life? Do you want to properly balance freedom and restraint? Do you want to be in the world and not of the world? Do you want to have a positive spiritual influence in your community, but not allow that community to mold you so you compromise what's true and what's right? Do you want to live a balanced life, not being driven by the extremes of legalism or its opposite, selfish license? If you do, then watch me, follow me, live with me. I may not be perfect, but I try to imitate the selfless life that Christ lived. I want to glorify God in what I say and what I do and in the attitudes of my heart. To the extent that I succeed, then the good news is that you can, too."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) If you have access to Fletcher’s book on Situational Ethics or if you have time to read J. I. Packer’s analysis below, how does the guidance here of the Apostle Paul differ from the basic premise of Fletcher’s approach?
- 2) What types of behavior might fall into the category of that which is lawful but not expedient or not edifying?
- 3) Where have you chosen to restrain your Christian liberties? Why and How did it work out in that situation?
- 4) What godly examples have had the most impact in your life?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J.I. Packer: Situations and Principles

First, let us note that though 'situationism' is usually thought of as a term referring specifically to one view of Christian morality, it is actually an umbrella-word for all views which reject the idea that the way to decide what to do is always to apply rules, positive and negative, concerning types of actions (*e.g.* keep your promises, do not steal, do not rape, do not torture). The situationist does not regard such rules as *prescriptive, i.e.*, as having absolute and universal authority, but as at best *illuminative*, in the sense of being relative, provisional and violable indicators of what behaviour may (though it may not) be right here and now. Thus, 'situationism' is a term of negative classification, dear only in what it excludes and covering many positive conceptions that are intrinsically different.

The word 'existentialism' is similar; it, too, is an umbrella-word for all views, Christian and non-Christian, which reject the idea that one can achieve authentic personal existence without total commitment, and it, too, in practice covers a wide range of outlooks. Now as a view about the way to determine what one should do, situationism can be part of an atheistic existentialist or humanist position no less than of a Christian one. The mark of existentialist situationism is its requirement that one should always act whole-heartedly, in conscious personal freedom (meaning by this, openness to variation from all one's actions hitherto). The mark of humanist situationism is its quest in all circumstances for the realization of personal values as it sees them. The mark of Christian situationism is its conviction that general moral rules applied to the matter in hand will not always lead you to what the command of God and the calculations of neighbourly love (which two things some identify and others distinguish) actually require.

The claim traditionally made for Christian morality is that love can be, and indeed has been, embodied in rules, so that in using the moral principles of Scripture prescriptively a Christian will always be expressing love, never frustrating it, and so will always be doing the will of God. Situationism diagnoses this claim as legalistic and declines to accept it, insisting that love itself requires one to go further and do more: namely, to pay fullest attention to the situation itself, which may be an exceptional set of circumstances requiring, for the fullest expression of love, an exceptional way of acting. Action which the rules would call wrong will yet be right if analysis shows it to be the most loving thing to do. For no types of action, as such, can be said to be immoral; only failures of love in particular situations can be called immoral or thought of as forbidden, inasmuch as the fullness of loving action is the whole of what God commands.

How, then, should we decide what to do in a given situation? Here the ways part. The *rational* situationism of the Anglo-Saxon Anglicans Fletcher and Robinson offers us a method of calculation; the *existentialist* situationism of the big Bs of continental neo-orthodoxy—Barth, Bonhoeffer, Brunner, Bultmann—takes the line of attuning us for particular self-authenticating commands from God which will reach us via Scripture, though they will not be identical with, nor will they be simply applications of, moral

principles stated in Scripture. Neither position (be it said) is intentionally lax or antinomian (that is, opposed to law); both think they achieve what the law in Scripture is really after; the differences between them, and between them both and Christian ethical stances which would not call themselves situationist, are theological. This chapter is most concerned with the former type of situationism, but we shall grasp it better by comparing it with the latter, and this will be our next step.

Pure situationism

Neo-orthodox situationism may be called 'pure' as distinct from 'principled'. Its main thesis is that as I face each situation, taking its measure and noting its complexities, God will speak, in some sense of that word, directly. The determining factor here is the dynamism or 'actualism' of the neo-orthodox conception of God: that is, the insistence that the Creator-God, who is transcendent, sovereign and free, is known to us and reveals his command to us only in the particularity of the present moment. So the generalized ethical injunctions of Scripture are understood not as formulae embodying the fullness of God's will for all time, but as so many indications of the lines along which, or within which, particular commands of God may be expected to come. God's revealed will never takes the form of a universally valid rule for us to apply to all relevant cases, but only of particular summonses. 'God's commanding can only be this individual, concrete and specific commanding,' says Karl Barth. Formally, then, the Christian ethic is obeying God in a most direct way; and materially it is neighbour-love, in whatever mode God's self-authenticating command specifies here and now. Thus Brunner writes: 'Nothing is good save obedience to the command of God, just because it is obedience. No reasons of determination from content here come under consideration, The "form" of the will, obedience, is all. But to be obedient means: "love your neighbour!"'

Bonhoeffer says this most starkly, forbidding us to ask 'What is the will of God for this particular case?' because the question embodies 'the casuistic misinterpretation of the concrete. The concrete is not achieved in this way. . . The will of God is always concrete, or else it is not the will of God. . . the will of God is not a principle. . . which has to be applied to "reality".' These negations sound startling; but the guidance that Bonhoeffer takes away with the one hand, by denying that God reveals principles, he effectively restores with the other, by his teaching on the 'mandates'—church, government, labour and culture, and marriage and the family, spheres of delegated divine authority which the Reformers also recognized. 'Mandate' (which term Bonhoeffer preferred to the more usual 'orders', because it denoted a God-given task) meant for him 'the conferment of divine authority (*i.e.* the right to command obedience as God's representative) on an earthly agent', and 'the formation of a definite earthly domain by the divine commandment'; and the mandates themselves, conservatively conceived, define closely the limits within which God's concrete will is expressed and encountered. Barth and Brunner speak similarly. Barth also affirms that, while God's demand cannot be anticipated in abstraction, his constancy of character revealed in Christ means that like demands will be made in like situations: for Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and for ever, is 'the ground, content and form of God's command'.

In all this neo-orthodoxy is polemicizing against what Barth calls a 'theoretical casuistry' which assumes that the whole of God's command consists of a legacy of general principles left us in the Bible, to be applied by our own best wisdom. Their motive—a proper one—is a desire to display Christian obedience as direct response to God's present, personal address. But as anyone with a ripe doctrine of the Holy Spirit can and will make that point without denying that in what God says today he applies what he has said in Scripture once for all, so the 'pure' situationism to which these men resort seems to turn God's command, at least in its details, into an uncheckable private revelation every time. Nor (to their credit!) do they sustain in practice the daunting notion which they profess. Thus, Bonhoeffer's concept of the command of God, which if it is not 'dear, definite and concrete to the last detail . . . is not God's command', receives a crippling qualification when he admits that God's will 'may lie deeply concealed beneath a great number of available possibilities', so that 'the whole apparatus of human powers must be set in motion when it is a matter of proving (*i.e.* discerning, as in Romans 12:2) the will of God'. These admissions, and the whole excellent section on 'proving' from which they come, recognize realistically the perplexities which ethical choices involve, but hardly square with 'clear, definite and concrete to the last detail'. And Barth's treatment of areas of ethical decision in terms of God's work in Christ (which, he holds, is the basic subject-matter of ethics) differs little from the kind of casuistical reasoning which he professes to abhor.

The most problematical version of neo-orthodox situationism is Rudolf Bultmann's. Here the existentialist motif is strongest (for man's existence consists wholly in his possibility of existence, and he is always seeking authentic selfhood by choosing who he is); here, too, God and his will are most elusive, for God is silent, and 'Jesus teaches no ethics at all in the sense of an intelligible theory valid for all men concerning what should be done and left undone', and obedience itself must be understood in a 'non-objectifying' way, not literally, that is, as response to God's command, but in a Pickwickian, that is, private and unnatural sense as decision in the situation, whereby authentic existence is achieved. The whole ethical process in man is reduced to successive crises of new decision each present moment. 'A man', Bultmann insists, 'cannot in the moment of decision fall back upon principles, upon a general ethical theory which can relieve him of the responsibility for the decision. . . man does not meet the crisis of decision armed with a definite standard; he stands on no firm base, but rather alone in empty space.' Newness of decision is called for each new moment, for each new moment the situation itself is new.

So how should we act? First, we must realize the necessity of meeting the demands of the moment, for it always carries eschatological, that is, ultimate, significance for our existence; second, we must realize that each moment calls on us not just to do something but to be something—namely, persons who love their neighbours as themselves. We know how we love ourselves and how we want others to love us, so we already know how to love others. Jesus and Scripture do not therefore tell us what things love should make us do (that, if attempted, would be legalism); all we are told is that we should love, and that is all we need to be told, for 'if a man really loves, he knows already what he has to do'; and he knows it, 'not on the basis of any past experience or rational deductions, but directly from the immediate situation.'

General strictures on situationism will come later, and general criticisms of Bultmann on God, Christ and Scripture would not be in place here, but some particular shortcomings of his ethic may be noted at once. First, he takes an over-optimistic view of *man*. Does one who ‘really loves’ thereby always know what to do? Does real love keep us who are naturally daft from speaking and acting in character? Second, Bultmann takes an over-simplified view of *situations*. Do not most perplexities in moral decision stem, not from lack of loving intention or will to obey God, but from ignorance of past and future facts, so that one cannot with confidence calculate consequences? Is it not daunting to note, with Thomas Oden, that Bultmann lacks ‘realistic understanding of the intense and endless *conflicts of values* and interests and obligations that characterize human existence’? Is it not disastrous that Bultmann neither will nor can develop a social ethic? Third, Bultmann gives an over-simplified account of the moral life, reducing it to a series of isolated decisions and allowing no significance to factors like character, habit, aspiration and growth (all of which find a place in the New Testament!). Fourth, Bultmann gives an unrealistic account of moral decision itself, speaking as if there never need be—indeed, never should be—any doubt in a Christian’s mind as to what he should do this moment, for if his heart is right God will have made the right course clear to him. I do not always find that, nor do you; who does?

Principled situationism

Set beside this, now, the ‘principled’ situationism of Fletcher and Robinson—‘principled’ because it offers a constant method of deciding in each case what love demands. We may state it thus:

- a. Neighbour-love is God’s absolute and only demand in each situation. God does not require invariable performance of particular types of action, as such, whatever the simple reader of the Decalogue and the ethical parts of the New Testament might think; he calls simply for love, first as a motive (good will) and then as beneficent behaviour, of whatever form the situation requires. ‘Love is both absolute and relative by its very nature. An unchanging principle, it nevertheless always changes in its concrete application.’
- b. ‘Old’ Christian morality lapses into Pharisaic legalism and so sins against love, because in determining how to act it ‘begins from the deductive, the transcendent and the authoritative. It stresses the revealed character of the Christian moral standard, . . . (and) starts from Christian principles which are valid “without respect of persons”.’ The ‘new’ morality, by contrast, starts from persons rather than principles and from experienced relationships rather than revealed commandments, and in and from the situation itself works out, by reference to personal claims and probable consequences, what is the most loving thing to do. Fletcher, stressing that love maximizes good for all, assimilates love and justice and affirms a Christianized utilitarianism²¹ so calculating that one reviewer called his book ‘blood-chilling’ and asked: ‘Does this “calculus” of love not, in effect, dehumanize love?’ Robinson, by contrast, seems to think that the discerning of love’s demands will occur spontaneously, through intuition

rather than calculation. 'Love alone,' he writes, 'because, as it were, it has a built in moral compass, enabling it to "home" intuitively upon the deepest need of the other, can allow itself to be directed completely by the situation. . . . It is able to embrace an ethic of radical responsiveness, meeting every situation on its own merits, with no prescriptive laws.' At all events, it is part of the optimism of situationist faith that, by one means or another, love will be able to see what the personal claims in each situation require, without needing to run to God's law for guidance.

- c. Love may dictate the breaking of accepted moral rules of the 'do this', 'don't do that' type. These rules, both in Scripture and in life, are no more than rules of thumb ('maxims', Fletcher calls them; 'working rules' is Robinson's phrase); they give preliminary guidance as to how love will normally be expressed, but sometimes for the sake of persons different action will be called for. This, however, presents no problem theoretically, for what the rules forbid is forbidden only because it is ordinarily unloving, and nothing that actually expresses love in a particular situation is actually wrong. 'Apart from (love) there are no unbreakable rules.' Love as the end justifies its means; nothing is intrinsically evil, since what makes for good in a situation thereby becomes good in that situation. Fletcher notes that Paul rejects all thought of doing evil that good may come (Rom. 3:8), but sees Paul as here 'victimized' by 'the intrinsic theory', that is, the false notion that things are good or evil in themselves.
- d. No situation ever faces us with a choice of evils; the traditional view to the contrary is one more product of the mistaken 'intrinsic theory'. '*The situationalist holds that whatever is the most loving thing in the situation is the right and good thing.* It is not excusably evil, it is positively good.' To illustrate, Fletcher is ready with blandest aplomb to justify— not as lesser evils, but as positively good—such acts as killing one's baby (p. 125), abortion (pp. 37ff.), therapeutic fornication (pp. 126f.), patriotic prostitution (pp. 163f.), adultery to induce pregnancy (pp. 164f.), premarital sexual intercourse (p. 104), sacrificing lives on your own side in time of war (p. 98), suicide and euthanasia (pp. 66, 74, 165f.), and distribution of contraceptives to unmarried women (p. 127; *Moral Responsibility*, pp. 139f.). He also insists on saying that 'in principle, even killing "innocent" people might be right', and 'in some situations lying and bribery and force and violence, even taking life itself, is the only righteous and good thing to do in the situation'. It is Fletcher's use of 'good', 'right' and 'righteous' that secures to situationism its well-known reputation of being desperately lax; here the 'new morality' and the old immorality do seem to speak in identical terms.

Situationism evaluated

Christian situationism claims to distil essential biblical teaching about decision-making. This claim must now be tested.

Let it first be said that fair dealing with situationism is not easy, for it is a very mixed bag. Viewed as a reaction of protest against the all-too-common legalism which puts general principles before individual persons and whose zeal for God ousts neighbour-love from the heart, it commends itself as making a healthy biblical point, namely that only by love and care for others can we acceptably serve God (*cf.* Rom. 13:8-10; I Cor. 13:1-3; Gal. 5:14). But viewed as a method to guide us in choosing our behaviour, it appalls, particularly when Fletcher cracks it up as the panacea for all moral perplexity, delivering us from centuries of Christian ethical error. When situationists detect provincialism, shallowness, negativism, thoughtlessness and lovelessness in our ethical thought and practice, we must humbly take the criticism, and be grateful for it. But when they treat God's revealed directives as working rules only, and invite us to hail as good what God calls evil, a different response is called for.

Situationists are right to stress that each situation is in some respects unique, and that only by concentrating intensely on it shall we ever see what is the best we can make of it. Rightly too do they stress that love always seeks the best for all parties, and is betrayed if we settle for mere formal correctness, or avoidance of wrongdoing, without asking whether we could not do something better. Insistence that real love is creative, enterprising and unwilling to settle for the second-best in relationships is a substantial grain of truth in situationism, as is its further insistence that the lovingness of loving action should be thought out and spelt out in terms of the relationship itself. Robinson's casuistry of premarital sex, for instance, runs thus: "To the young man asking in his relations with a girl, "Why shouldn't I?", it is relatively easy to say "Because it's wrong" or "Because it's a sin"—and then to condemn him when he, or his whole generation, takes no notice. It makes much greater demands to ask, and to answer, the question "Do you love her?" or "*How much* do you love her?", and then to help him to accept for *himself* the decision that, if he doesn't, or doesn't very deeply, then his action is immoral, or, if he does, then he will respect her far too much to use her or take liberties with her. Chastity is the expression of charity—of caring, enough.' Though weakened by Robinson's unwillingness to declare sex relations apart from the full bed-and-board commitment of marriage wrong as such, this is surely right-minded. **No; it is only in its denial that any particular action is intrinsically immoral, evil and forbidden that situationism goes astray. Unfortunately, this one mistake is ruinous.**

Whence does it spring? Partly, from an unbiblical habit of defining actions externally, in merely physical terms, abstracted from their motive and purpose; partly, from misconceptions about the place of the law of God as such. The New Testament says that while our relationship to God is no longer determined by law (Rom. 6:14), Christ having freed us from law as a system of salvation (Rom. 7:1-6; 10:4; Gal. 3:23-26), we are 'under the law of Christ' (I Cor. 9:21; *cf.* Gal. 6:2) as a standard of sanctification; Robinson, however, seems to infer from the end of the law for salvation that it has no place in sanctification. The continentals, conceiving God's command as essentially specific and concrete, deny that the Bible's moral teaching, which was specific and concrete for its own situation, can be directly applied to ours.

The effect of denying that there are universal God-taught prohibitions is to enmesh love (good will, the commanded motive) in perplexities. How am I to love my neighbour

now? By attending to the situation, I am told. But how should I define ‘the situation’? Any circumscription of it will be arbitrary and open to challenge; I could always have included more, or less. And however I define it, how can I be sure what is really the most loving thing to do in it? By trusting my ‘built-in moral compass’? I do not know whether Robinson risks trusting his, but I dare not rely on mine. My love is often blind, or at least goofy, partly through sin, partly through natural stupidity (two factors with which situationism fails to reckon). Also, I know by experience that in moments when I have to make decisions the factors that ought to count most, and the long-term implications of this or that way of handling the situation, are often far from clear to me. So am I to calculate my way through all possible alternatives, both those which stick to the rules and those which break them? But time, brains and factual knowledge fail me; and in any case it is plain that, whatever I do, whether I keep the rules or break them, uncertainty about the consequences I calculated will leave me still unsure whether I did the most loving thing. James Gustafson observes that “love”, like “situation”, is a word that runs through Fletcher’s book like a greased pig’ —how does one catch and tie down such slippery items? Fletcher’s method, which in intention makes things easy and, as Gustafson notes, ‘omits any possibility of a bad conscience’, actually makes it impossible for me to know whether I have ever done what I should, and so leaves me with an anxious conscience every day. The way of relating love to law which requires the former to do duty for the latter does not make the life of Christian obedience easier for anyone.

But how are love and law related in the Bible itself? As follows:

First, no doubt ever appears about the universal applicability and authority of laws commanding and forbidding particular things—promise-keeping, payment of debts and care of one’s children, for instance, in the one case; murder, adultery and theft, for instance, in the other—and John tells us ‘this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments’ (I Jn. 5:3; cf. 2:3-5; 3:21-24, and Jesus’ words, Jn. 14-15, 21; 15:10). In 1957, before the situationist storm broke, John Murray wrote: ‘It is symptomatic of a pattern of thought current in many evangelical circles that the idea of keeping the commandments of God is not consonant with the liberty and spontaneity of the Christian man, that *keeping* the law has affinities with legalism. . . .’ He then quotes the passages referred to above, beginning with John 14:15, ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’, and ending with 14:21, ‘He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me’, and concludes: ‘When there is a persistent animosity to the notion of keeping commandments the only conclusion is that there is either gross ignorance or malignant opposition to the testimony of Jesus.’ It is hard to see how this can be gainsaid.

Second, love of God has priority over neighbour-love. Jesus categorizes love of God as the great commandment, which comes first (Mt. 22:37f.). Scripture is full of instruction on how to trust, fear, praise and serve the Lord, and for this we may be grateful—no utilitarian calculus could possibly take its place! It is odd that situationists regularly ‘write as if love of God is wholly a matter of loving one’s neighbour, but in Scripture it is certainly not so.

Third, neighbour-love is to be directed by law. So far from seeing an antithesis and possible clash between the claims of persons and of principles, Scripture assumes that we can only meet the claims of persons as we hold to the God-taught principles in dealing with them, and the principles take the form of directives as to what should and should not be done to them. The theology, in a nutshell, is that God our Maker and Redeemer has revealed the unchanging pattern of response that he requires, and that man needs if he is to be truly himself. The pattern is both an expression of God's own moral character, an indication of what he approves and disapproves, and also a due to man about his own nature and that of his neighbour. By adhering to the pattern we express and further our own true humanness on the one hand, and true love for our neighbour on the other. Our fellow man is always something of an enigma to us, just as we are something of an enigma to ourselves, but our Maker who knows our true nature and needs has told us how we are to do ourselves and each other real good. So love and law-keeping are mutually entailed, as Paul shows in Romans 13:8-10. The sixth, seventh, eighth and tenth commandments prohibit particular actions and attitudes (murder, adultery, theft, covetous jealousy) and Paul quotes them to make the double point that when we keep these commandments we love our neighbour as ourselves, and when we love our neighbour as ourselves we keep these commandments. The point is confirmed by John's striking reasoning in I John 5:2: 'By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God *and obey his commandments.*' Neighbour-love fulfils the law.

Biblically, then, there is no antithesis between the motive of love and the divine directives which tell us what kinds of action on man's part God approves and disapproves. Situationism is, after all, gratuitous.

The lesser evil

But if God's laws, and the actions which they prescribe and prohibit, have fixed intrinsic values, as expressing God's unchanging will for mankind, what are we to think and do when we find ourselves in situations where we cannot move at all without transgressing a divine prohibition, so that the best we can do is evil from one standpoint? Briefly, love's task then is to find how to do the most good, and the least evil; doing nothing is rarely the answer! Rightly, different principles come out on top in different situations: two Christians armed with 'honour your parents' and 'do not steal' might well act differently if one could only prevent his parents dying of hunger by stealing, while the other was being told to steal by his heavily gambling father. We may agree with the situationist that love for persons must arbitrate between the conflicting claims of moral principles, that doctrinaire decisions in such cases will not make the best of the bad job, and that unwillingness to face the situation's full complexities, and insensitivity to the variety of rules and claims that apply, will lead straight into ironclad Pharisaic legalism. But we shall reject Fletcher's grotesque idea that in such situations adultery, fornication, abortion, suicide and the rest, if thought the *best* course (which arguably in Fletcher's cases they might be—we will not dispute that here), thereby become *good*: which valuation, as Fletcher himself emphasizes, leaves no room for regret at having had to do them. Instead, we shall insist that evil remains evil, even

when, being the lesser evil, it appears the right thing to do; we shall do it with heavy heart, and seek God's cleansing of our conscience for having done it.

In the film of Nicholas Monsarrat's novel *The Cruel Sea*, a destroyer commander had to decide whether to drop a depth-charge that would kill dozens of desperate seamen struggling in the icy North Atlantic, but might also (*might*—there was no certainty) destroy the U-boat waiting on the sea floor to ravage the rest of the convoy. The alternative was to stop and pick up the swimmers. He headed through the men in the water and dropped the depth-charge. One of his men yelled, 'Bloody murderer!' He did not know if he hit the U-boat. The experience temporarily shattered him. He said: there are times when all we can do is guess our best, and then get down on our knees and ask God's mercy. This is the most painful form of the lesser evil situation, that in which knowledge is limited and one does the evil that seems best knowing that it may not turn out best at all. The poignancy and justice of the commander's words need no underlining. The most distressing feature of Fletcher's often distressing book (in which, incidentally, there is a reference to this episode) is that, if he knows what Christian men feel at such times, he keeps quiet about it, and writes as if a dose of situationist casuistry will make them proof against it. One can only say: God help them if it does. Yet this is where situationism logically leads; Fletcher is only being clear-headed in pointing it out.

[check out the website for all of the references to the quotes used in the above analysis]

<http://www.the-highway.com/articleJan02.html>

Doug Goins: A Guide for Using our Freedom in Christ

Now we come to the good news in 10:23-11:1. Paul talks about the opportunity to use our freedom for God's glory and for the good of other people. No matter what we're doing, we're to do it all to the glory of God. It's interesting to me that Paul refuses to lay down rules for practice that will apply to every Christian in every cultural setting, under all circumstances. Instead he summarizes spiritual principles that we must work out in our own setting where God has placed us. He gives us wonderful insights into making decisions about the gray areas of life and spirituality—some of the issues that our brothers in Romania struggle with in the life of their churches and in being salt and light in their culture. In verses 23-30 Paul summarizes four principles in a kind of guide for using our freedom in Christ for God's glory.

The first point is in verse 23: Edification is more important than our personal gratification.

The second principle in verse 24. Our freedom is going to express itself in serving other people.

Look at the third principle in verses 25-27. The good news is that liberty in Christ will always triumph over legalism.

Let's read the fourth principle in verses 28-30. Self-sacrifice on our part will triumph over any kind of condemnation, either self-condemnation or judgment by others.

<http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/6446/4527.html>

Deffinbaugh: In the specific context of our text, let us be very certain that those things

we consider Christian liberties are really matters of liberty. And if indeed we do have the liberty to enjoy certain things, let us be willing to set aside the momentary pleasure we might gain from the exercise of our liberty for the good of our brother, the sake of the gospel, and the glory of our Lord.

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=799

Boyer: In what situations should we be expected to forego our rights in deference to the uninstructed consciences of the weak brother? The scriptural context specifically applies it to:

- (1) eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 8-10 and Rom. 14)
- (2) eating unclean foods (Rom. 14)
- (3) the observance of special days (Rom. 14)
- (4) the right to be married (1 Cor. 9)
- (5) the right of a minister to financial support (1 Cor. 9)
- (6) the Jew-Gentile distinction (1 Cor. 9:20-22)

It is to be noted that all of these are “morally indifferent” according to scriptural standards. None of them are matters which are right or wrong of themselves.

Therefore, Scripture uses this principle of considerateness for the weaker brother as a secondary principle. It is to be used only if the issue of right or wrong is not involved. If the Bible says a thing is wrong, then this principle has no application whatever. The way it is frequently used by Christians to answer the questions of “worldly amusements” can hardly be justified unless it has first been determined that the particular worldly amusement under consideration is by scriptural standards not wrong in itself.

MacArthur: Using Freedom for God’s Glory

I. The Principles for Using Christian Freedom

- edification over gratification
- others over self
- liberty over legalism
- condescension over condemnation

II. The Purpose for Using Christian Freedom = to glorify God

III. The Pattern for Using Christian Freedom

Imitate Paul in imitating Christ

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

TITLE: *THE WOMAN IS THE GLORY OF MAN*

BIG IDEA:

WOMEN MUST APPROPRIATELY ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUTHORITY (HEADSHIP) OF MEN (BY WEARING THE SYMBOLIC CLOTH HEAD COVERING) AND AVOID DENIALS OF THEIR GOD-APPOINTED FEMININE ROLE

INTRODUCTION:

This is certainly a very controversial topic in light of the feminist movement in our culture. We see a woman running for President of the most powerful country in the world. We see churches attacked as outdated and chauvinistic if they limit the church office of elder and the role of preaching to men. We see much gender confusion with women pushing for a type of “Equality of the Sexes” that amounts to denying any role differentiations between men and women. So you have women serving in the military and holding the most powerful leadership positions in the business world.

The Apostle Paul had been dealing with issues related to a Christian’s liberties. Apparently some women in the church had taken the concept of liberality too far and were removing their cloth head-coverings that symbolized their submission to the headship (authority) of men. Paul felt this was an important error to address since the God-ordained creation order and differing roles of man and woman were a fundamental fabric both of society itself and of godly behavior in the church.

I. (:2-7) FUNDAMENTAL TEACHING OF THE HEADSHIP OF MEN OVER WOMEN AND HOW THAT RELATES TO THE NECESSITY OF WEARING THE SYMBOLIC CLOTH HEAD COVERING

A. (:2) Introductory Word of Commendation

1. Positive Approach of Prefacing Correction with Praise
“Now I praise you”

Surprising, because Paul did not have a lot of areas in which he was praising the church at Corinth; very gracious, diplomatic approach to dealing with a delicate topic

2. Two Reasons for the Commendation

- a. Loyal to the Personal Example of the Apostle Paul – Personal Connection
“because you remember me in everything”

Whom are we imitating in our church practices?

- b. Loyal to the Doctrinal Teachings of the Apostle Paul – Doctrinal Connection
“and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.”

“traditions” can be either positive or negative – here viewed as the positive apostolic instruction in doctrine and practice that was essential in these transitional times before the full development of the Canon of Scripture

B. (:3) Reinforcement of the Fundamental Role Differentiations Involving Headship

1. Headship of Christ Over Man

“But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man”

Leake: head of every man, not just the church; Heb. 2:8

2. Headship of Man Over Woman

“and the man is the head of a woman”

Not restricting the context to the marital relationship of husband and wife

3. Headship of God the Father Over Christ

“and God is the head of Christ.”

Certainly no concept of inferiority involved

Leake: Christ submitted to the will of the Father; John 6:38; Jesus did not send the Father but the other way around (1 Cor. 15:28)

Concept of Headship had to involve primarily Authority ... some people today want to limit it to some reference to “Source” alone

What does this picture of headship communicate?

C. (:4-7) Explanation of the Need for a Head Covering for the Woman

1. (:4-5a) The Issue Involves Respecting vs Disgracing Your Head

a. How does a Man Disgrace His Head?

“Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head.”

b. (:5a) How does a Woman Disgrace Her Head?

“But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head;”

2. (:5b-6) Argument from the Lesser to the Greater --

Same Category as Shaving a Woman’s Head – just more extreme

“for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.”

3. (:7) Distinction of God-Appointed Roles Must be Maintained

a. Man is the Image and Glory of God

“For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God”

b. Woman is the Glory of Man

“but the woman is the glory of man.”

II. (:8-12) PRIMARY ARGUMENT BASED ON ORIGINATION WHICH CREATES A NECESSARY ROLE DIFFERENTIATION

A. (:8-10) Three Reasons Why it Makes Sense for Women to Wear the Cloth Head Covering

1. (:8) Woman Originates from Man

“For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man”

2. (:9) Woman Was Created For Man

“for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.”

3. (:10) Submission of Woman to Man Matters to Angels

“Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”

This is a powerful argument in favor of the symbol still being valid today and essential. Angels cannot see into the heart of a woman to determine if she has the proper attitude of submission. They must see the visible symbol. Yes, there can still be hypocrisy, but that is a separate issue.

B. (:11-12) Balancing Perspective (to mitigate against abuse)

1. Mutual Dependence

“However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman”

2. Primacy of God

“and all things originate from God”

III. (:13-16) THREE SECONDARY SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS WHICH LEAD TO THE SAME CONCLUSION – THE WOMEN MUST CONTINUE THE SYMBOLIC PRACTICE OF WEARING THE CLOTH HEAD COVERING

A. (:13) Argument From Propriety

“Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?”

B. (:14-15) Argument From Nature

“Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.”

C. (:16) Argument From Universal Church Practice

“But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.”

APPLICATION:

The difficulty in this passage is all about application. Apart from the easy-to-answer objections of the feminists to the clearly defined role differentiations, we are left to wrestle with the thorny issue of whether God really expects women today in our culture to still wear head

coverings in some context of Christian gatherings. This is an issue which the modern church does not have much appetite to investigate. Where is the perceived benefit to try to re-introduce a practice that most people would find to be bizarre at best? On the other hand, the issue is always about what is pleasing to the Lord and consistent with His revealed will.

There are two main approaches for the biblical scholar who cares about practicing what he believes to be the truth:

1) The majority will argue that the principle of submission is the focal point of the passage and the area of obedience of concern to God. The practice of wearing the head covering was cultural and not obligatory for today. The fact that the head covering has lost its symbolism in today's culture would make it unnecessary and even overly restrictive to try to re-introduce the symbol and re-educate people as to its significance. A strong argument from silence would be to note that the OT never claims that Eve was commanded to wear any type of head covering from the beginning. It would seem that she was naked in the garden originally; and after the Fall the garments which the Lord made for them did not include a head covering for Eve (Gen. 3:21).

However, the difficulty is that the arguments used in the passage seem to extend beyond cultural lines of reasoning and have a more universal application. Perhaps Paul is more concerned with the statement made by women removing the head covering rather than by the necessity of wearing the head covering itself. But again, the nature of the arguments do not point in that direction.

2) Some will dare to argue and practice that we need to take the Scriptures at face value in this text as everywhere else. And as strange as it seems to us, we need to make an issue of women needing to wear the required head covering. (The point would not be to coerce women against their conscience to adopt such behavior; that would be legalistic. Rather there would be teaching to re-establish the symbolism intended by God and women taking up this practice as a matter of personal conviction.) However, that puts us in very strange company in today's world. One would not want to create unnecessary obstacles to people embracing a church community. But the determining factor still must be: How clear is the Lord's revelation on this subject and what application does He desire for us?

If the practice needs to be re-instituted, one must address a wide range of questions that are problematic:

- **Who** is required to wear the head covering? The instruction goes beyond application just to married women. At what age would it become appropriate?
- What is the **context** in today's spiritual experience where "*praying and prophesying*" take place? Many people who have adopted the practice have limited its expression to the main public worship service. But the passage seems to go beyond that since women were not allowed to take a vocal leadership role in that context. Is the head covering something that you would put on and take off repeatedly? Should it have application in private prayer (probably not)? How about prayer within the context of the home, but not public prayer?
- **What type of covering** should be worn? Must it be opaque and truly cover the head as opposed to just a symbolic little cap?

The temptation is to admit to the complexity and allow others to wrestle with the details! You certainly have to have a very strong level of conviction to move forward in this direction.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How many generations ago did women in America typically wear head coverings in church? Why do you think our cultural practice changed?
- 2) Why do we still see men typically remove their hats before any public prayer?
- 3) What types of things most capture the interest of angels and why do you think this is the case?
- 4) What type of a distinction should we see in our culture in terms of hair length and hair styles for men and women? How can we encourage this without being legalistic?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Pastor Thomas Leake: Can Women Be Both Submissive & Liberated?

6 Truths About the Principle of Submission

Introduction: Very tough passage; There is a proper way for both men and women to behave in worship and in their distinctive roles. Much misleading teaching has grown up around Gal. 3:28. This text deals with salvation privileges in general – especially the future inheritance; everybody (man and woman, slave and master) gets the same glorious inheritance. However, that does not mean that these distinctions in society have been wiped out and no longer apply.

What today is sexism and what is not? Is it wrong for a woman to want a man to act like a man and vice versa? Should there be no distinctions in roles??

- man: lead, provide for, and protect
- woman: affirm, receive, and nurture

1) (:2-3) The Principle of Submission Declared

Concept of Headship involves Authority; Paul uses the word in contrast to the body (Eph. 5:22-30); Submission is involved = being obedient to authority over you; Titus 2:3-8; What kind of body doesn't obey its head? Head does not need another head but a body to uphold it and support it; The image is simple and clear
God did not design woman to lead man

2) (:4-6) The Cultural Practice of Submission

Takes the position that the wearing of the actual head covering cloth had a cultural symbolic meaning that no longer exists today; so it would not be appropriate to wear the head covering today. (quote from **Wayne Grudem**)

What exactly was the head covering? Lit., *something hung down from the head*

- Right view: some type of lengthy veil or shawl hanging down (Esther 6:12); Gen. 24:65; 38:14

- referring to a woman's long hair itself – but that leads to absurdities when you talk about covering and uncovering
- a woman's hair pinned up into a bun at the top rather than flowing down; Num. 5:18; but this does not work in terms of the contrast with man
- Style of the head covering was not Paul's main concern ... but it was some type of cloth covering separate from her hair

Problem of the context mentioned here for “praying and prophesying”

The context of “*praying and prophesying*” does not refer here to the entire church gathered together for public worship because it is clear from 1 Cor. 14 that women were not allowed even to speak in such a context. Also it would seem that vs. 17 talks about when they come together in the worship assembly in contrast to preceding verses [But others argue from the parallel expressions “*I praise*” vs 1 ... “*I do not praise*” vs. 17 that these must be the same contexts in view]; How do you harmonize the two passages that seem to allow for women prophesying and then seem to restrict that in the assembly?? Take chap 11:4-5 as a less formal setting than the full worship service

How can women today show their submission? (if the symbol no longer has validity)

- by their behavior
- by their propriety and modesty in how they dress
- by how they speak when around men
- by affirming male leadership

3) (:7-10) The Defense of the Principle of Submission

“*glory*” = that which flows out from a declared greatness of the original

“liberation” is an affront to God; a shame to woman; and robs man of his due

4) (:11-12) The Principle of Submission Balanced by Interdependence

Wrong for man to use headship in selfish ways; Christianity elevated the role of women in society

5) (:13-15) The Appeal to Common Sense About Submission

What is long hair today? “dropping to shoulders” -- There must be a distinction in length and style between man and woman

6) (:16) The Universal Practice of Submission

Sermons can be listened to at www.hopebiblechurch.org

“*Let Her Be Veiled*” -- Edited by **Tom Shank**:

Survey a host of Bible commentaries on 1 Corinthians 11 and you will find that generally only since the beginning of this century has the practice of wearing the veiling been interpreted away by liberal scholars, and the church has followed their lead. . .

It is Important to keep in mind that in writing this epistle to the Corinthian Christians, Paul was speaking not only to them, but also to "all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord..." (ch. 1:2). With prophetic foresight, Paul was perhaps seeing that his letters, as statements of apostolic doctrine, were going to be widely circulated. All of his epistles had

universally applicable messages even though he was also speaking to local needs and problems. With this in mind, we realize that his teaching concerning the veiling of women was not to a specific socio-cultural situation, but to all the churches everywhere, as 1 Cor. 11: 16 also clearly points out. . .

Man's headship over woman is a relationship for this age, and has Its origin in the creation account itself. Man's headship is not just a result of the fall, but was established in the Garden of Eden in that she was created out of man and was a "helper comparable to him" (Gen.2: 18). Eve's sin in the Garden was in one sense her breaking this headship principle by disobeying God and enticing Adam, She thereby overstepped her place as helpmeet, and thus nullified her authority and influence Man's headship over woman is not abolished in the church, because it is an aspect of God's government in this world for the effectual achieving of His purposes. . .

We serve a God who for various reasons has put great emphasis upon symbols and their meaning. The O.T. Is full of types and symbols which point to and prepare for the fuller revelation and reality of the new covenant. Circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham; baptism corresponds to It. The head veiling serves to remind us that even though we are in a new covenant and have entered into the boundless freedom of Christ, yet God's governmental distinctions which were established in the Garden are yet in force while this creation lasts. . .

* * * * *

Quoting from **Watchman Nee**:

The meaning of head covering is: I submit myself to God's government: I accept God's appointed position: I dare not nullify His government by the grace I have received; I do not even dare to think about it; on the contrary, I accept God's government. As Christ accepts God as His head, so should every man accept Christ as his head. Likewise, woman should representatively accept man as her head. In covering the head, the woman signifies that she is not head, that she is as if she has no head - for it is covered....

God calls upon the sisters to show this arrangement. It is through the sisters that God's governmental system is to be displayed. It is the sisters who are responsible to have the sign of obedience on their heads. God specifically requires women to have their head covered when praying or prophesying. Why? Because they ought to know God's government when they come before Him. In going before God to pray for people or in going before people to prophesy for God, whether In praying or in prophesying, whether in that which goes to God or in that which comes from God, in whatever is related to God, head covering is demanded. The purpose Is to manifest the government of God....

* * * * *

If one thinks that her hair is the only covering implied in this chapter, they need only replace the word 'covering' in verses 4, 5, 6, 7, and 13 with the word 'hair', and they will quickly see how absurd such a notion is.

The final blow to this argument is found in verse 6, where Paul says "If a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn". The word 'also' (kai) can't but be implying an artificial covering besides the hair. To paraphrase this verse with this assumption in mind, it would read, "If her head is not covered with hair, then let her hair be cut." How can you cut something that isn't there?!

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Cyprus/7560/LetHerBeVeiled.html>

Thomas Schreiner: Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity

The Son has a different function or role from the Father, not an inferior being or essence. This point is often missed by evangelical feminists. They conclude that a difference in function necessarily involves a difference in essence; i.e., if men are in authority over women, then women must be inferior. The relationship between Christ and the Father shows us that this reasoning is flawed. One can possess a different function and still be equal in essence and worth. Women are equal to men in essence and in being; there is no ontological distinction, and yet they have a different function or role in church and home. Such differences do not logically imply inequality or inferiority, just as Christ's subjection to the Father does not imply His inferiority.

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2820

David Silversides: Is Headcovering Biblical? – in Puritanism Today

Our feminist culture certainly does expose the church to the temptation to abandon the Scriptural sign of acceptance of male and female distinctiveness. . .

The idea that we must find 'culturally relevant' ways of expressing male headship becomes obviously absurd in a culture like ours where every trace of male leadership is being eradicated. .

The Danger of the Cultural Argument.

The random imposition on a passage of Scripture of cultural considerations has serious repercussions for Biblical interpretation generally. As an example of this approach applied to other passages relating to gender issues, let us see how it works with **1 Tim 2:11-14**.

- a) The concession - the principle of male leadership is based on the creation order and is permanent.
- b) The assumption - in the culture of the 1st century AD, the woman's acceptance of male leadership was expressed by her being silent in public assemblies (probably more easily provable than the use of headcovering).
- c) The conclusion - female silence wasn't the real issue, but the principle of male headship which may find different expression according to time and place. Therefore, women may now, in our culture, preach and teach in the church.

Again, the repercussions of the random appeal to culture approach on other aspects of worship should be kept in mind. Immediately after the headcovering passage, we have the section relating to the Lord's Supper. Let us see how the random cultural approach applies in **1 Corinthians 11 v23-27**.

- a) The concession - the principle that an ordinance commemorating the death of Christ in a meal is to be observed is permanent.
- b) The assumption - bread and wine were the normal elements of food and drink in the 1st Century AD (undoubtedly true) and can be assumed were only used in the Lord's supper for cultural reasons.

c) The conclusion - We are to remember Christ's death by communal partaking of food and drink, but the precise elements will depend on the culture of time and place (tea and biscuits or coke and crisps etc.). . .

John Bunyan 1628-1688

“For this cause ought the woman to have power”, that is a covering, “on her head, because of the angels” 1 Cor.11:10...Methinks, holy and beloved sisters, you should be content to wear this power or badge...”

Ligonier Ministries (1996)

“Our actions must conform to the principles that God has established...Do you disregard the exterior aspects of religion, saying the heart is all that matters? If so, confess your pride before God today.

Whenever we have a lesson from both the Scriptures and from nature, we are doubly bound to obey. We also must recognize that it is a rule rooted in nature, not custom.

If it is shameful for a woman to have her head shaved, then she must realize that it is just as shameful for her to enter public worship with her head uncovered. We must not confuse Paul's use of hair as ‘nature's covering’ and the covering he is exhorting women to wear in public worship.

Nowhere does (Paul) give cultural reasons for his teaching, i.e. abusive practices of a pagan society that placed prostitutes with shorn heads in the temple. Paul points back to God's established order in nature. Whenever a teaching in Scripture refers to ‘creation ordinances’, that teaching is binding for all cultures in all ages...

The ‘rules of decorum’...regarding the worship of God are established by God Himself not by the whims of culture. It is proper for a woman to have a symbol of authority on her head...The necessity of the symbol remains fixed even as the authority of the man remains fixed.”

(From ‘Table Talk’ Devotional Guide for June 17-24, 1996, pp.36-43 – quoted by Sanseri op. cit. pp.278f.) . . .

Female head-covering was the norm in the majority of churches for centuries. The comparatively recent change of this state of affairs is, we suspect, not due to greater exegetical insight or true scholarly advance, but concession to the spirit of the age in which we live.

<http://puritanismtoday.wordpress.com/2006/05/31/is-headcovering-biblical-1/>

Matthew Henry: Note, The sexes should not affect to change places. The order in which divine wisdom has placed persons and things is best and fittest: to endeavour to amend it is to destroy all order, and introduce confusion. The woman should keep to the rank God has chosen for her, and not dishonour her head; for this, in the result, is to dishonour God. If she was made out of the man, and for the man, and made to be the glory of the man, she should do nothing, especially in public, that looks like a wish of having this order inverted.

Miles Stanford: History of the Plymouth Brethren Assemblies

Experience of Dr. Ironsides: Dr. Ironside certainly knew whereof he spoke. During his illustrious and fruitful lifetime, he moved from the Salvation Army to the open Brethren to the closed Brethren (Grantites), to an extended ministry as pastor of Moody Memorial Church in

Chicago, and thence into Glory. He authored a book, titled A Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement -- An Account of Its Inception, Progress, Principles and Failures, and Its Lessons for Present-Day Believers [5]. Sometimes one can judge a book by its cover!

The assemblies have always insisted upon female silence in the meetings, and submission in the home. The possible over-emphasis and overbearing attitude of the men along these lines have in many instances produced a traumatic effect upon the female constituency. Some have claimed that this has brought about a situation whereby the women actually control many present-day assemblies--through their husbands!

Over-emphasis in any realm always has its penalties, no matter how well-intentioned or how biblical. The Brethren still insist that their women wear head coverings as a sign of submission; but a bit of net or cloth doily--or even a full-fledged and flowered bonnet--do not always prove the presence of a submissive spirit, do they?

<http://www.withchrist.org/MJS/pbs.htm>

Mark Copeland:

3. If my understanding is correct, the issue was...
 - a. Not: "Should women put on the veil to prophesy and pray in church?"
 - b. But: "Should women take off the veil to prophesy and pray in public?"
4. Paul sought to encourage them to act in harmony with the customs of their day...
 - a. Customs that were in harmony with the scriptural principles of headship and subjection
 - b. But he acknowledges that the head covering was not the custom of the apostles or the church

Thus I take his words regarding women and the head covering per se to be limited and temporary in application. But the idea of honoring societal customs that reflect scriptural principles certainly has universal and permanent application for Christians who seek to glorify God in this world.

http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/1cor/1co11_2.htm

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod:

However, to speak of head covering as an "apostolic custom" is to say more than Scripture says. There is no place in Scripture that establishes that God has mandated the custom of woman's head covering for his believers in all times and in all places.

Then why does Paul argue so strongly for it in 1 Corinthians 11? Even the pagan culture of that day recognized to some degree from the law written on the heart the concept of head and helper which God established at creation. It was not an apostolic mandated custom, but the general culture of Paul's day that had the expectation that women would wear a head covering. Paul urges the women of Corinth to abide by that custom of the day because it was a reflection of a God-given principle. Paul's whole point is based on the fact that for the women of the Corinthian congregation to flaunt that custom would be to speak against God's principle of head and helper that Paul clearly restates in verse 3.

You are correct that our own culture also once had a similar custom. And, as you mentioned, you can find remnants of that in some places. And were that custom still in general practice in our day, Christian women would be in danger of giving the same impression of ignoring God's principle if they ignored that cultural custom that reflected it. However, whether for good or bad reasons, that custom has ceased to be common in our culture. To insist upon reinstating it would be to elevate a custom of men to the level of a principle of God.

http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic_topicID=30&cuItem_itemID=15544

Warren Henderson: Glories Seen & Unseen – A Study of the Head Covering. Scroll Publishing, 2007.

Why did God take such care to create the Seraphim with six wings and the Cherubim with four wings? To ensure that all “competing glories” would be hidden and to provide a visible representation of divine order throughout the dominion of Almighty God. . .

What is symbolic truth? Simply stated, it is an act or object that epitomizes a spiritual fact. God knows that we are forgetful creatures, so He surrounds us with constant reminders of Himself, lest we forget his accomplishments. . .

This symbolic practice of covering ensures that only the glory of Almighty God is seen and all other competing glories remain unseen. Proper covering gives the visible evidence of order in the heavenly realms as well as in the assemblies of God's people on earth. Divine order is fundamental and central to the proper functioning of any local church, and it should thus be expressed symbolically in the church's public gatherings through the head covering. . .

To summarize [the data from church history], in two generations a Christian practice spanning two millennia was generally lost. Apparently, the head covering practice became unfashionable and lost its spiritual significance. In short, Christianity in the early 20th century still maintained the “what” – the head covering, but had generally lost the “why” – the scriptural principle. It is an important lesson for us to pass down to our children. Whenever we don't understand “why” we are practicing something, we ultimately lose the practice. “The why” must be declared to keep “the what”!

<http://www.scrollpublishing.com/store/more-Glories.html>

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

TITLE: *CORRECTING ABUSES REGARDING THE LORD'S SUPPER*

BIG IDEA:

THE PROPER PRACTICE OF THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER:

- **PROMOTES THE UNITY OF THE BODY**
- **PROCLAIMS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRUCIFIXION**
- **PROTECTS AGAINST DIVINE DISCIPLINE**

INTRODUCTION:

The Lord's Supper was instituted as the central act of Christian worship. Its simplicity and symbolism point to the depth and richness of the significance of the Lord's crucifixion for our salvation. Abuses in the practice of the Lord's Supper at the church of Corinth led to these important words of correction from the pen of the Apostle Paul. The context was the love feast or pot luck fellowship meal that led up to the observance of the divine ordinance. The abuses surrounded the selfish indulgence of the believers at Corinth on such occasions. The divisions in Paul's day seemed to revolve around social and economic status as the believers failed to share their food and drink in a way that would unite their fellowship. Today the divisions are even more dramatic revolving around the significance of the ordinance itself. The Roman Catholic mass takes the extreme position that the bread and the wine actually become the body and blood of Christ and communicate grace to the participants. But even within Protestantism there have been differing views regarding the meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper.

I. (:17-22) SHAMEFUL SCHISMS – THE PROPER PRACTICE OF THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER PROMOTES THE UNITY OF THE BODY

A. (:17) Constructive Criticism

1. Correction Necessary

"But in giving this instruction,"

When people are involved in practices that are hurting the church instead of edifying the body, the Word of God must be applied first to provide instruction, and then followed up in a way to administer reproof, correction and then training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

2. Commendation Not Possible

"I do not praise you,"

3. Coming Together Not Productive

"because you come together not for the better but for the worse."

MacArthur: It would have been much better for those Corinthians never to have had a love feast, and even never to have observed the Lord's Communion, than to have so abused them. They came together *not for the better but for the worse*. The term for *worse* is a comparative of *kakos*, which represents moral evil. Instead of the celebrations being times of loving fellowship and spiritual enrichment they involved selfish indulgence, shaming the poorer brethren, mocking the Lord's sacrificial death, and scandalizing the church before the unbelieving world around them.

B. (:18-19) Demonstrative Divisions

1. (:18) Divisions Disrupt Body Unity

a. Importance of the Issue

"For, in the first place"

Paul doesn't always follow out his enumerations.

b. Identity as One Body

"when you come together as a church"

c. Report of Divisions

"I hear that divisions exist among you"

d. Credibility of the Problem

"and in part I believe it."

2. (:19) Divisions Separate True Believers From Pretenders

a. Inevitability of Divisions

"For there must also be factions among you,"

b. Separation of Wheat from Chaff

"so that those who are approved may become evident among you."

Usage of *dokimos* consistent in Paul's writings for contrast between legitimate believers and mere professors of faith in Christ; the opposite would be the reprobate

C. (:20-22) Self-Centered Selfishness

1. (:20-21) Selfish Approach Documented

a. (:20) Missing the Point of Worship

"Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper"

b. (:21) Putting the Priority on Self Satisfaction

1) Piggish Behavior

"for in your eating each one takes his own supper first;"

2) No Consideration for Others
“and one is hungry and another is drunk.”

2. (:22a) Shameful Conduct Exposed (for what it is)
 - a. Shocking Exclamation
“What!”
 - b. Searching Question
“Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink?”
 - c. Sarcastic Accusation
“Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?”
3. (:22b) Scathing Rebuke Administered (in place of praise)
“What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.”

MacArthur: A Christian’s attitudes and motives should be pure at all times. But when believers come to the table of the Lord, sharing the bread of His body and the cup of His blood, it is absolutely necessary that they leave behind all sin, all bitterness, all racial and sexual prejudice, all class pride, and all feelings of superiority. Of all places and occasions, those attitudes are most out of place at the Lord’s Supper. They grievously profane that holy, beautiful, and unifying ordinance of God.

II. (:23-26) SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE – THE PROPER PRACTICE OF THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER PROCLAIMS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRUCIFIXION

- A. (:23a) The Significance of the Setting for the Establishment of the Ordinance
 1. Divine Institution
“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you,”
 2. Traitorous Backdrop
“that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed”

Morris: Paul brings out the poignancy of the institution of that feast of love which was to bring such strength and consolation to Christians, at the very time when human malignancy was engaged in betraying the Saviour to His enemies.

- B. (:23b-24) The Significance of the Bread
 - a. Consecration of the Elements
“took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it”
 - b. Connection to His Physical Body via Symbolism
“and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you;’”
 - c. Command to Practice the Ordinance

“do this in remembrance of Me.”

- C. (:25) The Significance of the Cup
 - a. Consecration of the Elements
 - “In the same way He took the cup also after supper,”*
 - b. Connection to His Atoning Blood via Symbolism Surrounding the New Covenant
 - “saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood;’”*
 - c. Command to Practice the Ordinance
 - “do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me.”*
- D. (:26) The Significance of the Regular Practice of the Ordinance
 - 1. Frequency
 - “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,”*
 - 2. Focus
 - “you proclaim the Lord’s death”*
 - 3. Finish Line
 - “until He comes.”*

Piper: If the Lord's Supper is worship, how does it express our inner treasuring of Christ's beauty and worth? Let me mention three things from the text. We express the value of Christ by "**remembering**," by "**proclaiming**," and by "**nourishing**." . . . This supper is not about physical nourishment. It is about spiritual nourishment.

III. (:27-32) SOBER SELF-EXAMINATION (= PREREQUISITE TO PARTICIPATION) – THE PROPER PRACTICE OF THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER PROTECTS AGAINST DIVINE DISCIPLINE

- A. (:27) Unworthy Participation Condemned
 - “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.”*

Chestnut:

- 1. What does it mean to "*eat in an unworthy manner?*" (27).
 - a. Not individual worthiness--nobody is worthy!
 - b. "Unworthy manner" is when you eat and hate your brother!
- 2. What should we be examining about ourselves before we eat? (28).
 - a. Whether or not we are worthy to partake?
 - b. "Do I love my brothers?" or "Am I united with the brothers?"
- 3. What does it mean to "*not discern the Lord's Body?*" (29).
 - a. Same thing as to "*despise the church of God*" (22).
 - b. Church IS the body of Christ! (Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:27).

Hodge: To eat or drink unworthily is in general to come to the Lord's table in a careless, irreverent spirit, without the intention or desire to commemorate the death of Christ as the sacrifice for our sins, and without the purpose of complying with the engagements which we thereby assume. The way in which the Corinthians ate unworthily was, that they treated the Lord's table as though it were their own; making no distinction between the Lord's supper and an ordinary meal; coming together to satisfy their hunger, and not to feed on the body and blood of Christ; and refusing to commune with their poorer brethren. This, though one, is not the only way in which men may eat and drink unworthily. All that is necessary to observe is, that the warning is directly against the careless and profane, and not against the timid and the doubting.

B. (:28-32) Self Examination Essential

1. (:28) Avoidance of Judgment –

Self-Examination with a Goal of Qualification and Participation
(not Disqualification and Avoidance)

“But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

2. (:29-30) Reality of Judgment

a. (:29) Possibility of Judgment

“For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.”

b. (:30) Examples of Judgment

“For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.”

3. (:31-32) Purpose of Judgment

a. Self Judgment Avoids Divine Judgment

“But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.”

b. Divine Discipline Provides Necessary Protection

“But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.”

(:33-34) SUMMARY – ABUSIVE PRACTICES MUST BE CORRECTED

A. (:33) Assemble to Promote Church Unity by Practicing Loving Self Control

“So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.”

Must be unselfish and loving towards the other members of the body

B. (:34a) Avoid Divine Discipline by Maintaining the Symbolic Focus of the Ordinance

“If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for

judgment.”

It's not about eating to satisfy your hunger

- C. (:34b) Anticipate Additional Authoritative Clarification and Correction
“The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Should some type of love feast or fellowship meal accompany the practice of the Lord's Supper?
- 2) Should the Lord's Supper be a central focus of the main meeting of the assembly?
- 3) Do you know anyone whom the Lord has disciplined with sickness or death in harmony with this context here?
- 4) What are some helpful guidelines for the preparatory process of self-examination?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Some were bringing a lot of food and gathering in their own little family group to eat it, while others who had hardly anything, or nothing at all, were left hungry. One would have a crust of bread, perhaps, to chew on, and over here would be a family group eating Kentucky Fried Chicken, or steak and lobster, perhaps, while others were completely left out. Paul says, "That an absolute parody of what the church ought to be. Instead of caring for one another, you are excluding one another, and even worse, some of you are eating and drinking so much that, unfortunately, you are actually coming to the Lord's Table intoxicated."

That is hard for us to conceive of, but that is what was happening. (Incidentally, that answers the question that many have asked as to whether the wine that the early Christians drank was alcoholic. I remember Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse being asked on one occasion, "Don't you believe that the wine the early Christians drank was really grape juice?" In his brusque way he said, "Well, they got drunk on it at Corinth." This certainly is the answer to that question.) But even worse, in the eyes of the apostle, some of them seemed to shrug off any rebuke along this line. They were indifferent; they exhibited a careless defiance of the need to minister to one another. . .

This is what the bread symbolizes -- that he is to be our power by which we obey the demands of God, the Word of God, to love one another, to forgive one another, to be

tender and merciful, kind and courteous to one another, to not return evil for evil but to pray for those who persecute us and mistrust us and misuse us. His life in us enables us to be what God asks us to be. We live by means of Christ. Jesus said it himself in John 6, "so he that eats me, even he shall live by means of me," {cf, John 6:57}. . .

The wine of the cup symbolizes his blood which he said is the blood of the New Covenant, the new arrangement for living that God has made, by which the old life is ended. That is what blood always means: Blood is the end of a life, and the old life in which we were dependent upon ourselves, and lived for ourselves, and wanted only to be the center of attention is over. That is what the cup means. We agree to that; we are no longer to live for ourselves. That is why, written across the front of this auditorium, it says. "You are not your own. You are bought with a price." You do not have final rights to your life, and the price is the blood of Jesus. Therefore, when we take that cup and drink it, we are publicly proclaiming that we agree with that sentence of death upon our old life, and believe that the Christian life is a continual experience of life coming out of death. That is what it says. . .

God guards the Table from unworthy partaking. Now, what that means, of course, is what Paul has just been rebuking these Christians at Corinth about. They were partaking in an unworthy manner because they were careless, selfish, and indifferent to the needs of others. They were coming to the Lord's Table in a kind of an empty ritual, just going through it in a mechanical, ceremonial way. That, Paul says, is a dangerous practice, because it is acting as though the death and the life of Jesus mean nothing to us, and he warns against that. We become sharers of the guilt of those who put the Lord to death when we participate without our heart-interest and our heart-concern involved in the Lord's Table. Therefore, according to the apostle, a proper participation involves a careful self-examination. That is why he says let someone examine himself or herself earnestly and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Piper: Instead of a detailed exposition of this passage I want us to see only two main things. One is that the Lord's Supper is a celebration of how Jesus established the new covenant. And the other is that this new covenant creates and controls the existence of local churches. . .

the Lord's Supper is a celebration of how Jesus established the new covenant--by shedding his blood for his people and thus securing for them the forgiveness of their sins and the sanctification of their souls. . .

God wills for the new covenant to create local churches. The covenant promise, "You will be my people and I will be your God," does not just create a universal body, but local expressions of that body in specific local gatherings called churches. . .

In other words when a local number of believers comes together to form a church they are to think something like this; we are bound to God by the new covenant; and not only that, since we are bound to God by that covenant, we are bound to each other by that covenant too. The covenant that makes us belong to God, makes us belong to each

other. Therefore our commitment to each other in a local church is a covenant commitment. Our covenant relationship to God implies a covenant relationship to each other. God's covenant with us creates and shapes our covenant with each other.

Piper: Different Views Regarding the Lord's Supper:

Roman Catholic View

How does this work? Roman Catholics speak of **transubstantiation** and teach that, at the consecration by the priest, the bread and wine are actually and miraculously transformed into the literal body and blood of Jesus. Eating this transubstantiated bread and drinking this transubstantiated wine brings saving grace to the soul.

Lutheran View

Lutherans speak of **consubstantiation** and teach that the bread and wine don't cease to be bread and wine, but that the real, literal presence of the physical body and blood of Christ is present along with the natural elements when they are consecrated in worship.

Reformed View

Our view (call it the Reformed view) is that the bread and wine are emblems or **symbols** of the real, literal body of Christ that was crucified in history and today is in heaven at the Father's right hand. But we believe that there is a real feeding on Christ spiritually by faith - not on his physical body, but on his real, spiritual presence. And even though a believer can nourish himself any time and anywhere on the presence of Christ in his word, there is a special nourishing offered in eating the Lord's Supper and hearing the preaching of God's word.

Luther Versus Zwingli - John 6

The place to see this most clearly perhaps is in John 6. Here is where Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli locked horns at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. Luther quoted verse 53, "So Jesus said to them, *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.*" And then he would quote 1 Corinthians 11:24, *"This is my body,"* and he even wrote it with chalk on the big conference table during the debate.

His claim was that we are tampering with the Word of God to say that *"This is*

my body" means "This symbolizes my body." He would go back to John 6:53 - we must "eat the flesh of the Son of Man!"

But Zwingli, on the other hand, who took the view that we embrace, pointed to John 6:63 as an explanation of Jesus' words. There Jesus said, "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*" He became exasperated at Luther's repetition of "This is my body," and said, "I remain firm at this text, 'The flesh profits nothing.' I shall oblige you to return to it. You will have to sing a different tune with me" (Reformers in Profile, ed. B.A. Gerrish, p. 139).

We believe that Zwingli was closer to the truth here. "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*" In other words, when Jesus said in John 6:53 that we must "*eat the flesh of the Son of Man,*" he did not mean to say that literal flesh profits anything, even if it were possible. He meant to say that his words were spirit and life. We feed on the flesh and blood of Jesus spiritually, not physically.

One last pointer to this way of seeing the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:25 Paul said, "*He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood.'*" I am not aware of anyone who says that the cup is literally the covenant. Nor is the wine in the cup the covenant. The new covenant is God's commitment to save to the uttermost those who trust in Jesus. The cup of wine (or juice) represents this covenant because the blood of Christ bought the covenant for us. It doesn't become this covenant.

So I conclude that, in a few minutes, when we eat the bread and drink the cup, we may nourish our souls by faith on the spiritual presence of Christ. When we remember and proclaim his death, he manifests himself to us as infinitely precious. He shows us all that God promises to be for us in Christ. This is the food of our souls. With this we are nourished and find strength to live as Christians.

The Lord's Supper is worship because it expresses the infinite worth of Christ. No one is more worthy to be remembered. No one is more worthy to be proclaimed. And no one can nourish our souls with eternal life but Christ. So let us come and remember, and proclaim and eat.

Alan Carr: Gilead Baptist Church
OUR TIME AT THE LORD'S TABLE

I. v. 24-26 IT IS A TIME OF REMEMBRANCE

A. v. 24-25 Remember An Agonizing Lord

B. v. 26 Remember An Achieving Lord

C. v. 26 Remember An Appearing Lord

II. v. 27-30 IT IS A TIME OF REPENTANCE

A. v. 27-30 From Our Sins

B. v. 17-22 From Our Selfishness

III. v. 31 IT IS A TIME OF RENEWAL

A. Our Vows -- What have you promised the Lord that you haven't carried out?

B. Our Vision -- This time at the Lord's table is a great time for us to remember why we are here anyway. We should all take this time to ask the Lord to renew our vision of:

1. A World Lost Without Jesus. (Ill. The horrors of the lost man -- Eph. 2:12)

2. A Lord Worthy Of Our Best Service, Faithfulness and Worship.

3. A Church With A Future Only As Large As Our Commitment.

C. Our Victory - This is a great time to bring your defeats, your trials, your valleys, your hurts and struggles to the Lord and let Him remind you that He hasn't forgotten you. That He is working everything out for your good -- Rom. 8:28. That in Him you always walk in victory -- 1 Cor. 15:57. That in Him, you are more than a conqueror -- Rom. 8:37.

Chestnut: Rituals have become devalued in our culture. Everybody wants a ceremony that is short and sweet. We have lost sight of the value of ritual.

Rituals and ceremonies have great value.

1. Actions that proclaim important truths without words.

2. Illust. Think about a wedding ceremony. Important truths are communicated non-verbally:

1) Giving away the bride. (Comes down aisle, hand placed in his, gets out of the way.);

- 2) Unity candle. (Two lives become a shared life.)
- 3) Throwing rice/birdseed. (The community wishes prosperity on new couple.)

In a ceremony actions speak louder than words!

3. Illust. Think about a baptism. Re-enactment of the death, burial, Resurrection of Jesus. Individual is passive, accepting salvation.

How can we keep the Lord's Supper from becoming an empty ritual?

1. Take the Lord's Supper each and every week.
 - a. This was the practice of the early Christians.
 - b. Illust. But someone says: "If we do it every week it will become too common and lose its significance."

Alexander Campbell answers: "Well, then, the seldomer the better. If we observe it only once in twenty years, it will be the more uncommon and solemn. And, on the same principle, the seldomer we pray the better. We shall pray with more solemnity if we pray once in twenty years." ("On the Breaking of Bread" [No. III], The Christian Baptist 3, No.3 [Oct. 3, 1825])

2. Take enough time for the Lord's Supper. (Meal: don't "eat & run")
3. Stress the meaning of the Lord's Supper. (Sacrificial death)
4. Give thought to the prayers at the Lord's Supper.
5. Sing appropriate songs for the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:17-34).

1. A look BACKWARD (v. 25)
2. A look FORWARD (v. 26)
3. A look INWARD (vv. 27-29)
4. A look OUTWARD (v. 26)
5. A look UPWARD (giving thanks)

Hodge: In order to show how inconsistent their conduct was with the nature of the service in which they professed to engage, the apostle recounts the original institution of the Lord's supper, vs. 23-25. From this account it follows, first, that the Lord's supper was designed not as an ordinary meal, but as a commemoration of the death of Christ; secondly, that to participate in this ordinance in an unworthy manner, was an offence against his body and blood, the symbols of which were so irreverently treated; thirdly, that no one ought to approach the Lord's table without self-examination, in order that with due preparation and with a proper understanding of the ordinance, he may receive the bread and wine as the symbols of Christ's body and blood, vs. 26-29. In this way they would escape the judgments which the Lord had brought upon them on account of their profanation of his table, vs. 30-32. In conclusion, he exhorts them to use their houses for their ordinary meals, and to make the Lord's supper a real communion, vs. 33, 34.

Pastor Thomas Leake: (:17-22) **Abuses of the Lord's Supper**

Introduction: A Christian is defined as one who follows Christ (Mat. 10:25; John

12:26); we must learn to obey Christ; Luke 6:46; Mat. 7:21; Obedience must be learned by all disciples; shown in different ways; Major way = Love one another = sacrifice in our love for fellow members of the body; Eph. 5:2 – as He loved us, setting the example; 1 John 4:19-21; 1 Cor. 11:1; Be imitators of Paul as he was imitating Christ; That's the way it is supposed to be in the church; but not the way it always is; Note Paul's tone of indignation and even disgust at their behavior; church was indulging itself at the very time it should be celebrating sacrificial love

3 Manifestations of a Selfish Spirit

I. (:17) No Benefit When They Assembled

When churches assemble a lot of good things are supposed to happen; but they were hurting themselves;

We need to think: How can I be a benefit to others? Be faithful in your area of service; make a contribution; don't be selfish and disconnected from the life of the church

II. (:18-19) Divisions in the Church

Church is the people, not the building;

Economic standing was one thing that had led to divisions; thought they were a cut above others

Two ways of looking at concept of "approved"

- genuinely approved by God
- sarcastically – approved wrongfully in their own eyes

In either case, two things are true:

- Paul is not happy with the divisions
- The divisions stemmed from selfishness

At HBC we strive to be of one mind, same doctrine, same philosophy of ministry; need to be on guard against someone with a secret agenda coming into the church and trying to gather a following and take the church in a different direction; a little corner of dissent

III. (:20-22) Pleasing Themselves Rather Than Others

Pastor Thomas Leake: (:23-32) **Abuses of the Lord's Supper (Part 2 and 3)**

Introduction:

The Lord's Supper is not to be abused like what was happening in the church at Corinth; So we need instruction to celebrate it correctly;

Ordinance has been dressed up and distorted over time. We need to understand it correctly.

Correct the various wrong understandings that have crept into the church over time.

Myths are best dispelled by going back to history.

12 facts about the Lord's Supper

1) The Lord's Supper is an Ordinance given by Christ

“Do this” and keep doing this; pres tense; something we are commanded to do; not optional for Christians; both must be consumed – the bread and the cup

2) Jesus Prescribed How to celebrate the Lord's Supper – not just the necessity of celebrating it;

Rebuke because the Corinthians are not doing it correctly; Jesus told Paul how to do it – not just take it or leave it instruction

3) The Lord's Supper Reflects True History

“in the night in which He was betrayed” – fixes this at a particular time in history when it was instituted;

“betrayed” = handed over; Imperf tense = ongoing nature; what was going on that night ... looking at Judas' betrayal of Christ here

4) It is a time of Communion for the church assembled

A communing with Christ and each other -- Luke 22:15 – “share among yourselves”

Matt. 26:27-28 – “all of you drink” – not some of you

Something we are to do together; not something we should go off and do by ourselves as a family; a symbol for the local church; don't put the symbols outside of the context God had prescribed; must be for the entire church or it is not the Lord's Supper; 1 Cor. 10:16 “a sharing in the blood of Christ” ... not just communing with one another but with Christ; no life innate in me a dead guilty sinner; it comes from without from Christ from His righteousness; not just for one particular church; we practice Open Communion – whoever the Lord has accepted should participate

5) It is a time to Give Thanks

Celebrating the eucharist = Gk verb to give thanks; believers delivered from wrath of God just as Jews had been delivered at time of Passover; look at all that we celebrate: secure inheritance; forgiveness of sins; etc.; to be a joyous time; not stoic; as things get embellished everyone gets a little more formal and stiff; 1 Thess. 5:18; Heb. 13:15; Is. 25:1; I Pet. 1; Eph. 1

Contemplate our own forgiveness and our unworthiness

6) The Lord's Supper is celebrated with Symbolic Elements

this is the controversial part; All agree that the bread and the wine are the two elements used;

Acts 2:42: “breaking of bread”; John 19 – not one of Jesus' bones was ever broken – so this does not refer to His physical body but is symbolic; no blood in the cup; called the fruit of the vine; Rev. 1:5 = the blood of the cross;

Widespread disagreement about what the elements actually mean;

4 views:

a) transubstantiation – elements changed thru an actual miracle – the various substance actually changes into body and blood of Christ; Roman Catholic; but you can't tell it has been changed; makes God deceptive

b) consubstantiation -- the real physical body and blood are around the elements – Lutheran view; assumes Christ's human body is omnipresent

c) Spiritual presence view -- Presbyterian and Reformed view – means of grace apart from other means of grace -- elements have no physical presence but convey to us a special spiritual presence of Christ that is not available to us any other way;

sacrament is a medium of communion and appropriation of blessings of Christ's death

d) the elements are only symbolic of Christ and His death; the communion is real; but no special presence of Christ spiritually or physically in association with the elements (Zwingli)

10 quick reasons in support of symbolic position:

- Christ was speaking with symbolism and non-literally because His body was right there intact
- Jesus often spoke non-literally in His teaching ("I am the door...")
- Symbolism already built into the very Passover meal that Jesus was using; giving it a greater sense
- Jesus said: "this cup is the New Covenant" – but a Covenant is a promise, not a cup; the cup is a symbol
- Jesus still called the contents of the cup "the fruit of the vine" after He had instituted it
- there was no spiritual presence of Christ in the elements; Jesus was there physically; today He is with His church spiritually all the time and with the church when it is assembled
- the other ordinance is also symbolic = mere water – not holy or special
- it was very common to use the word "is" = represents
- Jesus did not explicitly teach anywhere that He is spiritually present in the elements
- Eph 1:3 – we already have all blessings in Christ

Objections:

- What about people who ate unworthily and died? They mocked the symbol and God killed them
 - What about the communing with Christ at His table? Yes, we are communing with Christ at the table; but no special spiritual presence of Christ there; don't need it; have Holy Spirit all the time
- Don't look for any saving or sanctifying power in the ordinance itself

7) It is a Remembrance of Christ's Death

"Remember" is a rich word – treasure His sufferings on our behalf; never doubt God's love for you personally; time of rich and full meditation

8) It is the Sign of the New Covenant

Vs. 25 – another word for testament; celebrating the new covenant; so many believers still confused about what to do with the Old Covenant; Moses was the mediator; Ten Commandments at the center with other associated commands and regulations; we are not under the Old Covenant; it is gone; people feel compelled to do some of the things that the Old Covenant stipulates; but it has been made obsolete (book of Hebrews); Jer. 31:31; Luke 22:20 – church participates in that new covenant promised to Israel; live by the law of love; Christ has fulfilled the righteousness of the law for us completely; Sabbath, etc. no longer applies; it is a better covenant that we have; celebrating a new age that Christ instituted by His blood; a better covenant; law of God written on our hearts; Holy Spirit administering; we are NT believers; we must act that way; Permanently indwelt by Holy Spirit

9) The Lord's Supper is a Perpetual Ordinance

"as often as you" – shows the continuity; unlike the one time ordinance of baptism; one true baptism is all you have; continuation of observance commanded; the frequency is not commanded; some did it daily, weekly, etc. Jesus has not come back yet so we continue to celebrate

10) The celebration Proclaims the Lord's Death

a silent preaching that takes place; Why should we proclaim the death of Jesus? This is what Christianity is all about; people want to approach God on their own terms; this is the only way to come to God and gain access; a bold and clear message – presents Christ's death as the only gateway to God; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; No death of Jesus – no bringing us to God; so many churches decentralize the death of Christ

11) The Lord's Supper Anticipates the Lord's Second Coming

He was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven and sat down at Father's right hand in heaven and is coming again; it's just a matter of time; 1 Thess 4:16 – Jesus could come back at any time mentality

12) The Lord's Supper is a time for Self Evaluation (:27-32)

Very sobering verses; designed for a church that was abusing the Lord's Supper; we should be evaluating our walk with Jesus Christ;

This text answers 4 basic questions about self evaluation:

a) Why should we evaluate ourselves ...

Why do it? You might be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; cannot treat this time lightly; why is Paul being so severe? No magic in the elements – that would be superstition; Paul still calls it bread; importance of our attitudes and actions in God's sight as we worship Him; must worship in accordance with the truth of God and in sincerity; not talking about us being worthy in our own person; talking about your attitude – what motivates you on the inside

What are some unworthy attitudes:

- treat it as a ritual
- treat it lightly
- don't think of the import
- anger and bitter feelings against a brother or sister in Christ

b) How are we to go about examining ourselves?

To test something so as to attempt to approve it; Pres Impv – repeated along with the celebration each time we come to the table; reflexive pronoun – do the test to yourselves, not to others; asking God to probe your conscience; often we can deceive ourselves; what sins have I committed this past week? What motivated me to do that? Have I served the body of Christ? Have I been loving the things of the world more than Christ? Is there some reoccurring sin that I keep making excuses for? What have my parents or spouse been telling me?

c) What if I choose not to examine myself and still participate?

Spiritual sins can lead to physical ailments; doesn't mean that every illness we have is a result of God's chastisement; based on willful and persistent sin – God took the physical life of some believers; the judgment is severe for believers (but not eternal condemnation)

d) What is the benefit of self-examination (:31)

You avoid sickness and death and God's chastisement

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

TITLE: UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

BIG IDEA:

THE VARIETY OF EXPRESSION OF GENUINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS WILL CONSISTENTLY EXALT JESUS CHRIST AND BUILD UP HIS BODY

(:1) INTRODUCTION – IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC

A. Transition to a New Topic = Spiritual Gifts

“Now concerning spiritual gifts”

Important to the community of believers

B. Target Audience – Fellow Believers in the family of God

“brethren”

C. Teaching Opportunity Critical in light of the Danger of Ignorance regarding this important topic

“I do not want you to be unaware.”

Believers can be taken by surprise; some things look much better than they are; need to get behind the effects to the motivating spiritual forces at work

MacArthur: It was an idiomatic phrase often used to introduce an exceptionally important subject. Paul used it to encourage his readers to pay close attention to a critical truth.

I. (:2-3) RIGHTLY DISCERN THE GENUINE WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

A. (:2) Reality of the Deceptive Power of Satanic Spirits

“You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols; however you were led.”

B. (:3) Reliability of Indicators that Distinguish Between Counterfeit and Genuine Spiritual Powers

1. Apostolic Revelation Can be Trusted

“Therefore I made known to you”

2. Test for Rightly Discerning the Operation of the Spirit of God = the Exaltation of Jesus Christ

a. The Holy Spirit Cannot Blaspheme the Person of Christ

“that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is accursed’”

- b. Only the Holy Spirit Can Truly Confess the Lordship of Christ
“and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

David Prior: "The burning desire of the Holy Spirit to glorify Jesus is Paul's overall criterion of genuineness in this matter of spirituality. Indirectly but cardinally, it pervades all these three chapters. Thus chapter 12 concentrates on the church as the body of Jesus Christ; chapter 13 unfolds the essential character of Jesus Christ; chapter 14 takes two particular gifts (speaking in tongues and prophecy) and shows how any spiritual gift exercised with true Christlikeness serves to build up his body, the church -- at Corinth or anywhere. As the church is thus consolidated and begins to function effectively, so Jesus of Nazareth is seen to be Lord of the universe."

II. (:4-6) APPRECIATE THE VARIETY OF EXPRESSIONS OF THE WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – ALL CONSISTENT WITH THE UNITY OF THE TRIUNE GOD

- A. (:4) Variety of Gifts – bestowed by the One Spirit of God
“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.”
- B. (:5) Variety of Expression of the Gifts in Ministries – Directed by the One Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ
“And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.”
- C. (:6) Variety of Effects of the Ministries – Accomplished by the Power and Will of the One Sovereign God the Father
“And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”

III. (:7-11) UNDERSTAND THE SOURCE, PURPOSE AND EXERCISE OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- A. (:7) Simple Statement of Fact -- The Source, Purpose and Exercise of the Spiritual Gifts
1. Every Believer has a Spiritual Gift
“But to each one”

One or Multiple??
 2. Every Gift is Bestowed by and Controlled by the Spirit of God
“is given the manifestation of the Spirit”
 3. The Exercise of Every Spiritual Gift is for the Good of the Body
“for the common good.”

Zeisler: The apostle gives some tests that will help them know if their gifts were from the Spirit or not. The first test is that any such manifestation be "for the common good."

It should benefit everybody, in other words. If you have a special ability that is from God, it is not given to make you richer, more prominent, or anything like that. It is not merely for your own good, in other words. If it is in fact from the Spirit of God, it will benefit all. Your using your gift will spread joy, truth and knowledge of Christ everywhere.

B. (:8-10) List of Spiritual Gifts that are Especially Prone to Counterfeiting, Abuse, Misunderstanding and Misapplication – Emphasis is on the Variety

God has uniquely gifted each of His children; He does not intend for us to function as carbon copies; the body is healthy as we all make our unique and significant contribution

Jeffries: A complete list of around 20 specific spiritual gifts can be compiled by adding to the two 1 Corinthians 12 lists specific gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 and Romans 12:6-8. It has been suggested that since none of the lists is identical they were not intended to be comprehensive.

1. Word of Wisdom

“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit”

2. Word of Knowledge

“and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit.”

3. Faith

“to another faith by the same Spirit”

4. Healing

“and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit”

5. Miracles

“and to another the effecting of miracles”

6. Prophecy

“and to another prophecy”

7. Discernment

“and to another the distinguishing of spirits”

8. Speaking in Tongues

“to another various kinds of tongues”

9. Interpretation of Tongues

“and to another the interpretation of tongues”

C. (:11) Fuller Explanation -- Understand the Sovereign Distribution and Operation of

the Variety of Spiritual Gifts -- to Each Believer by the One and Only Holy Spirit
“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”

Craig Blomberg: Verse 11 provides a crucial caution against the natural human tendency to want or expect everyone else to be gifted in the ways we are. It completely refutes all claims that any one gift is necessary for someone to be a Christian, or to be a mature Christian, or to be in the center of God’s activity in some part of the world. Just as there are no ‘one-member churches,’ neither are there any ‘every-member gifts.’

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Can believers have only one spiritual gift or multiple?
- 2) Why does this list of spiritual gifts differ from the lists recorded in other NT passages? Can we put together one exhaustive list?
- 3) If someone practices some form of “spiritual gift” that only applies to their own personal edification, how would you respond?
- 4) Are you actively applying this test of whether the operation of the Spirit actually exalts Jesus Christ?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: It is the universal testimony of the Scriptures that man is subject to the influence of other spirits besides the Spirit of God, and Paul is giving us a way to tell who they are. They can use religious jargon, they can use Biblical terminology and practices, but they will lead eventually to some form of idolatry. And here are the marks of idolatry:

1. First, it is always a personality cult. Some leader lifts himself up as the focus of all interest and attention, and people following him find themselves having to give a form of adulation and worship to a man or a woman like that.

2. Second, it always involves some degree of regimentation and control. In order to enforce the personality cult there have to be certain demands made, certain limitations imposed, certain rights must be given up, certain liberties have to be set aside, and the power of the personality in charge is such that he or she enables people to voluntarily consent to giving up their rightful liberties. That is always true in religious error.

3. Then along with that comes certain claims of special and unique powers. Every

group must feel that they have a unique mission, they have a special authority, a special power has been committed to them that marks them out as different from others, and that claim becomes the mark of idolatrous solicitation.

4. Then together with that invariably comes a stress on money and finances as the central power and need of a group. Money is seen in terms of power as providing opportunities to fulfill desires and goals, and nothing can be done without it. . .

5. Then, of course, the final mark of religious idolatry is that it always creates unending jealousy and strife. You have groups like this constantly afflicted with internal dissensions, infighting, arguing, struggling for control, cutting down one another -- a total absence of all we seek to uphold in a Christian assembly: The love and affection of one for another.

Now in contrast to that, the apostle helps us to recognize the true mark of the Spirit of God at work. People are asking this everywhere today: "How do you know that the Spirit of God is really behind some of the manifestations that we're running into? Is the true Spirit of God behind the great healing meetings of today, or the demonstrations of tongues, or some of the other claims of religious leaders today?" Well, the apostle gives us the mark. He says,

Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, "Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. {1 Cor 12:3 RSV }

There is how you recognize the Spirit of God at work. He came into this world to do one thing: To exalt Jesus Christ. That is all he does. Everything the Spirit does aims at that goal and that point. And he will never do anything else.

Paul puts it negatively and positively here:

First, negatively: No one who speaks by the Spirit of God ever demeans or in any way diminishes the centrality of Christ in the Christian life or in the Christian faith. The Person and the work of Jesus are always the central thing. I am sure that very few people today would ever say these words, "Jesus is cursed." Perhaps there are groups that would say that; some of the Satanist groups might. I am equally sure that in the 1st century this was common, especially in the synagogues and in Jewish organizations where Christ was seen as a threat to Judaism. It may be that Paul is referring to the fact that when he was a young, zealous rabbi -- Saul of Tarsus, breathing out threatenings and slaughters against the Christians -- he may have forced them to say these words. In his defense before Agrippa, in the book of Acts, he says he forced many among them to blaspheme, and it may be that this is the sentence that he tried to get Christians to say: "Jesus is accursed."

But you do not have to say those words to fulfill what Paul is saying here. Anyone, for instance, who says that Jesus Christ nothing but a mere man is virtually saying, "Jesus

is accursed," because according to the teaching of the Bible the whole race is cursed; the curse of Adam's evil has come upon us all and twisted our inner life to make us self-centered and living for self-that is the curse. And it is universal, everybody is born with that inner drive to be the center of attention and to have the universe revolve around him. That is the curse. Now when you say that Jesus was nothing but a man, a great teacher, perhaps, a moral leader, whatever, you are saying that he too is part of that cursed race, that he was not free from it, although in the Biblical record it is the virgin birth that preserved him from that taint of sin. He was not under the curse of Adam; that is why he could be our Deliverer from it. Therefore, all teaching that puts down Jesus, that denies his deity, that says he is not the redeemer, that he too is nothing but a great teacher, is, in effect, saying "Jesus is accursed."

Now positively: When the Spirit is at work he always seeks to exalt and magnify Christ as Lord. "Jesus is Lord" was the creed of the early Church. The Romans attacked that. They tried to hold up Caesar as Lord, and in the early persecutions they made the Christians choose between saying, "Caesar is Lord," and they could be delivered and set free, or, "Jesus is Lord," and they would meet the lions, or be burned at the stake. And to the glory of most of the early Christians, they held fast and gave up their lives rather than deny that Jesus is Lord.

Lord means "in charge of all human events." I think we Christians oftentimes subconsciously live less than Christian lives in this regard. We think Jesus is only going to be Lord when he comes back again and rules and reigns in triumph over the earth, when every knee shall bow and every tongue acclaim that he is Lord. But the truth that the Scripture sets forth, and the truth that the Holy Spirit always undergirds, is that Jesus is Lord; he is in charge now of all human events; he is the One who holds the controls of history, and everything that is reported in our papers today is moving at his will to a single point in history that he controls.

This is what Peter declared to the assembled multitudes on the Day of Pentecost: "Him whom you crucified, God has made both Lord and Christ," {cf, Acts 2:36}. This was what made the early Christians so fearless: "Jesus is Lord; he is already in charge of these people who are giving us trouble, and he will see how far they go and determine what they do with us, therefore we don't need to be afraid. Jesus is Lord." This is what the Holy Spirit everywhere manifests.

Zeisler: God gives his children spiritual gifts, such as prophesy, teaching, discerning of spirits, etc., which he utilizes to spread his truth. But there are other voices claiming spiritual power who are actually liars and deceivers. That is why the apostle does not want the Corinthians to be ignorant of spiritual things, and why he wants them to be able to identify the course of spiritual things. . .

Although there are differences in callings, experiences and assignments, there is yet a central witness which all must make, and that is that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man. There is only one way to relate to Christ if we are Christian, and that is to relate to him as Lord. Having made that clear, then we

will find the beautiful diversity of Christian experience which we need to understand from that chapter. . .

The tests which Paul suggests we apply are: gifts are for the common good; they are given by the Holy Spirit; and, it is the Lord himself who is ultimately at work.

Piper: *[Takes the position that the gifts of miracles and healing are still appropriate for believers today.]*

Let me begin by summarizing some of the reasons why I think the "gifts of healings" and

"workings of miracles" referred to in 1 Cor. 12:9-10 are gifts still available to the church today. It may seem obvious to a simple reading. But there are many who say they are not. So basically what I have to do is respond to their arguments.

Let me quote directly from a very popular teacher: "The four temporary sign gifts [his designation, not the Bible's] were miracles, healings, tongues, and interpretations of tongues. These four sign gifts had a unique purpose -- to give the apostles credentials, to let the people know that these men all spoke the truth of God. But once the Word of God was inscripturated, the sign gifts were no longer needed and they ceased." The assumption in this argument is that the "gifts of healings" and "workings of miracles" mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:9-10 refer only to what Jesus and the apostles could do (including Stephen, Barnabas and Philip). These were not gifts given to ordinary Christians, but only to the authoritative leaders of the first generation. Then they disappeared.

The same teacher says, "We never see the gift [of healing] being used at random in the churches. It is a gift always associated with Christ, the Twelve (plus Paul), the seventy, and the close associates of the Twelve. The gift of healing was a limited one in terms of the people who possessed it, as was the gift of miracles. And like miracles, the gift of healing was used to authenticate and confirm the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom." So you see how the argument works: first, you equate the "gifts of healings" in 1 Cor. 12 with the unique authority of Jesus and the apostles (that's the linchpin of the argument!); second, you show that the role of miracles for the apostles was to authenticate their teaching; and, third, it follows automatically that these gifts cease with the disappearance of the founding apostles who wrote our New Testament.

The problem with this view is that the basic assumption won't stand up under scrutiny. The "gifts of healings" and "workings of miracles" in 1 Cor. 12:9-10 are not limited to Jesus and the apostles. In fact the New Testament never describes the ability of Jesus and the apostles to work miracles as "the gift of healing" or "the gift of miracles." When you read 1 Cor 12:7-10 you get the simple impression that these gifts are given according to God's will to various people in the church: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the one Spirit, to another the workings of miracles . . ." It does not seem to be a natural reading of

these verses to say that what they mean is that NO ONE at Corinth gets the "gifts of healings" or the "workings of miracles" but only Jesus and the apostles.

This looks even more unlikely when you read verse 28 where the gift of apostle seems clearly distinct from the "gifts of healings" and "miracles": "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings." This looks like gifts of healings and miracles are different from and additional to the gift of apostle and prophet and teacher.

This is what we saw in Galatians 3:5 last week also. Paul writes to the Galatians and says, "Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" The most natural meaning of that verse is that God is working miracles in their midst by the Holy Spirit. He is doing this through the ordinary believers not through the apostles. This is just what we would expect in view of 1 Cor. 12 -- The Spirit gives to some in the churches "gifts of healings" and "workings of miracles."

I still stand by what I said last week, namely, that I want to honor the uniqueness of the apostles -- that they are once for all eyewitnesses and authoritative revelatory spokesmen of the living Christ. We have their final revelation in the New Testament and that remains now and always will remain our measuring rod for all doctrine and experience. But now the question is: Do we need to keep the gifts of healings and miracles away from ordinary church members because that was the only way the apostles could authenticate themselves? No. The miracle working power of the apostles was only PART of what authenticated their authority. If the only thing that set the apostles apart as authoritative and true was their signs and wonders, then false prophets could claim the same authority and truth, because Jesus and Paul both tell us that false prophets will do signs and wonders to lead people astray (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; cf. Rev. 13:14; 16:14; 19:20).

Alongside miracles Paul said that his apostleship was confirmed by at least a dozen other things. For example, in 1 Cor. 9:1-2 he says, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." Here there is no mention of miracles as Paul defends his apostleship. He had seen Jesus in person and God had blessed his ministry with life changing power in bringing the Corinthian church into being. That was his argument. In other words miracle working was only part of his credentials.

What that means is that the apostles' uniqueness is not at all jeopardized when we say that gifts of healing and miracles were given to other Christians in the church at Corinth and in the churches of Galatia. And if that was true then, it is also true today. Gifts of healings today do not compromise or call into question the unique place of Jesus and the apostles or the unparalleled role that miracles had in their ministries. So as far as I can see the argument against the gifts of healings today is not compelling.

Wayne Wever:

DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL GIFT

A God-given ability for service (whether natural -- such as hospitality; or supernatural -- such as miracles); relates exclusively to the body of Christ (mostly for the purpose of building up the body of believers -- Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 12:7; some gifts deal with evangelism); None have self-edification as their goal -- this can only be a by-product.

MacArthur: True spiritual gifts are given by God to strengthen and manifest oneness, harmony, and power. Satan's counterfeit gifts are meant to divide, disrupt, and weaken. God's gifts build up; Satan's counterfeits tear down. . .

Spiritual gifts are divine enablements for ministry, characteristics of Jesus Christ that are to be manifested through the body corporate just as they were manifested through the body incarnate. Each gift the Holy Spirit now gives to believers had its perfect expression in Jesus' own life and ministry, His church continues to live out His life on earth through the power of His Spirit working through His gifted people.

James Boyer: That the exercise of these grace-gifts had been a problem in the Corinthian church has been hinted at before in various places (e.g., 1:5, 7a). Their pride in knowledge and wisdom apparently reflected a fascination with the showier, more spectacular gifts. Their particular problem appears to have centered in the undue exaltation of tongues, as is shown repeatedly in this section. In Paul's listing of these gifts, he puts speaking in tongues at the end of the list (12:10). In his second listing he does the same (12:29, 30). He begins his chapter on love by relating it to the gift of tongues (13:1). Later in that chapter he makes a clear distinction between tongues and the other gifts in the way they will cease. And the whole of Chapter 14 is a discussion of this gift. Evidently the Corinthians had some problems with this particular gift. And it is not inappropriate to remark that this is the most problematic gift of all.

Paul treats this problem after the following outline:

- (1) A general presentation of the matter, the diversity of gifts and their function in the one body (chap. 12)
- (2) The one quality necessary to the exercise of any gift, i.e. love (chap. 13)
- (3) The specific problem at Corinth, the relative value of tongues and rules regarding their practice (chap. 14)

Pastor Thomas Leake: Answering Basic Questions About Spiritual Gifts

Introduction: What is your spiritual gift? Are you using it? Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit? Why is the gift of tongues so controversial? Are there still prophets in the church today?

List of many possible questions about spiritual gifts . . .

Spirit of God speaks the Word of God – so you can count on consistency there;

We will be studying a number of **questions** in the section from chap 12-14

I. (:1) Why is it important to learn about spiritual gifts?

(10:1) – similar formula – there is a need to teach and fill in knowledge that is lacking;
Why would people be ignorant?

- maybe their church never talks about spiritual gifts
- maybe their church has a lot of activity in this area but very little instruction

Why should we even bring up such a controversial subject that has proven to be divisive? Our unity must be based on a right understanding of God and His purposes as we learn from His Word

We need to be able to distinguish between the true and the counterfeit

Context tells us that Paul is speaking about spiritual gifts (even though the word “gifts” is omitted)

Emphasis: on the source and enablement of the gift

1 Pet. 4:10 – we must employ the gift in serving one another; contrast the effort people put into what career to pursue

We are post-pentacostal believers – important distinction

- know who you are and what your gift is
- use your gift as a good steward

II. (:2-3) How can we discern the true from the counterfeit?

2 Ways to Distinguish the True from the Counterfeit:

A. Beware of Non-Christian Influences

Paul starts by reminding them of their dismal past in pagan days; but why did Paul include vs 2 in his flow of thought right here? Corinthians had come from a background of pagan idol worship – what did they used to find as spiritual, powerful, and impressive?

How could dumb idols hold such influence over intelligent people?

Ps. 115:3-8 –

“led astray” -- Passive; someone else was at work here; a false spiritual power; unclean, intelligent spirits; activity of demons; manipulative

Eph. 2:2; 1 Cor. 10:20 – an idol is nothing but they were sacrificing to demons

Spiritual warfare going on in unseen realm;

Need discernment about what comes from God and what does not

How Powerful were these influences? Examples from their pagan past:

1) The Mystery Religions – popular among the Greeks; ecstatic state; thought that they could become one with the gods; very enthusiastic and outwardly impressive; cf. description by Dr. House

2) Religion of Apollo – spirit of Python – demon possessed girl who was able to make pronouncements about the future

Acts 16:16 – ecstatic utterances – same manifestation; oracles spoken by prophets and prophetesses

Never let your pagan past guide you!

Impressiveness does not mean that it is from God; Corinthians were saved, but still easily fooled

B. Be Guided by the Scriptures – not Personal Experience

Not the only rule, but an important one provided here;

Obviously not just uttering the words, but meaning them;

1) Negative side – John 16:14; Spirit always glorifies Jesus Christ

What was happening here?? Can only speculate

- Jews – maybe were saying that Jesus was accursed because He had been hung on a tree – Gal. 3:13

- Greeks – dualistic theories; Gnostic theories – Jesus is separate from the divine Son of God – 1 Thess. 5:20

We must examine everything carefully; don't just look at the external phenomena;

Self control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit

Pentacostal groups can have elitist mentality – “I had the experience and you did not so you cannot say anything against it” = self-authenticating; “So I am the authority on the subject”

Cf. Toronto Blessing – some good things came out of this; but what about “barking in the Spirit” (their terminology)

Need to always subject your experience to the Word of God

Cf. “being slain in the Spirit” – exciting, impressive – but Bible says nothing about looking for this – God rules in climate of peace and order in the church

1 John 4:1; Rev. 2:2 – Test the spirits

2) Positive side – confessing “Jesus is Lord” = foundational confession of the Christian faith – Rom. 10:9

- to the Jews, Christ viewed as an imposter

- to the Muslims, as just a prophet

- to liberal Protestants, as just a good moral teacher

Etc.

2 Cor. 4:5; 1 Tim. 6:15; Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46

Deut. 13 – even if the prophet performs signs or wonders that come true – examine the message for consistency with the Word of God

III. (:4-7) What are Spiritual Gifts?

A. “Spiritual” – remember this from back in vs. 1; given by the Spirit; energized by the Spirit

B. “gifts” (:4) – God bestows, generously; these are grace gifts, not earned by works; undeserved; so we must use them in humility

C. “ministries” (:5) – word for deacon; servant; work done on behalf of other people; serving and waiting on tables; like slaves serving a master; some only want to serve when it is convenient

D. “effects” (:6) – energy – actual working out of the gift; what gets done by the gift in use; you accomplish something; not based on human talents or abilities; results are God's work and not our own

E. “manifestations” (:7) – that which is revealed, made plain, displayed; meant to be on display = how we see the working of the Holy Spirit; 1 Tim. 4:14; reflect the person

Def: A spiritual gift is an undeserved divine enablement freely distributed by the Holy Spirit to believers and manifested through empowered service to the body of Christ

IV. What is the Source of Spiritual Gifts?

The Divine Trinity

- Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gift
- Christ assigns the associated ministries
- God the Father produces the effects

Unity of the Trinity is a powerful argument for the unity of the church; this would be a remedy for the problems at Corinth; believers there are rebuked for elevating the gift of tongues; Paul puts it last on purpose; Love is most important

Something is seriously wrong when the effects of the gifts breaking out all over is one of division

V. What are the Kinds or Types of Spiritual Gifts? Varieties

Distributions; apportionments; as the Spirit wills

Diversity is crucial to the Body of Christ; there is beauty and fullness to the variety;

How many gifts are there? The lists in NT are not exhaustive (1 Cor. 12:8-10; 28; Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11)

How are they labeled? Expressed by either the ability, the name of the church office, or through the effect produced (e.g. miracles)

Look at the overlap in the lists – e.g. prophecy mentioned repeatedly

Lists might only be representative ... but we have a hard time coming up with other possibilities

Problem: many view the church through the lens of their own giftedness; cf. people with discernment who tend to be overly critical

VI. (:6-7) Who Gets Spiritual Gifts?

“in all persons” / “to each one”

Any and every member of the body of Christ; all true believers (Rom. 8:9); 1 Cor. 2:11; we are the temple of the Holy Spirit; indwelt; gifted – no exceptions

Vital equipment to operate in the body of Christ; not based on level of maturity; no second blessing needed; Eph. 4:7; Rom. 12

VII. When does a Christian get his or her Gift?

At moment of salvation; when they enter into the body of Christ; the body would have no use for someone without a gift; every member of the body is needed; we are never exhorted to try to get some gift you don't already have; Spirit of God has already decided; what about vs. 31?? Some people misunderstand this – *“be zealous for the greater gifts”* – not “desire” – not talking individually here, but as a congregation; covet the ministry of the apostles, prophets and teachers in their midst (vs. 13) – *“in (with) one Spirit we were all baptized into one body;”* answers the When question; you got into the body of Christ by Spirit baptism; a doctrine often overlooked

Erroneous teachings about Spirit baptism:

- Seek it as a second work of God's grace after salvation; you must understand the historical, transitional nature of the Book of Acts where the church is born
- Staging some service where you seek the anointing of the Holy Spirit; or the Holy

Spirit to fall upon you in some special way

- Teaching that OT saints were also baptized into the Holy Spirit in the same sense
- Claiming you have to speak in tongues as a sign you have been baptized in the Spirit
- Confusing this with other works of the Holy Spirit (regeneration, filling, etc.)
- Seeking multiple experiences of being baptized in the Spirit (only happens one time)
- Confusing water baptism with Holy Spirit baptism

Bapto = to dip; Baptidzo = intensive form = to totally immerse

Immersed into the Holy Spirit (just as immersion into water)

Acts 1:5; that sound of the wind was never repeated (shows it is transitional in nature rather than normative for church age)

Jesus is doing the baptizing; not only all around us, but within us; Gal. 3:27

VIII. How many gifts did we get?

Harder to answer this question; emphasis = we don't have all the gifts; but each one is gifted

Apostle Paul = example of someone who had multiple gifts (Apostle, prophet, gift of healing, spoke in tongues, etc) – indicates that multiples are possible

You have the perfect blend of gifts that the Holy Spirit wants you to have for how God wants you to function in the body; one might be dominant

IX. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

For the common good of the body of Christ

Eph. 4:16 – have to operate in love; building up others; not given for personal edification; people are too wrapped up in themselves; tools for helping others not toys for playing by ourselves

1 Cor. 14:4 rebuking self edification; not promoting it;

1 Pet. 4:10

We have to fight the individualism and selfishness of our culture

Cannot be like the Olympics where 90,000 watch 8 people race

Word for body (soma) used 18 times

Vs. 12 summarizes vv.14-27

- 1) the body is one body
- 2) all the many members make up the one body
- 3) it is the body of Christ and that is you

Vs. 27 is the climax – get busy serving together

X. Why should I use my spiritual gifts?

Our corporate identity and our personal identity revolves around our spiritual giftedness – much more than around our profession

We are continually the body of Christ

What should define my life – be all encompassing; permanent

We are not just members of some religious club that meets several times a week

Your address in the universe is in Christ; make sure the body of Jesus Christ is built up

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

TITLE: ONE BODY OF CHRIST . . . MANY DIVERSE MEMBERS . . . ALL SIGNIFICANT AND ESSENTIAL

BIG IDEA:

THE HEALTHY FUNCTIONING OF THE LOCAL CHURCH (THE EXPRESSION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST) DEPENDS ON EVERY MEMBER FULFILLING THEIR GOD-APPOINTED ROLE

INTRODUCTION:

We have been studying the subject of spiritual gifts. Do you know how God has uniquely gifted you for the goal of building up the body of Christ? Are you fulfilling your role so that the local body of believers is benefiting from your ministry? Do you have an appreciation for the contribution that others are making in your life and in your church? Are you envious of the gifts that others have? Are you content with your God-appointed role? Too many people approach church from the standpoint of what they can receive rather than what they can give. Too many people sit on the sidelines and squander the opportunity to invest their spiritual gift to impact the lives of others.

I. (:12-27) THE BODY OF CHRIST IS PATTERNED AFTER OUR PHYSICAL BODY WITH DIVERSITY OF FUNCTIONALITY SUPPORTING UNITY OF PURPOSE AND EXPRESSION

A. (:12) Presentation of the Thesis: The Parallel Between the Human Body and the Body of Christ – Unity Despite Diversity

1. Human Body

“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body”

2. Body of Christ

“so also is Christ.”

B. (:13-18) Argument Based on God’s Formation of the Body of Christ

C. (:19-26) Argument Based on Each Role Being Significant and Essential

D. (:27) Conclusion: Many Members but One Body of Christ

“Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.”

II. (:28-31) EACH CHURCH MEMBER MUST FUNCTION WITHIN THEIR GOD-APPOINTED ROLE WHILE DESIRING THE OVERALL EDIFICATION OF THE BODY AND PURSUING LOVE ABOVE ALL

A. (:28) Sovereign Disposition of Spiritual Gifts – All Are Not Equal in Order or Importance

“And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.”

B. (:29-30) Sensible Diversity of Spiritual Gifts -- One Size Does Not Fit All

“All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”

Stedman: These gifts, when they are being exercised, grow into offices. Notice how that which is listed as a gift in the beginning of the chapter has now become an office in the church at the end of it. Instead of having "gifts of healing," we speak of "healers," and instead of "gifts of administrations," we speak of "administrators." One grows into the other.

C. (:31) Strategic Design of Spiritual Gifts

1. Edification of the Church Must Be the Differentiator in Promoting Spiritual Gifts

“But earnestly desire the greater gifts.”

2. Love Must Be the Common Thread in Exercising Spiritual Gifts

“And I show you a still more excellent way.”

Stedman: Now, there is a big difference between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit is what God is after. That is the character of Christ coming through. The gifts are given to enable us to achieve in increasing degree, by mutual exercise, the fruit of the Spirit. But the fruit is what God is after, and every congregation should be infinitely more concerned with the fruit of the Spirit than they are with the gifts of the Spirit.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How content are you with the way that God has gifted you . . . or do you tend to be jealous of the gifts of others?
- 2) Do you see your role in the local church as significant and essential? How can you encourage others to view their role in this way?
- 3) How would you argue from this passage against those who would encourage all believers to speak in tongues?
- 4) How can Paul say that the church should *“desire the greater gifts”* if all members should be content with the gift they have been given?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Pastor Leake: (:14-26) You Are the Body of Christ

3 Vital Truths About the Church that should Inspire Greater Involvement and Dedication

Introduction: Christ is the Head of the Church; importance of corporate commitment; cf. Mark Dever book: 9 Marks of a Healthy Church

Eph. 3:10, 21; 1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 20:28 – “purchased with Christ’s own blood”

I. One Body Yet Many Members

Message written to a selfish, divisive group that needed greater commitment to one another; series of couplets; cf. Eph. 4:15-16

The parts of the body are all different, but are all needed; should be no inferiority complex in the body of Christ; there would be no wisdom in gifting everybody identically

(12:14-19 illustrate this truth)

3 Keys to Unity amidst Diversity:

- 1) (:15-19) Recognize the value of our own position and gift
- 2) (:25-26) Have the same care for one another
Rom. 12; James 5:16; Gal. 6:1 – the one another passages
- 3) (:29-30) Don’t try to do everything yourself
But do we act like we are one body? We have less involvement than we ought to have.

II. (:20) All of the Members Make Up the One Body

The flip side of v. 14 – Members have need of one another; the body must not have uniformity; diversity helps us get a wide array of functions accomplished; Exercising our gift with pride leads to problems and division; don’t claim superiority; the gifts may at times come in conflict with one another (e.g. doing battle over which ministry should get more of the church’s budget)

Need love and humble teamwork

III. (:27) The Body is the Body of Jesus Christ

V. 27 is the climax of this passage; You should base your decisions on your identity in the body of Christ; you should be committed to serving; the body needs to hold the Head up; need to use gifts with fervor

1 Tim. 4:14 – real possibility of neglecting your gift; God will never take your gift away; There are great pressures and demands in serving the church; you feel like giving up at times; need greater love; patience with people; gratitude

2 Tim. 1:6 – “*stir up the gift that is in you*”

How important is Christ to you? Serve Him with the best you have; Be alert to the needs of others; organize your ministry better; Christian life is designed to be lived in the context of the local church – Giving / Serving / Sacrifice

When it starts to get hard you are just starting to learn what ministry is all about;
“For me to live is Christ; to die is gain”

Temptation to pursue an easier life; don't be an under-achiever in the body of Christ;
show me your commitment by your service; in a church you make ministry, not
excuses; you can bring your children alongside of you in ministry rather than use family
obligations as an excuse not to minister

Piper: This is what the church is for in the world. This is our calling. We are to pursue
the manifesting of God. And when we do, what happens is the common good. "To each
is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." We stressed that these
two goals are not at odds: the common good of the body through the manifesting of
God; and the manifesting of God for the common good. The good of people and the
glory of God happen together through faith in Christ.

Now there are some ailments in the body that keep this from happening the way it
should. Paul deals with one of these in verses 14-20 and another in verses 21-27. The
one is feelings of uselessness (today) and the other is feelings of self-sufficiency (next
Sunday). When members of the body feel useless or when they feel self-sufficient--
when they say "You don't need me," or, "I don't need you,"--then the body will not
manifest the Spirit and produce the common good the way it should. . .

So the point of verses 14 and 19-20 is that the very existence of the body depends on
having diversity of members--"member" means "a constituent part having a function of
it own" (C. Hodge, *First Corinthians*, p. 256). So a person who says, "I'm useless
because my function is not like the function of another," is saying, "The church should
not be a body with "many" diverse members. It should only have a few members and I
should be like a lot of others. But the truth is (v. 20): "There are many members, but
one body." That's what it means to be a body. . .

So Paul's remedy for feelings of uselessness in the body is first to say that they are
feelings or opinions that do not accord with truth. They are out of sync with reality (vv.
15-16). Second, to think that you should be like others in the body rather than having a
unique function of your own is to go against the very idea of a body made up of many
diverse members (vv. 14,19-20). Third, and most important, resenting your gifts and
your unique manifestation of the Spirit is a way of not trusting God. Since verse 18 says
he put all the parts where they are with their unique functions, to say that you are
useless is to say that God is weak or mistaken or evil: He is not sovereign, not wise or
not good. Like all issues it comes down to a radically God-focused issue—do you trust
God?

Summary:

Let us not say, "I have no need of you."

Let us have the same care for one another.

Let us seek our worship unity around these primary truths.

And let us put our trust in God who composes the body as he wills.

Stedman: The work of the church is to heal the broken-hearted out in the world, to give deliverance to the captives, to open the eyes of the blind, and to preach the good news to the poor and despairing of heart. That is what the Body of Christ has come into the world to do -- to encourage, strengthen and help people, and especially to deliver them from the guilt, the loneliness and the misery of sin and to set them free from the bondage of foul tempers and evil habits and all the rack and ruin of life. That is what the work of the church is. And it does not go on here, it goes on out there. This is merely part of the training program. We do not come to church to fulfill the work of the church. We come here to get ready to fulfill it out there. If you have that in mind, then there is definitely a part for every member, without exception.

That is what Paul is arguing here. You are only kidding yourself if you say that because you cannot lead, or teach, or preach, you are not a part of the body and do not have a function within it. . .

I am sure Paul is referring to what we used to call our "private" parts when he says "our unrepresentable parts." (They are not so private anymore.) But we treat these with great modesty. Paul simply draws the analogy with the Body of Christ. He says there are hidden, secret functions within the body, never mentioned in public, that are nevertheless exceedingly important. Take the ministry of prayer, for instance, and those people who consistently pray for others. Nobody knows about them. There is a lady in this congregation who spends hours each day praying for the staff and members of this church. She counts it her ministry. You seldom see her at meetings, she has difficulty getting out, but how she upholds us in prayer. What a mighty, valuable ministry that is. That is what the apostle is referring to. . .

There is nothing in the world more beautiful, more exquisite than the human body. It is the most beautifully balanced and delicately articulated instrument the world has ever seen. All the computers in the world put together cannot do what a single human body can do, and it does it with such exquisite grace when it is functioning right.

Zeisler: It's very important for everyone to know that they have gifts, to discover what they are, and to come to understand what our gifts fit us for. Where can we serve? Where can we make our best contribution? Having found that out we should engage in making that contribution with a whole heart. We are not to isolate ourselves in our supposed inadequacy, nor are we to isolate ourselves in our imagined superiority. We are all in this together. If one of us suffers, everybody suffers. This is true of your physical body. If you have a stomach ache, the rest of you feels crummy. If one member rejoices, we all rejoice together. . .

I hope you recognize that the Spirit of God is present in his people; that he is committed to glorifying Jesus Christ; that he has given us work to do and capacity to do it. Christians are to be united in their one Lord, despite their diversity. The Christian life is a call to adventure. The people sitting next to you are remarkable because the Spirit of God dwells in them. There is a vibrancy about the Spirit's call which we must not lose

sight of. We need each other. We are members of each other. Each of us can contribute as the work of the Spirit is made manifest in us.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

TITLE: THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE – ITS PERMANENCE AND VALUE

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL MINISTRY MUST FLOW THROUGH THE CHANNEL OF LOVE

MacArthur: It is easier to be orthodox than to be loving, and easier to be active in church work than to be loving. . . Chapter 13 is the central chapter in Paul’s lengthy discussion of spiritual gifts (chaps. 12-14). Chapter 12 discusses the endowment, receipt, and interrelatedness of the gifts. Chapter 14 presents the proper exercise of the gifts, especially that of languages. In this middle chapter we see the proper attitude and atmosphere, the proper motive and power, the “*more excellent way*” (12:31), in which God has planned for all of the gifts to operate. Love is certainly more excellent than feeling resentful and inferior because you do not have the showier and seemingly more important gifts. It is also more excellent than feeling superior and independent because you do not have those gifts. And it is more excellent than trying to operate spiritual gifts in your own power, in the flesh rather than in the Spirit, and for selfish purposes rather than for God’s.

I. (:1-3) IN THE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS, NOTHING CAN COMPENSATE FOR A LACK OF LOVE – MINISTRY WITHOUT LOVE FAILS IN 3 AREAS:

A. (:1) No Reception of Revelation . . . Just Annoying Noise of Proclamation

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

∇Ean taij glwssaij twh anqrwpwn lalw/kai. twh aggel wn(agaphn de. mh. ecw(gegona cal koj hcwh h' kumbal on al al azonã

B. (:2) No Spiritual Impact . . . Just Empty Knowledge and Faith

“And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”

kai. ean ecw profhteian kai. eidw/ta. musthria panta kai. pašan thn gnwsin kai. ean ecw pašan thn pistin wšte orh meqistanai(agaphn de. mh. ecw(ourqen eimiã

C. (:3) No Eternal Reward . . . Just Meaningless Sacrifice

“And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”

kah ywmisw panta ta. uparconta, mou kai. ean paradw/ to. swha, mou iha kauchswmai(agaphn de. mh. ecw(ouden wfel outmaiã

Stedman: In the next section the apostle goes on to show us that love must be practical.

Love is not an ethereal thing; it is not just an ideal you talk about. It is something that takes on shoe leather and moves right down into the normal, ordinary pursuits and aspects of life. That is where love is to be manifest. Nothing is more helpful, in reading a chapter like this, than to ask yourself the question. "Am I growing in love? Looking back over a year, am I easier to live with now? Am I able to handle people more graciously, more courteously? Am I more compassionate, more patient?" These are the measurements of life. This is why we were given life, that we might learn how to act in love. Nothing else can be substituted for it. There is no use holding up any other quality we possess if we lack this one. It is the paramount goal of every human life, and it is well to measure yourself from time to time along that line.

II. (:4-7) IN THE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS, LOVE CAN COMPENSATE FOR A MYRIAD OF DEFICIENCIES – 15 WAYS LOVE PROMOTES EFFECTIVE MINISTRY:

1. Love is Patient

-H agaph makroqumei

Leake: be inconvenienced; allow yourself to be taken advantage of by others without getting angry; be slow to anger; be aware of the faults of others but still show love and care; help to preserve the unity in the church; Eph 4:2; 2 Pet 3 – look at how God views time; Rom. 2:4; Eph. 5:3-5; Listen well Prov. 18:13; show patience with newer believers and with unsaved friends and in discipling others; spiritual learning is a slow process; spiritual leaders must be persistent; patience with correcting our children; patience with traffic; sometimes action is needed or we would be called neglectful; the trouble is when I am in a hurry and God is not; Col. 3:12

2. Love is Kind

crhsteuetai h' agaph

Leake: gracious in serving and helpfulness; connotes action of some kind; deeds of kindness; must be shown first in the home; opposite = bickering and sarcasm; recognize that everybody carries a heavy load; unlocks hearing for the gospel; Ruth showed kindness to Naomi; David to Mephibosheth; kindness is the oil that takes out the friction in the machinery of the church; Prov. 3:3; think of others first; show hospitality; pray for others

Stedman: Notice in that paragraph there are only three positives; all the rest are negatives. So love is really only three simple things, basically. It is patient, it is kind, and it is honest. It rejoices in the right. (The word really is "truth." It rejoices in the truth.) The quality of love we are talking about is that which produces patience, kindness and honesty. The negatives that are given here are associated with love in the apostles though -- because these are the things we must set aside in order to let the love of God, which is patient and kind and honest, manifest itself. We do not have to produce this love in the Christian life. We only have to get the things that are hindering it out of the way. Those are the negatives that are suggested here.

3. Love is not Jealous
οὐκ ζηλοῖ

Leake: wants what others have – their toys, their popularity; joined with spite and envy; there is a godly form of jealousy – 2 Cor. 11:2; Ex. 34:14; Deut. 4:24 = zealous for the name of God and for the purity of His people

Jealousy is the inability to rejoice when others have success and you do not; robs you of happiness and fruitfulness; cf. Rachel vs Leah over Jacob; Prov. 27:4; first sin in heaven and first murder on earth sparked by jealousy; selfishly possessive; sometimes lazy people are jealous; they feel that others owe them; you can see it in their countenance; they turn into backstabbers in the church; their success should be your success – Phil. 2; James 3:16; Rom. 13:13 – coupled with arguments and strife

4. Love does not Brag
ἡ ἀγάπη οὐκ περπερευεῖται

Leake: talk conceitedly; gloat; show off; trash talk; if it is all of God's grace there is no room for bragging; empty yourself; Paul viewed himself as a servant; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 5:6; Mark 9:35; Phil. 2:17

5. Love is not Arrogant
οὐκ φουσιούται

Leake: Humility involves lowliness of mind; 1 Pet. 5; lower your view of yourself; Romans and Greeks saw no use for humility – they valued power, control, intellectualism; 1 Cor. 1:26-30; 2 Cor. 10:17-18; 11:30; we like to commend ourselves; but should boast only in our weakness = the things that I can't do; 12:9 – we need the power of Christ; don't take pride in our knowledge of Scripture and the conclusions we come to; church leaders need to watch out for pride in themselves; how do you receive correction? Do you need to be at the center of attention? Are you always bragging about your children? Do you need to be seen as one of the cool ones? Do you associate with the lowly?

6. Love does not act Unbecomingly
οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ

7. Love does not Seek Its Own
οὐκ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς

8. Love is not Provoked
οὐκ παροξυνεῖται

9. Love does not Take into Account a wrong suffered
οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν

Goins: Love doesn't take into account a wrong suffered; it isn't resentful. "Take into account" is a bookkeeping term. It means to calculate something, as when entering

numbers into a journal or a ledger. It's to keep a permanent financial record. That's good practice in business, but in human relationships that's a bad thing. It's very destructive to keep records of imagined or real slights against us, because it means we end up living with indignation toward other people, holding a grudge, feeling victimized by an affront or personal injury. We must remember that God does not view us this way. God is not a record-keeping God. And love won't keep records against other people. It never evaluates people that way.

10. Love does not Rejoice in Unrighteousness
ouvcairēi epi. th/ adikia

11. Love Rejoices With the Truth
sugcāirei de. th/ al hqēia

12. Love Bears All Things
panta stegei

13. Love Believes All Things
panta pisteuei

14. Love Hopes All Things
panta elpizei

15. Love Endures All Things
panta upomenei

Goins: Finally, love endures all things. Literally that means to stay under pressure. It's a military term that means to hold a position at all costs, even unto death, whatever it takes. So love holds fast to people it loves. It perseveres. It never gives up on anyone. Love won't stop loving, even in the face of rejection.

III. (:8-13) THE CAPSTONE OF THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE = ITS PERMANENCE AND VALUE

A. (:8A) Promise of Permanence for Love
“*Love never fails*”
-H agaph oudepote piptei

MacArthur: Love cannot fail because it shares God's nature and God's eternity.

B. (:8B) Contrast with the Transitory Nature of Spiritual Gifts
1. Example of Gift of Prophecy
“*but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away*”
ei te de. profhteia(i) katarghōsontai

2. Example of Gift of Tongues
“*if there are tongues, they will cease*”

eite glwssai(pausontai

3. Example of Gift of Knowledge

“if there is knowledge, it will be done away”

eite gnwsi(katargqhsetai

MacArthur: Prophecy and knowledge will be stopped by something outside themselves (the coming of *the perfect*), but the gift of tongues will stop by itself. . . Tongues will have ceased at an earlier time (when the New Testament was completed).

C. (:9-12) Supremacy of Full Revelation Over Partial Revelation

1. (:9-10) Full Knowledge Will Replace Partial Knowledge

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.”

ek merouj gar ginwskomen kai. ek merouj profhteupomen\ oitan de. el qh(to. teleion(to. ek merouj katargqhsetai

2. (:11) Maturity Preferred Over Immaturity

“When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things”

ofte hmhn nhpioj(el aloun wj nhpioj(efronoun wj nhpioj(el ogizomhn wj nhpioj\ ofte gegona anhr(kathrhka ta. tou/ nhpiou

3. (:12) Full Knowledge Will Replace Partial Knowledge

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

blepomen gar arti di\ esoptrou en ainigmati(tote de. proswnon proj proswnon\ arti ginwskw ek merouj(tote de. epignwsomai kaqw kai. epegnwsqh

Piper: My conclusion is that the contrast between seeing fuzzily in an old mirror made out of metal and seeing face to face is not a contrast between first century spiritual knowledge and the knowledge we have from the New Testament today, but rather it's a contrast between the imperfect knowledge we have today in this age and the awesome personal knowledge of God we will have when the Lord returns.

D. (:13) Supremacy of the Value of Love Over Even Faith and Hope

1. The Top Three Christian Virtues

“But now abide faith, hope, love, these three;”

nuni. de. menei pistij(el pij(agaph(ta. tria tauta

2. The Winner is. . .

“but the greatest of these is love.”

meizwn de. toutwn h agaph

MacArthur: Love is the greatest of these not only because it is eternal, but because, even in this temporal life, where we now live, love is supreme. Love already is the

greatest, not only because it will outlast the other virtues, beautiful and necessary as they are, but because it is inherently greater by being the most God-like. God does not have faith or hope, but “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8).

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What evidence is there in your life that you are growing in the exercise of *love* as you use your spiritual gifts in the church?
- 2) What are some of the signs that someone values spiritual knowledge more than love?
- 3) Do we interact with others as those who only “*know in part*” or as a “know it all”?
- 4) Try reading this passage substituting the name of *Jesus* for *love* and see what insights grow out of that exercise.

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leake:

INTRODUCTION:

In church ministry we need to push for excellence in all areas; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; 1 Cor. 12:31 – showing us a still more excellent way; Pride in self limits the effectiveness of your ministry vs. Love for the Brethren which allows for the effectiveness exercise of your gifts; love is the right atmosphere in which the gifts operate; in the list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit – love is primary; 1 John 4:7 Love has its source in God

I. (:1-3) THE PREEMINENCE OF LOVE

A. The Gift of Tongues apart from Love

The most abused and misunderstood spiritual gift; simply means languages; who knows what kind of language the angels use – just pointing to that as an exaggeration; What does the church need? Not the richest person but someone who loves others; people want to be ministered to by someone who cares about them; Consider how what you say will affect others; parents can give correction without love; Col. 4:6; Bible teacher must connect with people with a heart of compassion; develop rapport with people (Prov. 12:18; 16:23); you are not wise because you know the right answer; you must deliver the message with love; Love for the Brethren is the jersey we all wear that identifies us as being on the Team

B. Exaltation of Prophecy / Knowledge / Faith apart from Love

Impressive gifts – receiving and understanding and communicating all of God’s

revelation; but still in God's estimation worth zero apart from love; training and background don't matter; Love matters; the world doesn't value humble, selfless love that much; Jesus will give the ultimate evaluation on Judgment Day; exalt those who have served humbly; there is no way to love a body of believers without being committed to serving one another

C. Sacrifice apart from Love

Some charity can operate from selfish motivations rather than from love –

- produces nothing
- is nothing of value
- gains nothing of value

What if I don't feel like loving others? Do it anyway

What if people are unkind to me? Love them anyway

Sacrificial love is the pathway to the richest kind of joy; we are too interested in self
Don't wait to love; there can be no excess in love; 1 John 2:9-11; James 2; Rom. 13; Eph. 5:1-2, 25; Phil: 1:9; Col. 3 – love = perfect bond of unity

II. (:4-7) THE PICTURE OF LOVE

Describing what love is; what it looks like in its operation; many wrong views of love in today's culture; 1 John 4:8 – essential to the character of God; John 3:16; many-sided perfections of love

Look at what Love Is ...

Look at what Love Is Not ...

III. (:8-13) THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE – LOVE NEVER FAILS

A. (:8) Superiority of Love

What does this not mean?

- it does not mean that love is always successful in winning others to Christ
- it does not mean that if only man was loved more he would do what is right –
This is very shallow thinking; Mk. 7:21

“fails” = never falls into decay or uselessness

Gifts of the Holy Spirit will run out of usefulness – 3 are mentioned here; they were prominent in the church at Corinth

1) “prophecies” – does not refer to the gift but to the effect = what is produced by the gift

“done away” = made inoperative, not abolished; God's Word endures forever; the fulfillment of the prophecies will have arrived; only God can put these out of operation

2) “tongues” – emphasis is on the effects as well, the languages

“cease” – middle voice instead of active; will cease all on their own; fizzle out; doesn't say when or how; but the gift serves a limited time and purpose

3) “Gift of knowledge” – the result or the effect – revelational knowledge; in the

context of progressive revelation

B. (:9-10) Reason for Love being so Valuable = it is Permanent – The Partial is Replaced by the Perfect

That which is perfect – brought to completeness

C. (:11-12) 2 Helpful Illustrations / Images

1. Illustration from Childhood to Manhood

Remember how a child thinks and reasons

2. Illustration of seeing in a mirror vs face to face

Polished metal not like our clear mirrors of today – details not all that clear; partially distorted

What is the perfect and when is it to come? Possibilities:

- Canon of NT Scripture (would be attractive to cessation view)
 - But not in view in this passage
 - this view too hidden from original audience
 - doesn't explain vs. 12 adequately
- Maturity of the Church – gifts no longer needed
- Presence of Jesus Christ – some options here or combination of options –
Believer enters into His presence at death; Rapture; Second Coming; Eternal state; this is preferred option

Jude – once for all delivered; not continually

Eph. 2:2 – foundational aspect of certain gifts

Heb. 1

Rev. 22

But charismatics use this passage to say tongues continue to the end of the age; the effects of prophecies and knowledge do continue until the end of the age; but new prophecies are not being issued today

We should be excited about being in the presence of Christ

D. (:13) Climax

Paul has both this age and the next in mind; Why is love the greatest? Because love never fails; it will always be permanent; How do you learn to love? Look at how Jesus loved others

Stedman: I call this [the way of love] the "fruit of the Spirit" because in the letter to the Galatians, in the famous passage in Chapter 5, the apostle details for us what the fruit of the Spirit is. It is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, {cf, Gal 5:22-23}. It has been pointed out that all of those qualities really are manifestations of the first one, love -- that, after all,

Joy is love enjoying itself;
Peace is love resting;
Patience is love waiting;
Kindness is love reacting;
Goodness is love choosing;
Faithfulness is love keeping its word;
Gentleness is love empathizing; and
Self-control is love resisting temptation.

Love is the key; love is the main thing. This chapter, therefore, is setting forth that quality of love which is the work of the Spirit of God within us reproducing the character of Christ. Now once you have love all these other qualities that are part of the fruit of the Spirit are possible to you. If we have the love of God in our hearts, then we can be patient; we can be peaceful; we can be good, loving, faithful, gentle, kind, and all these other qualities. But without love all we can do is imitate these qualities, and that is what produces a phony love. One of the most deadly enemies of the Christian cause is phony love. That is why, in Romans, Paul says, "Let love be genuine," {Rom 12:9a RSV}. When you come into the church, especially among the people of God, love must be genuine. If it is not, it is hypocrisy. If it is put on just for the moment, if it is an attempt to put on a facade, to act like you are kind, thoughtful, gracious, faithful, and so on, but it all disappears as soon as the situation changes, that spreads death within the whole community. Genuine love, however, will produce all these qualities.

Deffinbaugh: But, while all Christians now share in the "unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3; compare 4:5; 2:14-22; 1 Corinthians 12:13), we do not all share in the "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). This is because we only "know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). We Christians disagree, in part at least, because our knowledge is partial and incomplete. We tend to disagree over those things we do not fully know, even though we may believe we do know. Love is the means God provided for us to live in harmony and unity, even though there is a diversity of doctrine in matters which are not fundamental. Paul's instruction on love then becomes absolutely vital to our Christian walk and to our Christian unity.

[With regard to the **cessationist** position, Deffinbaugh argues that we should make allowance for the possibility of God continuing to use those gifts of prophecy and knowledge and tongues today.]

Having indicated I do not embrace the cessationist position, I should further say I also believe God is not obliged to give the gift of tongues today either. It should be pointed out that there are certain vital and necessary functions in the church, for which there are accompanying general commands. All are commanded to give, to help, and to encourage. All may not be gifted in these areas, but it seems necessary that there be some who are thus gifted. All are not commanded to prophesy or to speak in tongues, and I believe there may be reasons for **inferring** that some gifts may have ceased. I must further state in clear terms that while I must grant the possibility of tongues, I do not grant the necessity of tongues, as is the practice of some Christians. Not all that is called tongues is biblical tongues, and much of what is practiced as tongues (whether

genuine tongues or false) is not practiced as the Scriptures require. In spite of this, a blanket rejection of the possibility of tongues cannot be biblically sustained in my opinion.

MacArthur: By process of elimination, the only possibility for *the perfect* is the eternal, heavenly state of believers. Paul is saying that spiritual gifts are only for time, but that love will last for all eternity. The point is simple, not obscure.

The eternal state allows for the neuter form of *the perfect* and allows for the continuation of knowledge and prophecy during the church age, the Tribulation, and the Kingdom. It fits the context of Paul's emphasis on the permanence of love. It also fits his mention of our then seeing "*face to face*," which will come about only with our glorification, when we will be illumined by the very glory of God Himself (Rev. 21:23). Finally, only in heaven will we "*know fully just as [we] also have been fully known*" (1 Cor. 13:12).

The eternal state begins for Old Testament believers at the first resurrection, when they will be raised to be with Him forever (Dan. 12:2). For Christians the eternal state begins either at death, when they go to be with the Lord, or at the rapture, when the Lord takes His own to be with Himself. For Tribulation and Kingdom saints it will occur at death or glorification.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 14:1-26

TITLE: *CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING PROPHECYING AND SPEAKING IN TONGUES IN THE CHURCH*

BIG IDEA:
GIFTS THAT EDIFY THE CHURCH (SUCH AS PROPHECY) MUST TAKE PRIORITY OVER THE GIFT OF TONGUES

INTRODUCTION:

We must first understand that in today's context the spiritual gifts most related to edification would be teaching and preaching the Word of God and exhorting believers to obey. New prophecies are not being delivered today. We have the completed canon of Scripture. We need gifted men to study and explain the text and its application to our culture today. That is not the gift of prophecy. But that is how edification takes place today in the church. That is why churches must give the highest priority to the exposition of Scripture. It is not enough to just treat things in a topical manner. You must have a systematic diet of going through the Scriptures book by book, paragraph by paragraph, verse by verse.

I. (:1-5) EDIFICATION MUST BE THE PRIMARY GOAL IN CHURCH SERVICES

A. (:1) Exercising Spiritual Gifts is Consistent with Pursuing Love when the Emphasis remains on Edification

“Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”

Diwkete thn agaphn(zhloute de. ta. pneumatika(mal lon de. iha profhteute

Many people today would downplay the goal of edification; their concept of love is not a biblical one; they are much more interested in the emotional experience associated with worship. Paul is not setting spiritual gifts in opposition to love. We have already seen that any spiritual ministry must be conducted in the environment and within the boundaries of love. The error of the Corinthian church was that they had placed too much priority on the gift of tongues rather than on those gifts that had more functionality related to edification. Paul is not deprecating the importance of all of the spiritual gifts – including the proper use of the genuine gift of tongues. His point in this passage is that edification must be the primary goal in church services.

Goals: This first verse says that spiritual gifts are given as a channel for love. The basic reason that we're to express our spiritual gifts, to minister and serve, is for the benefit of other people. In this discussion of gifts, especially tongues and prophesying, love ought to be the controlling factor in our consideration.

1. Pursuing Love Remains the Highest Priority
2. Exercising Spiritual Gifts Must Harmonize with Pursuing Love

3. The Emphasis Must be on Those Gifts that Contribute the Most to Edification

B. (:2-5) Since the Measurement is Edification, Prophecy Excels Tongues

1. (:2-4) Two Contrasts Between Speaking in Tongues and Prophecy

a. First Contrast = Whom are You Addressing

1) Tongues – speaking not to men but to God

a) Men do not understand the content = “*in his spirit he speaks mysteries*”

b) Only God understands the content

2) Prophecy – speaking to men – they understand the content

b. Second Contrast = What are You Accomplishing

1) Tongues – Edifies Self – not the purpose of spiritual gifts

2. Prophecy – Edifies the Church – Has Value for:

- Exhortation

- Consolation

ο̅ γαρ̅ Ιαλ̅ ω̅η̅ γλ̅ω̅σ̅σ̅η̅ ου̅κ̅ αν̅ρ̅ω̅ποι̅η̅ Ιαλ̅ει̅/α̅λ̅λ̅α̅. ρ̅ε̅ω̅λ̅ ου̅δει̅η̅ γαρ̅
α̅κου̅ει̅(ρ̅νε̅υ̅μα̅τι̅ δε̅ Ιαλ̅ει̅/μ̅υσ̅θ̅η̅ρια̅\ 3 ο̅ δε̅ ρ̅ο̅φ̅η̅τε̅υ̅ω̅ν̅ αν̅ρ̅ω̅ποι̅η̅
Ιαλ̅ει̅/ο̅ικ̅ο̅δο̅μ̅η̅ν̅ και̅. πα̅ρα̅κ̅λ̅η̅σ̅ιν̅ και̅. πα̅ρα̅μ̅ο̅υ̅χ̅ια̅\ 4 ο̅ Ιαλ̅ ω̅η̅ γλ̅ω̅σ̅σ̅η̅
ε̅α̅υ̅το̅ν̅ ο̅ικ̅ο̅δο̅μ̅ει̅\ ο̅ δε̅ ρ̅ο̅φ̅η̅τε̅υ̅ω̅ν̅ εκ̅κ̅λ̅η̅σ̅ια̅ν̅ ο̅ικ̅ο̅δο̅μ̅ει̅\

Goins: Paul says in 14:3 that there will be three obvious effects or results when prophecy is exercised in the church. The first is **edification**. That's a great word from the building trade. It means building or construction. A prophet is a home-builder. The word can be used either for laying a foundation, which speaks of stability, or retrofitting or repairing a building that already exists, strengthening it and shoring it up. So applying this word to our lives, it means that when prophecy is exercised, we will be spiritually strengthened and stabilized in our emotions and our understanding.

The second effect of prophesying is **exhortation**. That means to motivate, to come to a person's side and put an arm around their shoulder, to encourage that person, to give direction. This word exhortation doesn't mean that you shake your finger in somebody's face and holler at them. We sometimes have the idea that a prophet is someone who thunders from on high at people. But exhortation means you're on the same level; with your arm around their shoulder, you're saying, "Would you consider this truth?"

The third effect of prophecy is **consolation**, or literally, "near speech, talking very closely." It means to comfort somebody with tenderness and hope, to empathize with that person, to give sensitive counsel.

2. (:5) Prophecy Excels Tongues with respect to Edification

a. Not Putting Down Tongues

“Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues”

qe|w de. pantaj umaj |aleih glwssaj

b. But Elevating Prophecy

“but even more that you would prophesy”

mal |on de. i|a profhteuh|e

c. Prophecy More Valuable for Edifying the Church

“and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues . . .so that the church may receive edifying.”

meizwn de. o| profhteuh|wn h' o| |alwh glwssaj ektoj i|a h' ekklhsia oikodomhn |abh|

d. Exception: Tongues Accompanied by Interpretation

“unless he interprets”

eivmh. diermhneuh|

II. (:6-12) SPEECH MUST BE UNDERSTANDABLE FOR EDIFICATION TO OCCUR

A. (:6) Contrast Between Speech that is Unintelligible vs. Intelligible

1. No Profit in Unintelligible Tongues

“But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you”

Nuh de| adel foi| ean e|qw proj umaj glwssaj |alwh| ti, umaj w|fel hsw

2. Much Profit in Intelligible Spiritual Communication

“unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?”

ean mh. umih |al hsw h' en apokaluyei h' en gnwsei h' en profhteia| h' ien| didach

B. (:7-9) Illustration from Realm of Music –

Only Clear Speech Can Elicit an Appropriate Response

“Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? 8 For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? 9 So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.”

ofwj ta. ayuca fwnhn didonta(eite auloj eite kigara(ean diastolhn toij
 fqoggoij mh. dwk(pwj gnwsqhsetai to. auloumenon h' to. kigarizomenonē 8 kai.
 gar ean adhl on salpigx fwnhn dwk(tij paraskeuasetai eij polemonē 9 outwj
 kai. umeij dia. thj glwsshj ean mh. eushmon logon dwte(pwj gnwsqhsetai to.
 laloumenonē esesqe gar eij aera lalouhteja

1. Generally, Musical Instruments must make distinct intentional sounds
2. Specifically, the Battle Call of the Trumpet must be understandable
3. Language and speech must be clear

C. (:10-11) Language Only Has Value if it is Understood

“There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.”

tosauta eivtucoi genh fwnwh eis in en kosmw| kai. ouden afwnon\ 11 ean oua
 mh. eidw/ thn dunamin thj fwnhj(esomai tw/ lalouhti barbaroj kai. o' lalwh
 en emoi. barbaroja

Tremendous argument against any type of language that would not have meaning for man; the essence of language is the communication of thoughts and ideas that can be understood by those who know the language

MacArthur: The Corinthians were so carnally self-centered that they could not have cared less about communication. They were interested in impressing others, not communicating with them, much less edifying them. . . . A language without meaning is pointless. A language without meaning is not really a language. It is meaning that makes language language.

D. (:12) Zeal for Spiritual Gifts Must be Channeled Towards Edification

“So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.”

outwj kai. umeij(epei. zhlwtai, este pneumatwn(proj thn oikodomhn thj
 ekkhhsiaj zhteite iha perisseuhteja

III. (:13-19) PRACTICE IN THE CHURCH (RELATED TO THE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS) MUST BE ADJUSTED TO PROMOTE EDIFICATION

A. (:13) Tongues Require Interpretation

“Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.”

dio. o' lalwh glwssh| proseucesqw iha diermhneuhja

B. (:14-17) The Mind Must be Engaged in Worship

1. The Mind Must be Engaged in Prayer

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also”

ean lgarth proseucwmai glwssh(to pneuma, mou proseucetai(o de nouj mou akarpoj estina 15 ti, oua estine proseuxomai tw/ pneumatiki proseuxomai de kai tw/ noi

John Calvin: Let us take notice, that Paul reckons it a great fault if the mind is not occupied in prayer. And no wonder; for what else do we in prayer, but pour out our thoughts and desires before God? Farther, as prayer is the spiritual worship of God, what is more at variance with the nature of it, than that it should proceed merely from the lips, and not from the inmost soul?

2. The Mind Must be Engaged in Singing and Praise

“I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.”

yal w/ tw/ pneumatiki(yal w/ de kai tw/ noi

MacArthur: Spirituality involved more than the mind, but it never excludes the mind.

3. The Mind Must be Engaged in Giving Assent and Blessing and Thanks

“Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.”

epei ean euloghj lenth pneumatiki(o anaphrwh ton topon tou idiwtou pwj erei/ to. VAmh n epi. th/ sh/ eucaristiaj epeidh. ti, legeij ouk oiden\ 17 su. men gar kalwj eucaristeij al lV o eteroj ouk oikodomeitai

“ungifted” is not speaking of an unbeliever, but of one who does not have the gift of interpretation to allow him to understand the message from the speaking in tongues

MacArthur: *Amen* is a Hebrew word of agreement and encouragement, meaning “So let it be”

C. (:18-19) The Practice of the Apostle Paul Supports This Emphasis on Edification

1. (:18) Paul Excels in Speaking in Tongues

“I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all”

eucaristw/ tw/ qew(pantwn umwh mal lon glwssaij lalw

Paul can't be accused of not knowing what he is talking about here.

Stedman: Well, then, when did Paul speak in tongues? I think the only situation that fulfills all the biblical requirements for the gift of tongues, one that would have allowed the apostle to exercise his ability in this area, would be when he went into the Jewish synagogues, because there was a provision made for public praise of God by visiting people. To praise God in a language never learned would be a very impressive thing to the Jewish people present, especially if it was a Gentile tongue. That is when Paul spoke in tongues "more than them all," and that would fulfill every requirement of the biblical gift of tongues.

2. (:19) Paul Addresses His Communication in the Church to the Mind
"however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue."

al la. en ekklesia qelw pente logouj tw| noi< mou lalhsai(ipa kai.
 al louj kathchsw(h' muripuj logouj en glwssh

IV. (:20-25) CONTRAST IN PURPOSE AND EFFECT BETWEEN SPEAKING IN TONGUES AND PROPHECYING

- A. (:20-21) Appeal to Maturity of Thinking

1. (:20) The Appeal

"Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature."

VAdel foi(mh. paidia ginesqe taij fresin al la. th| kakaia| nhpiazete(
 taij de. fresin teleioi ginesqe

Goins: A preoccupation with tongues without concern for their place and purpose, or their effect on oneself or others is childish. Paul says we're to be innocent or childlike when it comes to evil or sin, but not in our use of spiritual gifts. Some of the Corinthian believers had come to believe that speaking in tongues was evidence of spiritual maturity. But Paul is making it clear in this chapter that this gift can be exercised in an unspiritual, immature way. Twice he uses the word "thinking" in verse 20. That word means the faculty of wise, thoughtful, rational investigation. Mature faith will never stress the noncognitive or nonrational over the cognitive or rational. I'm not saying the noncognitive and nonrational have no place, but the cognitive and the rational must be central to the life of the church.

2. (:21) The Supporting Argument from Isaiah

"In the Law it is written, "BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME," says the Lord."

en tw| nomw| gegraptai oti VEn eteroglwssoij kai. en ceilesin eterwn
 lalhs w tw| law| toutw| kai. oudw outwj eisakousontai, mou(legei
 kurioj

Context here is clearly talking about known languages, not ecstatic utterances.

B. (:22) Contrast in Purpose

1. Purpose of Tongues – Directed towards unbelievers

“So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers;

w̄ste aī gl̄w̄ssaī eij̄ shmeibn̄ eisin̄ ouw̄ toij̄ pisteuusin̄ al̄ la. toij̄ apistoj̄

2. Purpose of Prophesying – Directed towards believers

“but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.”

h̄ de. profhteiā ouw̄ toij̄ apistoj̄ al̄ la. toij̄ pisteuusin̄

Goins: He tells us that tongues is a sign gift to be exercised for the benefit of non-Christians. That was its purpose at Pentecost, as we see in Acts 2. It arrested attention as the disciples declared the magnificence of God to the thousands of Jewish pilgrims from all over the world in their native languages. Their praises were immediately followed by Peter's preaching of the gospel as he interpreted the events to the crowd. So the expression of tongues, like any good sign, directed the attention to the saving message of Jesus Christ, which is the more important issue. A billboard arrests attention, but surely you don't get hung up with the sign itself. Its advertisers want you to think about the message it's pointing to. That's the purpose of any sign in our culture today. Tongues awakened people to the presence and the power of God at Pentecost, but it was Peter's prophetic preaching that explained who this God was and called the people to believe what God had said in his word.

C. (:23-25) Contrast in Effect

1. Effect of Speaking in Tongues

“If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?”

¶Ean̄ oūn̄ sunel̄qh̄ h̄ ekkl̄hsiā ōll̄ h̄ epi. to. auto. kai. pantej̄ l̄alw̄sin̄ gl̄w̄ssaij̄(̄ eisel̄qwsin̄ de. idiw̄taī h̄ apistoī(̄ ouk̄ erousin̄ ōltī mainesqet̄

2. Effect of Prophesying

“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.”

ēan̄ de. pantej̄ profhteuwsin̄(̄ eisel̄qh̄|̄ de. tij̄ apistoj̄ h̄ idiw̄thj̄(̄ el̄ egcetaī upo. pantwn̄(̄ anakrinetaī upo. pantwn̄(̄ 25 ta. krupta. thj̄ kardiaj̄ autou/̄ fanera. ginetaī(̄ kai. outwj̄ peswn̄ epi. proswn̄pon̄ proskunhseī tw/̄ qew/̄ apaggel̄lwn̄ ōltī :Ontwj̄ ō qeoj̄ en̄ umīh̄ estin̄

(:26) CONCLUSION: EDIFICATION MUST BE THE PRIMARY GOAL IN CHURCH SERVICES

“What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”

Ti, ou \bar{n} estin(adel foi \bar{t} o \bar{t} an sunerchs \bar{q} e(ekastoj yal mon ecei(didachn ecei(apokaluyin ecei(glw \bar{s} san ecei(ermhnei \bar{a} n ecei\ panta proj oikodomhn ginesqwa

This forms the transition to the next section in chapter 14 which speaks of orderliness in the church services

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is our church doing to promote the function of edification within our church services? What parts of the service don't seem to engage the mind?
- 2) Will the gift of prophecy be functioning again during the Great Tribulation period even though we don't need it at present?
- 3) If the Apostle Paul was such a prolific speaker in tongues, why don't we hear more about how he used that gift in his missionary journeys?
- 4) When unbelievers visit our church services do they come under the conviction of the Spirit as described in v.24-25? Why don't we see more of this type of behavior?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leake: (:1-12) THE CHURCH IS TO VALUE PROPHECY FOR EDIFICATION SAKE – 2 COMPARISONS

INTRODUCTION:

Very controversial and yet practical section; the importance of edification; the mind and the understanding are key

I. (:1-5) PROPHECY IS GREATER THAN TONGUES

A. (:1) Bridge: 2 Commands

- Follow after love hard
- Earnestly desire spiritual gifts

You should want your congregation to be blessed by prophecy since prophecy has a greater ability to edify the church

B. (:2) The Inadequacy of the Gift of Tongues

Communicates nothing of value to the congregation; *no one* in the congregation can understand that foreign language (does not mean that *no one* in the world can understand it)

Nature of Tongues – known foreign language; not ecstatic utterance with repetitive syllables that make not sense; charismatic tongues movement of recent origin – maybe only the last 100 years in America

Origin of Tongues = at Pentecost – look at historical record in Acts 2 – interpret the unclear in light of the clear (not vice versa) – meant to be a miracle; not gibberish that others could produce apart from the Spirit of God;

Acts 2:9-11 lists the various foreign languages involved that day

2:18 – uses the word dialect – like a reversal of the Tower of Babel; the sign was effective; not a gift of hearing

How does the charismatic movement arrive at definition of ecstatic utterances or some type of unknown angel language?? They start with their experience and then go back into the Scriptures looking for justification for some type of private prayer language – Can there be two different types of tongues?? Not likely since the same words are used; Acts 10 and 19 assume the same phenomena as Acts 2; Luke = traveling companion of Paul and wrote Acts after 1 Corinthians – must be talking about the same thing

Purpose of the gift of tongues = a sign to unbelievers (14:22) – same terminology, same purpose, same gift of languages

Improper not to use the gift for edification

“mystery” = previously unrevealed truth; not a reference to the groaning of the Spirit from Rom. 8:26; when we pray, God hears our language just fine; the Holy Spirit then talks to God on our behalf using groanings that are too deep for words (unutterable); not talking about ecstatic speech on our part

C. (:3) Reasons for Superiority of Prophecy

- communicates effectively

- edifies

- builds up the church properly

1. Via Exhortation – move the human will towards godly goal

2. Via Consolation – comforting the troubled heart

3. Also need systematic teaching for doctrinal instruction

Rom. 12:7-8 – now teaching and exhortation needed for growth

D. (:4) Who Should be Edified

The Church; not Self

The church must receive the benefit; the reference here to building self up is not a compliment; not encouraging us to sit at home and speak in tongues

E. (:5) using hyperbole – 7:7 is not saying that all men should really remain single; it is not the divine will that all men should speak in tongues; not deprecating tongues; but elevating prophecy and edification – We need God’s Word

Having an interpreter is the key = why it can't refer to ecstatic utterances that could never be interpreted

II. (:6-12) UNDERSTANDING IS GREATER THAN CONFUSION

In order for edification to take place, content must be delivered in understandable language; otherwise all you have is Confusion

“barbarian” = anyone who does not understand the Greek language

(:12) Application -- use the gift in love to build up and edify the body of Christ; value the teaching; listen; it can change our lives; value the pulpit ministry

Leake: (:13-25) PREACHING TO THE MIND IS ESSENTIAL FOR EDIFICATION – 4 REASONS

INTRODUCTION:

God's method to build up the local church continues to be the expositional preaching of the Word of God; not based on the greatness of the human instrument behind the pulpit but on the greatness of the Word of God as the Spirit applies it to the hearts of the people;

Look at the differences and similarities between prophesying and preaching so that we get the right application from this text;

Our worship service is important to the Lord

I. (:13-15) PREACHING TO THE MIND EDIFIES THE SPEAKER HIMSELF

“therefore” – links back to vs. 12 and the principle of edification; this principle of the importance of speaking to the mind is not limited to prophecy; aim everything at the mind = singing, etc.

They were using the genuine gift of tongues inappropriately; apart from gift of interpretation this would not edify the church; Paul's aim was always to edify

Prayer Request

Reason for the Prayer Request

Paul was not advocating praying only in the spirit; the mind must be engaged; vs. 15 looks at the correct practice; this is how it should be happening

Worship Principle: singing must be truth oriented, not rote or mindless; not just repetition to gear us up to some type of emotional excitement;

Look at the reduction in truth that has taken place in contemporary Christian songs and prayers; you don't see people praying Scripture back to God;

We are not advocating that emotion should not be expressed in our worship

II. (:16-19) PREACHING TO THE MIND EDIFIES THE WHOLE CHURCH

- Paul had the gift of languages

- Paul was thankful for the gift
 - Paul exercised the gift more than the Corinthians
- So Paul knows what he's talking about

Look at the Pride of the Corinthians and of some charismatics today: "If you don't have the gift of tongues you are not qualified to teach me on this subject"

Same experience of ecstatic utterance has been evidenced around the world; not supernatural; not a sign; not impressive; not from the Spirit of God

Paul used tongues in his missionary travels; not talking about speaking privately or without an interpreter

Note Matt. 6:7 caution against meaningless repetition in our prayers; pray intelligently

III. (:20) PREACHING TO THE MIND MATURES THE THINKING

2 sides of the same exhortation expressed as a rebuke; the Corinthians prided themselves in their thinking; Truth matures the mind

Qualification given about being infants with respect to evil; does not mean:

- not to study the bible
- not to be on guard against Satan's schemes
- not to be able to recognize evil for what it truly is

But it means don't have experiential knowledge of sinning; cf. tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden

Stay away from imagination and creativity in the realm of evil

You don't learn loving by lusting;

You don't learn contentment by coveting

IV. (:21-25) PREACHING TO THE MIND CONVINCES EVERYONE

Everyone = believers and unbelievers alike

Talking about the abuse of the principle

Sometimes the entire OT referred to as "the Law" – here the quote is from Isaiah – foreign language brought by Syrian conquerors – pointing to the special work of God in correction and discipline of His people

Purpose of tongues = miraculous sign for unbelievers; God doing something special; had an evangelistic and apologetic purpose; unnecessary to authenticate apostles and prophets today

(:24-25) Positive effect of Prophecy – benefits spill over to unbelievers

John Stott: Between Two Worlds

Word and worship belong indissolubly to each other. All worship is an intelligent and loving response to the revelation of God because it is the adoration of His name. Therefore, acceptable worship is impossible without preaching, for preaching is making known the name of the Lord, and worship is praising the name of the Lord made known. Far from being an alien intrusion into worship, the reading and preaching of the word are actually indispensable to it. The two cannot be divorced. Indeed, it is their unnatural divorce which accounts for the low level of so much contemporary worship. Our worship is poor because our knowledge of God is poor, and our knowledge of God is poor because our preaching is poor. But when the word of God is expounded in its fullness, and the congregation begin to glimpse the glory of the living God, they bow down in solemn awe and joyful wonder before his throne. It's preaching which accomplishes this, the proclamation of the word of God in the power of the Spirit of God. That's why preaching is so unique and irreplaceable.

Stedman: The gift of tongues is a sign. A sign to whom? Well, the quotation from Isaiah 28 makes it clear {cf, Isa 28:11}: Isaiah was speaking to the whole nation of Israel at a time when the Assyrians were knocking at the doors of Jerusalem, threatening to capture it. Through the prophet, God is warning the nation that, if they do not repent and turn from their evil and idolatrous ways, they are going to hear foreigners talking in the Holy City; they are going to hear Gentile tongues filling the streets of that city. It is a warning to Israel to face up to their relationship with God lest he turn from them to the Gentile world.

Now that was the scene and the setting of Isaiah's words. One hundred years later they were completely fulfilled when the Babylonians came in and did take over the city and the streets of Jerusalem were filled with foreigners speaking strange tongues. If you read the Day of Pentecost in that light you will see how fully that accords with this prediction, for, on that day, when the streets of Jerusalem were filled with thousands and thousands of people, largely Jews, who had come from all the nations around, they heard the disciples speaking these strange, Gentile languages they had never learned. It was a sign to unbelieving Jews that God was about to turn from Israel's favored position and go to the Gentile world. On that day, remember, Peter stood up and warned them that they were facing the judgment of God, being convicted in their hearts, that was why they said, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" {cf, Acts 2:37}, and three thousand of them turned to God because of that, while the rest of the city, the mass of the population, remained in unbelief.

That is what Isaiah said would happen, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." {cf, Isa 28:11}. So Paul says that is the purpose for the gift, that is why he used it in synagogues wherever he went, because it would be a sign of warning to unbelieving Jews that God was turning to the Gentiles.

Stedman: That raises, then, the final question, which I want to briefly answer this morning. That is, "Is what we are hearing around us today the biblical gift of tongues?"

My judgment is, "No, it is not." I have heard hundreds of manifestations of what is called "tongues" today, and I am alarmed by the fact that hardly anybody ever raises the question, "Is this the same thing?" They never ask, "Is this a language, or is it not?" I have a quotation here from William Samarin, professor of linguistics at the University of Toronto, who says,

Over a period of five years I have taken part in meetings in Italy, Holland, Jamaica, Canada and the United States. I have observed old-fashioned Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals. I have been in small meetings in private homes as well as in mammoth public meetings. I have seen such different cultural settings as are found among Puerto Ricans of the Bronx, the snake handlers of the Appalachians and the Russian Molakans of Los Angeles... I have interviewed tongue speakers, and tape recorded and analyzed countless samples of tongues. In every case, glossolalia turns out to be linguistic nonsense. In spite of superficial similarities, glossolalia is fundamentally not language. It is not a language, and it is not often addressed to God. It is usually addressed to a crowd of people present, so it does not fit that qualification. And it is primarily exercised privately today, whereas there is no manifestation of the private use of tongues in the New Testament. Finally, it is not a sign to unbelievers, therefore, we have to judge that the phenomenon that we see and hear today is not the biblical gift of tongues.

What is it then? Well, once again people are being misled, oftentimes quite earnestly and sincerely, into identifying a purely psychological phenomenon, of which many temperaments are capable, a kind of self-induced hypnosis which results in a repetition of sounds and syllables that have no meaning in themselves, as the gift of tongues. In itself it is relatively harmless. If people want to do it at home I have no objection as long as they do not call it the biblical gift of tongues because it is not that. It is this common phenomenon which was present all through the ancient world, and which Plato discusses in several of his discourses, and which was practiced commonly in the mystery religions of that day. It is very often, all through the history of the church, associated with religious excitement. That is what is being identified today as the gift of tongues.

MacArthur: In the church at Corinth much of the tongues-speaking had taken on the form and flavor of those pagan ecstasies. Emotionalism all but neutralized their rational senses, and selfish exhibitionism was common, with everyone wanting to do and say his own thing at the same time (v 26). Services were bedlam and chaos, with little worship and little edification taking place. Because of the extreme carnality in the church at Corinth, we can be sure that much of the tongues-speaking there was counterfeit. . .

The apostle gives three reasons why the position of tongues is secondary to that of prophecy: prophecy edifies the whole congregation; tongues are unintelligible; and the effects of tongues are emotional rather than rational. . .

The mysteries Paul has in mind here are of the type associated with the pagan mystery religions, out of which many of the Corinthian Christians had come. Unlike the mysteries of the gospel, which are revelations of things previously hidden (Matt. 13:1; Eph. 3:9; etc.) the pagan mysteries intentionally remained mysterious, as unknown truths and principles that supposedly only the initiated elite were privileged to know. . .

The sign was threefold: a sign of cursing, a sign of blessing, and a sign of authority.

A SIGN OF CURSING

Some 15 years or so before Isaiah prophesied about the strange tongues from the lips of strangers, the northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered and taken captive

by the Assyrians (in 722 B.C.) because of unbelief and apostasy. The prophet then warned the southern kingdom, Judah, that the same judgment awaited her at the hands of the Babylonians. The proud religious leaders of Judah would not listen to Isaiah. His teaching was too simple. He talked to them, they claimed, as if they were babies. . .

About 800 years before Isaiah, God had warned Israel that *“The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand”* (Deut. 28:49). The strange language of their conquerors would be a sign of God’s judgment. About 100 years after Isaiah, the Lord warned through Jeremiah, *“Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel, . . . a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say”* (Jer. 5:15). The sign of judgment would be a language they could not understand.

When the apostles spoke at Pentecost and were heard in their own language by Jews from many countries (Acts 2:7-11), those Jews should have known that God’s judgment was imminent. His judgment had fallen on rebellious Israel and then on rebellious Judah. How much more would it fall on those of His people who now had crucified the Son of God? . . .

After the destruction of Jerusalem, and especially of the Temple, the reason for tongues ceased to exist. The judgment of which it was a sign had come. After the Pentecost manifestation of tongues, Peter, by implication, reminded his hearers of that judgment: *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified”* (Acts 2:36; cf. vv. 22-23).

A SIGN OF BLESSING

The gift of tongues was a sign that God would no longer work through one nation, and favor one people. . .

A SIGN OF AUTHORITY

Those who preached the judgment and promised the blessing were the apostles and prophets, whose authority was validated by *“signs and wonders and miracles”* (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Rom. 15:19). Among the authenticating signs was the gift of tongues, in which Paul spoke *“more than you all”* (1 Cor. 14:18).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

TITLE: ORDERLY CHURCH SERVICES

BIG IDEA:

THE ORDERLY PATTERN FOR WORSHIP LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH INVOLVES MULTIPLE GIFTED MEN PROMOTING THE GOAL OF EDIFICATION

INTRODUCTION:

There is a pattern for worship leadership in the church. There are appropriate ways to achieve the goal of edification; there are inappropriate ways. The role of gifted men is different from that of gifted women. Need to determine if this passage addresses the church as it comes together in its entirety or just as it meets in smaller house church or flock group meetings. It would seem that the corporate meeting of the entire church is in view. However, in either case, these principles would seem to apply.

I. (:26-33) CONNECTION BETWEEN ORDERLINESS AND EDIFICATION

A. (:26) Orderliness Essential for Edification

1. (:26A) Exercise of Spiritual Gifts Must Achieve Desired Outcome

“What is the outcome then, brethren?”

Ti, ouñ estin(adel foi

We have spent a lot of time studying spiritual gifts and the pursuit of love. This has not been just an academic exercise. There is a practical objective of accomplishing the goal of edification within the context of orderly church services.

2. (:26B) Eclectic, Haphazard Contribution by All Does Not Work

“When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.”

oñtan sunerchsqe(ekastoj yalmon ecei(didachn ecei(apokaluyin ecei(glwssan ecei(ermhneian ecei

Paul is challenging the appropriateness of their unorganized practice.

3. (:26C) Edification Must be the Goal

“Let all things be done for edification.”

panta proj oikodomhn ginesqwA

They have gotten so caught up in themselves and their giftedness that they have lost sight of God’s goal for the church.

B. (:27-32) Orderliness Ensured by Following Simple Guidelines / Restrictions

Stedman: Well, I do not like rules either. I basically resist rules, but I learned many years ago that you cannot function as a corporate body without some rules. You cannot play a game of football without rules; the rules make the game possible. You cannot

play a game of chess without rules; you cannot drive through traffic without rules.

1. (:27-28) Guidelines Involving Speaking in Tongues in Church Meetings

a. Not Too Many – But More Than One

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, “

eite glwssh| tij |alei(kata. dup h' to. pleiston treij

Why this emphasis on multiple ministry?

b. Not All At Once

“and each in turn,”

kai. ana. meroj

c. Not Without an Interpreter

“and let one interpret but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.”

kai. eij diermhneuetw\ 28 ean de. mh. h=diermhneuthj(sigatw en ekklhsia(eautw| de. |alei,tw kai. tw| qew|

Implied goal is edification of the church – not just speaking to oneself or to God

2. (:29-32) Guidelines Involving Prophecy in Church Meetings

a. (:29A) Not Too Many – But More Than One

“And let two or three prophets speak”

profhtai de. dup h' treij |alei,twsan

b. (:29B) Not Without Checks and Balances

“and let the others pass judgment.”

kai. oi' a|loi diakrinetwsan

How do we accomplish this goal of checks and balances in our assembly. Do the elders actively monitor the content of the teaching and preaching and raise appropriate questions or refute error? Do other gifted men have a forum to pass judgment on what has been spoken as well? Importance of discernment

c. (:30-32) Not Without Self Control and Restraint and Consideration for the Contribution of Others

“But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

ean de. a|lw| apokalufqh| kaqhmenw(o' prwtoj sigatw| 31
dunasqe gar kaql eha pantej profhteujin(iha pantej
manqanwsin kai. pantej parakalwhtai| 32 kai. pneumata

profhtwh profhtaij upotassetai(

Implied goal is edification of the entire church – not just speaking to oneself or to God

Why would God give multiple men in a single church the gift of teaching and preaching? What should be the context for the expression of those gifts? Does it show a lack of self control and a lack of restraint and a lack of consideration for the contribution of others for the public teaching ministry to be dominated by one man – no matter how singularly gifted?

Stedman: nobody was to take over the meeting, Paul says, for **two reasons:**

1. First, because the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. Someone might have said, "I can't help what I say. The Spirit of God is in me and he is speaking through me. Therefore, everything I say is of God." Paul says, "Rubbish! The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. You can help yourself; you need not claim that you just have to say these things." As someone has said, there are always two kinds of speakers -- those who have something to say, and those who have to say something. The apostle is concerned that he limit the latter.

2. The second reason he gives is, the Spirit of God never creates confusion or disorder. Therefore, no one is to dominate a meeting, to run away with it, or consider himself an inspired spokesman because God does not work that way. Let it be orderly and decently done and give room to others to speak and to share in the ministry. Remember, if there is strife, jealousy, confusion, argument, and that kind of thing, it is not a meeting led by the Spirit of God. God does not work that way. When that kind of a meeting is going on, it is some other spirit at work.

MacArthur: A new revelation took precedence over the reiteration of something that had already been taught. It was not that the truths in the new revelation were necessarily more important than those then being proclaimed, but that, at the moment, the new should be heard while it was fresh from the Lord. That is not an issue in the church today, because the revelation aspect of the prophetic ministry ceased with the completion of the New Testament. But apparently in the early church such conflicts sometimes occurred. When they did, the prophet with the new revelation was to be given the floor. In other words, when God spoke directly, everyone was to listen.

C. (:33) Orderliness Consistent with the Character of the God we Worship
“for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

ouvgar estin akatastasijaj o' qeoj al la.eirhnhjA -Wj en pasaij taij
ekklhsiaij twh agiwn

II. (:34-35) CORRECTION REGARDING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC CHURCH SERVICES – NOT A VOCAL, TEACHING, AUTHORITATIVE ROLE

A. (:34) Role of Women Defined – Two Broad Injunctions

1. With Regards to Their Role in Public Teaching – Keep Silent

*“Let the women keep silent in the churches;
for they are not permitted to speak”*

ai` gunaikej en taij ekkhhsiaij sigatwsan
ouu gar epitrepetai autaij lalaih

2. With Regards to Their Submission to Male Authority – Submit Themselves

“but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says.”

al la upotassesqwsan(kaqwj kai. o` nomoj legeia

Jeffries: Prophesying and speaking in tongues involve teaching, transmitting truth and revelation. A woman, who is to be in submission to male authority, should never seek to overshadow that authority. This does not mean that she is not endowed with these gifts, which she can use privately. Neither does it mean that she cannot pray or sing, because neither of these actions involve exercising authority. And even though Paul refers to women prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11:5, there is not indication that he approves of the practice.

B. (:35) Proper Context for Doctrinal Interaction

“And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home;”

eivde, ti maqeih qelousin(en oikw| touj idiouj andraj eperwtatwsan\ aiscron

Seems to imply a much greater role of participation on the part of a larger number of men than what we see in our church services

C. (:35B) Appropriateness of This Role Reiterated

“for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.”

gar estin gunaiki. lalaih en ekkhhsiaia

III. (:36-38) CAUTION AGAINST PRIDEFULLY ASSERTING SOME INDEPENDENT STANDARDS FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP SERVICES

A. (:36) Caution Based on the Source and Scope of the Word of God

1. Source -- Did Not Originate From You

“Was it from you that the word of God first went forth?”

h' aifv umwh o` logoj tou/ qeou/ exhl qen

2. Scope -- Was Not Limited to You

“Or has it come to you only?”

h' eij umaj monouj kathnthsent

B. (:37-38) Caution Based on Respect for Apostolic Authority –

Communicating Divine Commands must be in the context of recognizing and submitting to the Authority of the Word of God

1. (:37A) Warning Against Pride

“If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual”

Ei; tij dokei/profh,tj einaï h' pneumatikoj

2. (:37B) Assertion of Apostolic Authority
“let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.”

epiginwske,tw a]graf,w umih o]ti kuri,pou estin entol h\

3. (:38) Litmus Test for Legitimacy

“But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”

eiv de, tij agnoei(agnoeitaia

Beware of anyone who is not willing to submit to the authority of the Word of God; or who appeals to some type of subjective experience for legitimacy rather than putting the priority on the Word of God

IV. (:39-40) CONCLUSION: THE ORDERLY PATTERN FOR WORSHIP LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH INVOLVES MULTIPLE GIFTED MEN PROMOTING THE GOAL OF EDIFICATION

A. (:39) Pursue the Goal of Edification

1. Priority on Prophecy

“Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy”

w]ste(adel foi, imou(zhl oute to profhteuein

2. Prudence Regarding Speaking in Tongues

“and do not forbid to speak in tongues.”

kai. to. laleih mh. kwluete glwssaij

B. (:40) Practice Orderliness in the Church Services

“But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.”

panta de. euschmonwj kai. kata. taxin ginesqwa

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How must the principle of orderliness of the worship service be balanced with the command to not quench the Spirit of God?

2) Do we place too much emphasis on the edification gift of one man in our services rather than allowing edification from multiple gifted men? How should the change in emphasis from a ministry of prophecy (involving direct divine revelation) to a ministry of teaching and Bible exposition (involving a lot of study and preparation) affect our approach to edification in the worship service?

3) If the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy are no longer applicable

for the church today, why didn't Paul indicate here that his instructions to the Corinthians were not normative for the entire church age?

4) What are some ways that people claim to have a message directly from God that others should submit to when in reality they are not submitting to the authority of the Word of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: PRESCRIBED PRACTICE OF TONGUES AND PROPHESYING IN CHURCH, 26-38

- A. The basic rule for all gifts, 26
 - 1. Intended for when you come together
 - 2. Must result in edification

- B. The specific rules for tongues, 27-28
 - 1. Only two, or at most, three should speak
 - 2. Each must wait his turn
 - 3. At least one must interpret
 - a. If no interpreter, keep silent in church
 - b. Speak to himself and to God (Way to edify himself and yet keep silent)

- C. The specific rules for prophesying, 29-33
 - 1. Let two or three prophesy, 29
 - 2. Let the others (other prophets) evaluate what has been said
 - 3. If a revelation be given to a second prophet, let the first keep silent (no domination of meeting by one), 30
 - 4. Take turns, one by one, 31
 - a. So all may learn and be encouraged
 - b. Possible, because each prophet can control his own spirit
 - 5. Confusion or tumult is not from God, for he produces peace

- D. Rules concerning women, 34-36
 - 1. Women should neither prophesy or speak in tongues in church, 34-35
 - a. It violates their submissiveness
 - b. The law agrees with this also, 34
 - 2. Provision for learning is made for them at home, 35
 - 3. It is shameful to disregard this, 35

- E. Admonitions to those who resist this, 36-40
 - 1. Do you think you are supersaints? 36
 - a. Did you originate the Word?
 - b. Are you the only saints around?
 - 2. A genuine prophet or spiritual man acknowledges apostolic authority

3. To resist this teaching is ignorance, so leave such to his ignorance

Jeffries: Some scholars believe that the apostle Paul has in mind two very different worship settings in this chapter.

a. In 14:23 ("*Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place...*") he is referring to the infrequent occasions when the various home-churches in Corinth would join together for a large-scale corporate worship service. In Paul's mind, "outsiders" and other interested inquirers might well be expected to visit such a service.

b. In 14:26 ("*Whenever you come together...*") Paul might be directing his comments toward those home-churches, which met more frequently and, in all probability, in less formal settings.

Zeisler: How different is our problem than the one which the Corinthians had to struggle with! They were too active in their expression, we are too passive. I liken the Corinthian church to a large, voluble family living in a house that is too small for them. They are forever bumping into one another. There are always lines for the bathroom. They talk too much and get on each other's nerves. Although they love one another, they are at times resentful of each other and impatient with one another. Today, the Christian body seems to gravitate towards what I would call condominium-type Christianity. We each want to have our own small space, at a safe distance from other Christians. We are polite towards one another and we are good, quiet neighbors, but we take good care to maintain our privacy. We need to be reinfused with life. If the Corinthians were crowded and competitive, we tend to be isolated and private. Because they wrestled with a problem that was the opposite of ours, perhaps the very difference between us can be a source of help to us.

Tom Leake: Spirit Led Worship is Orderly

Introduction: cf. orderly plan the Lord laid out for the tabernacle in the OT; cf. orderly arrangement of the Israelite camp; cf. duties of the priest and their clothing – all prescribed in Ex. And Lev.; God was to be approached in a certain way – with thought and care; they were to be systematic; cf 2 sons of Aaron who learned that lesson the hard way (Lev. 10). Churches should have the same attitude of reverence; although differences in dispensation; but the God whom we worship has not changed from age to age. His holy person has not been altered; He desires beauty and order; despises a flippant approach to worship.

Regulating gift of tongues and prophecy in the gathered assembly; could be used for edification if used in a certain way; get some insight into early NT worship services;

Cautions:

- 1) Paul's purpose is not to explain how the worship service is to be set up and run; not trying to give us a complete and sequential order of how it should flow;
- 2) Since there were revelatory gifts in operation in First Century, by necessity the early church had to have supernatural revelation; so their services will look different
- 3) NT purposefully gave no set rules as to how to structure our worship services; focus on the timeless principles that can be adapted to different times and cultures; use godly

wisdom to think through our present circumstances and make applications; meeting in any church building would have cost Christians their lives; cf. meeting outside under trees; would not work for us

Still much to learn from this passage about worship

Our worship should reflect who God is and must be orderly and peaceful and holy and careful; we must be committed worshippers

7 Timeless Principles of God Honoring Worship

1. (:26A) Worship Should be Corporate

“*when you assemble*” – not just individual and family worship; we are the body of Christ; we are meant to relate to one another and build one another up; to use the gifts to edify; some people miss this = a sin; your small group meetings are not the same as the whole corporate church assembling; you must understand this time and value it

2. (:26B) Worship is to be Complementary

Diversity of spiritual gifts in operation; all the varying gifts are needed; they are to be inclusive; prophecy resulted in a revelation; various speakers were not to be in competition with each other

3. (:26C) Worship is to be Constructive – designed for edification

1 Thess. 5:11; Rom 14:19; worship is primarily for God’s pleasure, yet has an edifying effect on us; Ephes. 5:18-19; not gathering together for show

4. (:27-30, 40) Worship is to be Coordinated (Orderly)

Importance of having some structure; the structure itself is not completely dictated; not all met in houses (some in synagogues; some in storefronts); needs to be a time limit; tongues was not to dominate the other gifts; not a result of an irresistible urge of the Spirit – he could keep quiet; they had control over the gift; not speaking at the same time; Charismatic Chaos = book by Dr. MacArthur; gift of prophecy also regulated; must be used in love; remember, these were not expository sermons – might have been quite short and followed by exhortation; these revelations must be judged as to whether they really came from God; practice discernment in the worship service (cf. Bereans); How do we know something is from God:

- predicts the future accurately
- would be consistent with rest of God’s revelation

Not told how the revelation came to the prophets; Holy Spirit does not overrule common courtesy and common sense; God has given gift of governments to His church

5. (:31) Worship is to be Charismatic

Not that the speaker is to be a charismatic speaker or imitating the false gifts going around today; but led by the gifts given by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of worship; not “all” in the church for the first “all” – but all those who are gifted to minister the Word should be allowed to speak over time; not necessarily in that one meeting; Paul was not attempting to suppress the contribution of any gifted speakers; No single person was to dominate and suppress others from speaking; no pontification; Some

want to use their gifts without training; others are shy and need to be encouraged to step out in faith

6. (:32) Worship is to be Controlled

You must keep self control as a prophet; all that we teach must be subject to the text of Scripture; does not mean that every teacher will agree on everything; endorsement of preparation in a subtle way

7. (:33) Worship is to be Cooperative (Peaceful)

The theological reason underlying all of the teaching in this section. Heb. 13:20; Rom. 15:30; 2 Thess. 3:16; do not let disruptive people win out in our service; important role of our ushers to provide order and peace

Conclusion:

Phil Johnson article: The Vineyard Movement – “*Laughing our Brains Out*” ?
www.spurgeon.org – My visit to the Anaheim Vineyard (related to Toronto Blessing)
- dancing girls; “In a moment I will call down the Holy Spirit ... you will see things you have never seen ...no matter what you see happen, don’t be alarmed; don’t try to analyze things; God trying to reach your heart, not your mind; let the Spirit flow through your emotion”; cf. chaotic ministry that followed – shocking and appalling; decidedly anti-intellectual tone; park your doctrine at the door and get into the feeling of this; holiness is a feeling; drunkenness in the Spirit is the opposite of the path to sanctification; how can anyone who loves the Bible think that this pictures true revival or the true work of the Spirit of God

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

TITLE: *THE CORE OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE --
THE HISTORICAL FACT OF THE RESURRECTION ESTABLISHED*

BIG IDEA:

THE FAITHFUL PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL – FOCUSED IN THE DEATH AND ESPECIALLY THE HISTORICALLY ATTESTED RESURRECTION OF THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST – ACCOMPLISHES SALVATION BY THE GRACE OF GOD

MacArthur: Just as the heart pumps life-giving blood to every part of the body, so the truth of the resurrection gives life to every other area of gospel truth. The resurrection is the pivot on which all of Christianity turns and without which none of the other truths would much matter. Without the resurrection, Christianity would be so much wishful thinking, taking its place alongside all other human philosophy and religious speculation.

**I. (:1-2) THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE – THE GOSPEL SAVES ALL WHO PERSEVERE IN FAITH –
WHAT THE GOSPEL DOES**

A. The Faithful Communication of the True Gospel

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you”

Lenski: force = “I remind you of” truths you already know very well

B. The Power of the Gospel to Create and Sustain Spiritual Life and Stability

“in which also you stand”

C. The Need for Perseverance in Believing the Gospel for Genuine, Lasting Salvation

“by which also you are saved”

1. Positive Condition

“if you hold fast the word which I preached to you”

Hodge: not retaining in the memory, but persevering in the faith

2. Negative Possibility

“Unless you believed in vain.”

Empty, worthless faith; without effect; to no purpose (Gal. 3:4; 4:11)

Hodge: Their salvation, however, is conditioned on their perseverance. If they do not persevere, they will not only fail of the consummation of the work of salvation, but it becomes manifest that they never were justified or renewed.

MacArthur: Our Lord repeatedly spoke of sham believers who had useless, non-saving faith. The parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1-23) tells us that some of the seeds of the gospel fall on shallow or weedy soil, and that tares often look like wheat, but are not (13:24-30, 34-43).

Jesus spoke of many kinds of fish being caught in the same net, with the good being kept and the bad being thrown away (13:47-50). He spoke of houses without foundations (7:24-27), virgins without oil for their lamps, and servants who wasted their talents and so were “cast out” (25:1-30). He warned of gates and paths that seem right, but that lead to destruction (7:13-14).

II. (:3-8) THE ESSENTIALS OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE – THE GOSPEL CENTERS ON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST AS PROPHECIED IN THE OT – WHAT THE GOSPEL IS

A. Paul’s Faithful Stewardship of the Gospel Message

1. The Delivery
“For I delivered to you”
2. The Priority
“as of first importance”
3. The Reception
“what I also received”

Paul received this gospel by direct revelation

B. The Death of Jesus Christ

1. The Historical Event
“that Christ died”
2. The Significance
“for our sins”

As a sacrifice or propitiation for our sins

Boyer: these historic facts alone . . . are not in themselves the good news . . . It is the scripturally interpreted significance of those historic events which constitute the good news.

3. The Scriptural Prophecy
“according to the Scriptures”
4. The Undeniable Proof
“and that He was buried”

Stedman: Did you ever realize how hard it was for them to accept the fact that he died? They did not want to believe it when he himself told them that was what he was going to do. They refused; they shut their minds to it. When it actually happened they went away stunned and unbelieving, agonizing and unwilling to believe that all their hopes and dreams, all they had built up in those marvelous years with him, should come crashing down and become nothing but empty hopes, empty dreams, all in ashes at their feet. But somewhere along the line some realist among them faced up to it and said, "We have got to go get his body, and bury him." Joseph of Arimathea came forward and offered a tomb, and with loving hands they took his

body down from the tree. They wrapped it in grave clothes, bound it tightly, took his head and wrapped it with a separate cloth. (By the way, that answers the claims of the so-called "Shroud of Turin" as to whether it was the legitimate garment that was about Jesus. According to the Scriptures, his grave clothes came in two pieces; one was wrapped around the head and the other around the body.) They embalmed him with spices, and then they placed him in a tomb where he lay for three days and three nights. There is no question that the disciples believed that he was dead. In their minds there was no doubt about it. They could never have entertained any idea that he had merely fainted on the cross, or entered into a coma, for they themselves had performed the burial service. That is why Paul adds that here. It marked the acceptance of the disciples that Jesus was truly dead.

Lenski: This addition is necessary; first, because it attests the reality of Christ's death, and secondly, because it shows that his death was like ours, for we, too, are buried after death. The latter is important because, like Christ we who die shall have our bodies raised again. Paul intends to write at length regarding this resurrection of our bodies.

C. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. The Historical Event

"and that He was raised on the third day"

2. The Significance

[will be the subject of much of the remainder of Chapter 15]

3. The Scriptural Prophecy (Ps. 16:10)

"according to the Scriptures"

4. The Undeniable Proof = Numerous Post Resurrection Appearances – 6 Listed Here

a. Peter

"and that He appeared to Cephas"

b. Apostles

"then to the twelve"

c. Multitude of Brethren – more than 500 – most still alive

"After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep"

d. James (half brother of Jesus)

"then He appeared to James,"

e. Apostles Again

"then to all the apostles"

f. Paul Himself

"and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also"

III. (:9-11) THE ENIGMA OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE – THE GOSPEL

**SHOWCASES THE GRACE OF GOD POURED OUT UPON UNDESERVING ENEMIES –
WHAT THE GOSPEL SHOWCASES**

A. (:9) Supreme Example of the Grace of God = Personal Testimony of the Apostle Paul Himself

1. His Undeserving Character
 - a. *“For I am the least of the apostles”*
 - b. *“and not fit to be called an apostle”*
2. His Unrelenting Persecution of the Church
“because I persecuted the church of God”

B. (:10A) Transformed Identity – by the Grace of God
“But by the grace of God I am what I am”

C. (:10B) Supreme Effort Directed Towards Sanctification and Service – Energized by the Grace of God
“And His grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”

(:11) CONCLUSION: THE CORINTHIANS HAVE RESPONDED TO THE FAITHFUL PREACHING BY THE APOSTLES OF THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF GOD’S GRACE IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

“Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed”

Applications:

- The message is more important than the messenger
- Preaching the gospel remains God’s method of saving sinners
- Repentance and Faith are essential for salvation
- God’s Grace Accomplishes it all

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Does our presentation of the gospel to unbelievers faithfully capture the essentials of the message and showcase the grace of God?
- 2) Do we orient our cooperation and partnership in ministry around those groups and spiritual leaders that are faithful to this exclusive gospel message?
- 3) Do we give God all of the glory for the wonderful working of His undeserved grace in our Christian growth and ministry?
- 4) Are we laboring our hardest for the sake of the gospel?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steve Zeisler: It appears that two kinds of evidence are on display here. In a court of law, juries find two things that are persuasive. The first is that the evidence for the case being tried be attested to not just by one, but by several witnesses. Paul demonstrates that not just several but five hundred people, most of whom were still alive when he wrote this letter, and so were available to confirm his words, saw the resurrected Jesus. And they would testify that it was in fact Jesus, not an apparition or a ghost, who appeared to them. In a resurrection body, fit for eternity, the Lord had eaten with them and fellowshiped with them. There was an abundance of evidence testifying to his resurrection.

And then Paul names three people to whom Jesus appeared, Cephas, James, and Paul himself, men for whom the evidence was deep as well as wide. Cephas, otherwise known as Peter, the self-promoter who was given to much talk, the man who had protested that he would never deny his Lord but who would later do so three times when confronted by a teenage girl, had become a changed man. Why? It was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and his appearance to Peter which set the apostle on his feet again. Peter was one who would attest to the fact of the resurrection and also the efficacy of that event.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, is the second eyewitness whom Paul mentions. We remember that at one time in his ministry the family of Jesus thought he was a disturbed man and sought to put him away for his own good. To them, Jesus was eccentric and incomprehensible. Even his own brothers failed to recognize his Messiahship. But to James, the little brother of Jesus who had rejected him during his earthly ministry, the Lord appeared after his resurrection. And this had the effect of making him also stand on his feet, and confirming him, with Peter, as a leader of the church.

Then we have this extraordinary description by the apostle of himself: "...and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am..." The words "untimely born," mean a miscarriage or an abortion. Paul regards himself as an ill-conceived, rejected person. On occasion, a pregnancy will terminate spontaneously because the fetus is diseased or malformed. The apostle is describing himself in these terms. He was a persecutor, an enemy of the church, an outsider who deserved nothing. Yet the Lord appeared to him. He refers humbly to the energy given him which enabled him to serve in the ministry to which he had been called.

Thus we have the testimony of a preponderance of evidence, and the depth of character of the three individuals called, to testify to the change that occurred in them because of the resurrection. The apostle is at pains to point out that these are reliable facts. (We will look at their implications later.) Be assured, however, says Paul, that we know what is true. Our hope for the forgiveness of our sins rests on a reality that cannot be taken away.

Deffinbaugh: Verse 12 discloses the problem which prompts Paul to write this chapter: some of the Corinthian saints are saying there is no "*resurrection of the dead.*" Denying the resurrection of the dead is seen in several different forms in the New Testament. The Greek pagans denied the resurrection of the dead, as we can see from the Book of Acts. In his sermon to those in the market place of Athens, Paul preached these words:

30 *“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this”* (Acts 17:30-32).

The Greeks may have believed in the immortality of men, as spirits, but they did not seem responsive to the teaching that God raises the dead so that they may stand in judgment before God.

The Jewish Sadducees did not embrace the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead either:
6 *But perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!” 7 And as he said this, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9 And there arose a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?”* (Acts 23:6-9)

The Pharisees did believe in the resurrection of the dead, and in spirits and angels, but the Sadducees did not. Basically, the Sadducees were anti-supernaturalists—they did not believe in miracles. It would almost seem the Sadducees were farther from the truth (at least about the resurrection of the dead) than the Gentile pagans.

There were those in the church who professed to believe in the resurrection of the dead but who insisted that this “resurrection” had already taken place:
16 *But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some* (2 Timothy 2:16-18).

This “resurrection” was a present possession rather than a future hope. It must therefore have been some kind of mystical or spiritual “resurrection” rather than a literal, bodily resurrection. In saying that there has already been a spiritual resurrection, these heretics were denying that there was a future bodily resurrection. And for this they receive Paul’s indictment that they have “gone astray from the truth” (2 Timothy 2:18). The error is so serious that it “upsets the faith” (verse 18) of those who embrace this error.

We are not told exactly what form the denial of the resurrection of the dead took at Corinth. I am inclined to think it was the same kind of error Paul exposed in Ephesus (2 Timothy 2:16-18), where Paul told Timothy that such error would “lead to further ungodliness” (verse 16). We can see some forms of ungodliness this doctrinal deviation took in the earlier chapters of 1 Corinthians. While the theological error regarding the resurrection of the dead is not exposed until chapter 15, the fruits of this error are everywhere apparent in chapters 1-14.

In the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul deals with the divisions and factions which had disrupted the unity of the church at Corinth. These divisions were based upon the pride

which some took in certain leaders and their teachings. The Corinthians were puffed up because their leaders “*were the greatest*” and their teachings were so “*wise*.”

Their esteem for these leaders resulted in a corresponding disdain for Paul and the other apostles:

6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. 7 For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. 9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. 11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now (1 Corinthians 4:6-13).

Paul's gospel (which was one and the same with the gospel proclaimed by the other apostles) was disdained because it was too simplistic, too naive, too foolish. The “new gospel,” proclaimed by the Corinthians' new leaders, was much more sophisticated, much more acceptable and appealing to the pagan culture of that day.

Just what was the problem the Corinthians had with Paul, his theology, and his practice? The key is found in the word “*already*” in verse 8. The Corinthians seem to be claiming that they have already arrived, spiritually speaking. Christianity has three dimensions or tenses: past, present, and future. We were chosen in Christ in eternity past, and 2,000 years ago, Christ died, was buried, and was raised from the dead for the forgiveness of our sins and our eternal salvation. We are now being saved; we are currently being sanctified, daily being transformed into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. Our final salvation comes when our Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth, and when we, with glorified and transformed bodies, live eternally in His presence.

Difficulties arise whenever we confuse these three tenses. Some Christians live as though Christ's atoning work at Calvary (in the past) has no great impact on our day-to-day living in the present. Such people live out their lives naturalistically, as though the supernatural power of God has no practical relevance to daily living. They go about their daily living little different from atheists. They employ merely human methods and mechanisms. They raise funds, for example, using the same methods as the Red Cross or the United Fund. They seek to sanctify and utilize secular marketing techniques to evangelize and to produce church growth. They use human management techniques to run the church and Christian organizations.

Other Christians go to the opposite extreme. They confuse the future blessings, which Christ has promised and purchased, with His present blessings. In short, they think the Christian can and should experience heaven on earth. They believe no one needs to be sick (or perhaps even to die), because of the atoning work of Christ at Calvary (see Isaiah 53:5). According to this

version of “spirituality,” we should expect to be happy, healthy, and wealthy now. They claim the future blessings of Revelation 21 and 22 as their present rights, and they tell us that if we do not experience these blessings now it is due to our lack of faith.

This health and wealth doctrine does not find its origin in the Scriptures, but in the wishful thinking of those who do not want to face up to a life of suffering, a life that is lived out in a fallen world. The context of 2 Timothy 2 and 3, the teaching of the Book of Hebrews and 1 Peter, and the example set forth by Paul and the apostles points to a different view of spirituality in the present age (see also Romans 8). The Scriptures speak of our identification with Christ in this age through our participation in His sufferings (see Philippians 1:12-26; 3:10; Colossians 1:24-29; 1 Peter 4:12-19), rather than in our escape from them.

No wonder the “spiritual” Corinthians looked down upon Paul. They had already arrived; Paul had not. They were kings; Paul was homeless. Paul and the apostles were a disgrace, and the proud Corinthians were ashamed of them. The apostles did not look nor act like royalty, but like the “*scum of the world*” (1 Corinthians 4:8-13). To speak of the resurrection of the dead as a future certainty meant they had not already arrived, that the kingdom of God had not yet come. It meant that they must identify with Christ in His earthly humiliation and rejection and not in His triumphant reign. And so they set aside the literal bodily resurrection of the dead, embracing in its place some kind of spiritual resurrection which already brought them into their kingdom, a kingdom of this age and not the next, a kingdom which the apostles and their gospel would not embrace or sanction. . .

Several characteristics of the gospel are emphasized in verses 1-11, which we can summarize.

- (1) *The gospel is not a message devised by the minds of men, but a revelation from God, received by the apostles and delivered to men by them (see 15:1, 3, 11).*
- (2) *The gospel is the only message by which men are saved and by which they stand (15:1-2).*
- (3) *The gospel is “good news” concerning the grace of God, which informs men concerning the only way they, as undeserving sinners, may experience the forgiveness of their sins (15:3, 9-10).*
- (4) *The gospel is the message which is based solely upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, the One who died for our sins on the cross of Calvary, who was buried, and who was literally and bodily raised from the dead on the third day (15:3-4).*
- (5) *The sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ are events which were prophesied in the Old Testament, foretold in the Gospels by our Lord, and then fulfilled by Him as God’s promised Messiah.*
- (6) *The gospel is the message which is of the highest magnitude of importance (15:3).*
- (7) *The gospel saves and keeps only those who receive it and hold fast to it by faith (15:1-2).*
- (8) *The gospel is false and our faith is vain if any element of it is proven to be false (15:2; 12ff.).*
- (9) *The gospel is established on the literal, bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, as witnessed by more than 500 people.*

Boyer: It must be made clear here at the start, because there has been much foolish and unscriptural teaching on this point, that the resurrection is a term which has to do with the *body*. It has nothing to do with the “*immortality of the soul*,” or the persistence of existence beyond the grave. It is the doctrine that a man “stands up” (Greek, *anastasis*) again after he dies, he comes back to life in the body. While the term is used in the Scriptures in a metaphorical sense of a spiritual resurrection, this too is not persistence of the soul. It is coming back to life again (spiritually) in regeneration.

Charles Hodge: In treating this subject the apostle first proves the fact of Christ’s resurrection, vs. 1-11. He thence deduces, first, the possibility, and then the certainty of the resurrection of his people, vs. 12-34. He afterwards teaches the nature of the resurrection, so far as to show that the doctrine is not liable to the objections which had been brought against it, vs. 35-58.

MacArthur: The doctrinal problem on which this chapter focuses was not the Corinthians’ disbelief in Christ’s resurrection but confusion about their own. Paul was not trying to convince them that Christ rose from the dead but that one day they, too, would be raised with Him to eternal life. Nevertheless, to lay the foundation, in the first eleven verses he reviews the evidences for Jesus’ resurrection, a truth he acknowledges they already believed (vv 1, 11). The five evidences, or testimonies, he presents are: the church; the Scriptures; the eyewitnesses; a special witness, the apostle himself; and the common message.

Lenski: [anticipating vs. 12] Now, with their faith in Christ’s resurrection again rising full and strong in their hearts, he flashes on the screen with one vivid sentence the startling, utterly unfounded denials at which this entire introduction has aimed from the very beginning. The effect produced must have been very strong when Paul’s words were first read in Corinth.

Thomas Leake: What is the Correct Christian Gospel (:1-4)

Gal. 1:6-9; Paul here strengthens their understanding of the Resurrection as a prominent part of the genuine gospel (he had already stressed the importance and significance of the cross earlier). Doctrinal issue that had arisen = denial of the resurrection of our human bodies (not a denial of the resurrection of Christ) – v. 12; Why did some not believe? Acts 17:32 – belief that anything physical or material was innately evil; Greek thinking and philosophy; honest confusion; so out of the problems of the Corinthians we get the blessing of this great teaching on the Resurrection

I. (:1-2) Characteristics of the Gospel

“which . . .”

A. Preached

“to evangelize” = preach the good news God has for the world; Aorist = simple past tense; pressure in our culture to quit evangelizing others; we are not called to “share” the gospel as if it is one attractive option among others; this is an authoritative message from God to be proclaimed to the whole world

B. Received

Not just heard; Corinthians were to be praised for having received it in repentance and faith; not designed for entertainment; contains its own persuasive power; cf. the emotional responses elicited by large Crusades – where are the changed lives??

Cf. if there were a pill discovered that would cure cancer; you must take the pill; Gospel gives mankind Hope; John 1:10-12

C. Upholds Every Christian in Every Church

The image of Standing as an image of a transformed life; Opposite = Falling; we gather because of the gospel; Rom. 5:2; 11:20; 14:4; Eph. 6:11

D. Saves

Pres. Tense here; Rom. 10:9; we must respond before it is too late

E. Gospel Must be Held On To for Entire Life

Conditional clause; people can let go of the gospel by turning their back on Christ or changing the gospel; not talking about a one-time only belief; not just praying the sinner's prayer or going forward in altar call; only those who persevere in faith have genuine saving faith; You can't lose your salvation; If you turn your back on Christ you have no one who can save you

F. Cannot be Renounced

Very similar thought; gospel presentation must include the Resurrection; look at preaching in the Book of Acts

II. (:3) Contents of the Gospel – 4 Components

Paul was a faithful delivery boy; carried out his role; Gal. 1:11; did not get the gospel from men

A. Christ Died

1. Normal word for physical death – historical act; past tense
2. Sacrifice for Sins – on behalf of something; paid the penalty for sins
For whose sins?? Specific and particular in His aim; definite atonement;
For the elect; Yes there is a real choice for all to make; but the death of Christ will only benefit the church
3. According to the Scriptures (plural – all of God's Word)

B. Christ Was Buried

Simple, direct; we tend to leave out this important detail but it is stressed in all 4 gospel accounts; confirmed the reality of His death; showed Jesus was fully human; nobody stole the body; grave was secured; gives support to the bodily resurrection

C. Christ Was Raised – Ps. 16:8

Perf tense – present reality due to accomplished fact

Not raised in a different body; He was recognizable; predicted that it would be on the third day; God sovereign over all of the details and events; Jesus = only true Prophet who rose again (not Mohammed)

D. Christ Appeared to His disciples following His resurrection

5 Applications:

- need to receive the gospel; Jesus accomplished all of the work
- need to proclaim the gospel
- need to guard the gospel – Satan is always attacking it
- need to define your arena for acceptable Christian fellowship and joint ministry by the Gospel; Satan likes to lump everyone together and pretend like there is no difference

- need to live the gospel

Thomas Leake: (:5-8) Resurrection Appearances

Introduction: Christianity confirmed by historical fact

I. The Historical Order of the Resurrection Appearances

Luke 24:38-39 shows the nature of these appearances = *“flesh and bones”* = resurrected body; this list of appearances is only representative, not exhaustive

Acts 1:3 – *many convincing proofs* over 40 day period

This list is presented in chronological order: *“then . . . after that . . . last of all”*

A. Cephas – Aramaic name for Peter

Mark 16:7; Luke 24:34

B. The Twelve – but Judas has gone out and died already; also Thomas was not there; so this was a term used to refer to that chosen group; Matt. 19:28; Acts 1 – Judas replaced by Matthias

C. More than 500 Brethren – at one time, somewhere outside; these could not have been hallucinations; Corinthian letter written only 25 years after the resurrection; you could go and check out the story with people who were still alive

D. James – Half brother of Christ – Gal. 1:19; Acts 15:13; an *apostle* in the wider sense; a leader in the church at Jerusalem; wrote the Epistle of James; Jesus was showing some special mercy to His earthly family; he was the eldest of the brothers – none of them believed initially; but by Acts 1:14 they were all on board

E. All the Apostles – maybe included some beyond the 12

Acts 1 – time of the Ascension

F. Paul – *“Last of all”* in chronology; came after the Ascension; 1 Cor. 9; Acts 1 – having seen the resurrected Christ was necessary for an apostle

Damascus Road experience; *untimely born* = a fetus born before full term = incapable of sustaining life on its own apart from supernatural intervention; Paul was the last new person ever to see the Resurrected Christ; 1 Peter 18

There were other appearances not mentioned in this representative list:

- Mary Magdalene – John 20; Mark 16 = one who had been forgiven much and then loved much; very loyal to Christ; honored by seeing Christ first
- Bunch of other women – not impressive – but faithful and loyal; Matt 28:9-10
- Two on the Road to Emmaus – Luke 24; Mark 16
- the Seven by the sea shore – John 21
- Matt. 28:16-20
- Mt of Olives – Christ giving final instructions

II. The Historic Importance of These Resurrection Appearances

A. Confirms that Jesus was Raised from the Dead

- better proof than just leaving us with the mystery of the empty tomb

B. Predicted in detail and then it happened in corresponding detail

C. Showed us what kind of Body we will have

First fruits of those who believed – permanent existence

D. Basis for our Witness

What gives us the right to pass along the gospel message? We can testify that Jesus is alive and has changed our lives; don't let anyone intimidate you or shut you up

Christianity is Unique – the Passion and the Empty Tomb

Thomas Leake: (:9-11) 2 Simple Guides for A Healthy Christian Self Image

Introduction: Self Esteem movement has been accepted by most of the evangelical church; liking self, being happy with self, being infatuated with self; Is it really healthy to have a positive self image? To question that today is almost heresy; people do not want to hear a message that has anything negative; Build us up in our view of ourselves; we don't want to think that there is anything wrong with us;

But how do these sayings of Christ and Paul fit in:

John 12:25; Luke 14:26; 2 Tim. 3:1 "*lovers of self*"; Matt. 7:23 – eternal rejection – that doesn't build up self esteem; How did the Apostle Paul view himself?

The great American Idol isn't someone who sings . . . it is Self Esteem!

The impact of the resurrected Christ in changing his own life; grace should transform our lives; How could He be changing lives if He were dead?

This is how Paul views himself. Phil. 2:3 We must see ourselves the way God sees us.

I. Devalue Self (:9)

A. The Least of the Apostles

Lowers his status as compares to others in his category; doesn't take any time to accentuate the negatives of the other apostles; Don't you remember how . . .

Not even towards the bottom half – but the least; significant since many were speaking out against Paul; forming factions against him; but he had loved them so much; he had started the church; poured out his life for them

B. Not even fit to be called an Apostle

Looking at the office he held with its privileges and status; the most prominent of the gifts; vs. I earned this; I worked for this; I deserve this; I belong here; But he was called an apostle; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; Rom. 11:13

Why did he not deserve it?

C. Reason: He had persecuted the church of God – Acts 8

Persistence and degree of Saul's opposition before his conversion was shocking; what would we think of such a man? Destroying people's lives; Paul knew very well the depth of his depravity and personal transgression; not weighed down with guilt but could not forget that for which he had been forgiven; Do you think highly of yourself? Are you better than the average person? Is. 64:6; Rom. 3:10-12 – You can't become a better You The You is too corrupted; Luke 9:23

Do any of you have a horrific background that you are ashamed of? We are not fit to be a member of the church of God – we don't deserve anything – that is the first step to a healthy self image

II. SuperValue God's Grace (:10-11) – 3 Reasons

Our lives are not worth much, but God's grace is worth much

A. Value Grace because it made a new and better you (:10A)

Whatever is attractive about me, I want to give full and unreserved credit to the grace of God; Undeserved; God is the source of the grace; 2 Cor. 8:9; Heb. 1:3; God is completely unimpressed with our goodness; sinners by nature, by practice, by divine declaration; yet now

we possess untold riches and status

B. Because it is presently working in your life right now (:10B)

You need it to sustain you; the grace did not just come, make a flashy splash and then fizzle out; it is still accomplishing something; Grace is sovereign; it accomplishes what God wants it to; not empty; the same grace that was responsible for his calling was responsible for his faithfulness; so Paul worked hard to the point of exhaustion; Gal. 1:23; Paul is boasting here in the greatness of God's grace – labored more than all of the other apostles; True humility can recognize that you are doing more and doing better than others as long as you give all the credit and glory to God's grace; *“to the praise of the glory of God's grace”* (Eph 1)
Accentuate the undeserved work of God in your life; what would you be like today apart from the grace of God

C. Because it advances the Gospel (:11)

Can you imagine someone boasting about how many souls they have won to Christ, or baptisms they have produced; 1 Cor. 3:3; we have no resources in ourselves to bring to the table – not even to worship

Don't fall victim to a high Self Image – opposite from the message of the world

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

TITLE: IF NO BODILY RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD . . .

BIG IDEA:

6 FUTILE RAMIFICATIONS OF NO BODILY RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

(:12) INTRODUCTION: THE PIVOTAL QUESTION UNDER EXAMINATION

“Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

This is the issue that Paul is addressing in chapter 15. He waits until this point to introduce the pivotal question.

I. (:13) THE FUTILITY OF CHRIST NOT HAVING BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised.”

These two concepts are mutually exclusive; you cannot have it both ways.

PTL: CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD!

II. (:14A) THE FUTILITY OF PREACHING THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

“and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain”

PTL: OUR PREACHING MINISTRY IS NOT IN VAIN!

III. (:14B) THE FUTILITY OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

“your faith also is vain”

PTL: OUR FAITH IS NOT IN VAIN!

IV. (:15-17A) THE FUTILITY OF WASTING YOUR LIFE IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AS PROCLAIMERS OF A FALSE HOPE (BEARING FALSE WITNESS AGAINST GOD)

“Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless”

Grosheide: *False witnesses of God:* people who give their false witness in God's name not only speak an untruth but they hold God in derision by covering their false witness with His name. Thus the apostles would then appear to have presented themselves as witnesses of God, while God actually did not send them. The object of the testimony is the resurrection of Christ. That was the message Paul and his co-laborers brought.

REPETITION: BASED ON THEIR BEING NO RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD:

- I. Futility of Christ not having been raised
- II. Futility of Preaching and Testifying regarding the Gospel
- III. Futility of Faith

PTL: WE ARE NOT FALSE WITNESSES

V. (:17B) THE FUTILITY OF STILL BEING HELD IN BONDAGE TO SIN

“you are still in your sins”

PTL: WE HAVE BEEN DELIVERED FROM OUR SINS

VI. (:18) THE FUTILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN DEAD HAVING PERISHED WITHOUT HOPE

“Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”

PTL: THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN CHRIST HAVE NOT PERISHED!

(:19) THE MISERABLE CONCLUSION

“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”

Hodge: “If all our hopes in Christ are confined to this life . . .”

Morris: If there is no resurrection they are pitifully deluded men. They have set their hopes on a Lord who is to bring them a richer, fuller life, and all that distinguishes them from others is a special form of hardship (cf. 2 Cor. vi. 4ff., xi. 23ff.). While Paul never minimizes the compensations the Christian has in this life in the way of peace within and the like, yet it is only common sense to see that, if this world is all there is, anybody is better off than the Christian.

PTL: BELIEVERS ARE DESTINED FOR GLORY AND REWARD!

(:20) GLANCE FORWARD:

“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How could they both affirm the resurrection of Christ on one hand and deny the bodily resurrection of believers on the other hand?
- 2) What are you expecting your resurrection body to be like?
- 3) How do we know whether or not we are *still in our sins*?
- 4) Does the world pity those who are believers?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Have you ever had the "What if's" about your Christian faith? What do you do when doubt attacks, and you feel that perhaps it is Christianity that is wrong, that maybe this is all a delusion, a psychological trick you have been playing on yourself? What do you do when you feel that the record of Scripture is merely a collection of myths and legends, as we are frequently told, and that there is no life after death, there is no God, no judgment, etc.?

We all feel that way at times because those are attacks upon our faith, and we live in a day when faith is being attacked. I have just returned from Poland, and in that Communist world Christians have to learn to live under the unrelenting pressure of assaults upon their faith. They are constantly asked to believe, to accept, the secular, world view. They are ridiculed when they say they believe in life after death. Karl Marx, of course, is well known for his statement that "religion is the opiate of the masses," that it holds them in a kind of a "pipe dream," removing them from the realities of existence and making them willing to endure great indignities and injustices now, with the transient hope that some day they will find a compensation.

Even here, in the West, this is very common also; we are under attack as well. I am sure there are days when you feel, as I sometimes do, that Christianity might just be a delusion; we feel that we are just kidding ourselves, perhaps, that this Christian faith is nothing but a dream, or at best a kind of unfounded hope based on wishful thinking.

Now, when we feel that way, the temptation is always to think, "Well then, I'd better get what I can now." The fundamental assumption of almost all advertising today is, "You only have one life, so live it now. You are only going to get one opportunity to enjoy yourself, so go to it." Somebody once said in my presence that we are living in a day which is like unto the day of the sinking of the Titanic. Even secular observers can see that we are headed for destruction, but the philosophy seems to be, "Well, if you are

going to be a passenger aboard the Titanic you might as well go first class."

Some of these feelings were widespread in Corinth when the Apostle Paul wrote this letter. The Corinthians were concerned about getting the most out of life now. They were not denying the resurrection of Jesus; there was too much evidence for that. As we saw in our last study, there were over 500 eye witnesses, "most of whom are still alive," as Paul had said, whom they could ask if they wanted evidence about the resurrection. But what they were denying was that that meant that we, the body of Christians, were going to be resurrected too. This represented a surrender to the thinking of the Greek philosophers, who held that the spirit is saved but the body is buried, gone and forgotten. These philosophers taught that the body is essentially evil, that it is a kind of prison we have to live in now, and when the day comes that we can get out of it we will be free; the body will have served its purpose, and that will be the end of it. . .

Let me share with you a quotation from a man who had no faith in the resurrection. His name is **Bertrand Russell**, one of the eloquent spokesmen for unbelief in our day. This is what he says has to be the natural outcome of a life from which faith in the resurrection of Christ is removed. He says:

The life of Man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach and where none can tarry long. One by one, as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent Death.

Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. For Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day.

What pessimism! What despair! What darkness! That is what we have left when the resurrection of Jesus is taken away.

Piper: I see Paul proclaiming the good news that the resurrection of Jesus satisfies six of our deepest needs and longings. But in doing this he is not putting us at the center. He is putting Jesus as the center, and God who raised him from the dead. . .

The greatest news in all the world is that God and his Son are most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in them. And to make that true God raised his Son Jesus from the dead to reign for evermore. In raising him from the dead:

1. (:17) he gave us **forgiveness** and glorified Jesus as the all-sufficient forgiver;
Rom. 4:25
2. (:14) he gave us a **friend** to count on and glorified Jesus as utterly reliable;
[Our faith is not in vain]
3. (:15) he gave us guidance and unchanging **truth** and glorified Jesus as the absolute

foundation for truth and righteousness; (John 14:6) [importance of absolute truth]
4/5. (:19) he gave us a life that is not pitiable but **enviable**, a ministry that is not in vain but **fruitful**, and glorified Jesus as the source and goal of all life and all ministry;
6. (:18) and he gave us everlasting **joy** that will not be ended by death, and glorified Jesus as the author of life, the victor over death and the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Alan Carr: WHAT IF THERE HAD BEEN NO RESURRECTION?

Intro: In the opening verses of this chapter, the Apostle Paul reminds us that the doctrine of Christ's resurrection from the dead is a vital and foundational doctrine. In fact, he tells us that it is an essential component of the Gospel of grace, v. 3-4. With that in mind, he proceeds to offer proof that Jesus did indeed raise from the dead, v. 5-8. Apparently, there were some members of the church in Corinth who doubted the truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead. In this chapter, Paul is writing to remind them that the resurrection is essential to salvation and to any hope of Heaven. In an effort to awaken the Corinthian believers to the importance of the resurrection, he paints a dismal picture of what life would be like if there had been no resurrection. You see, if there had been no resurrection from the dead, then we would be in sad shape this morning! As the Lord leads, let's take the time to consider what would be true if there had been no resurrection.

I. V. 12-19 A BITTER ASSUMPTION

A. V. 12-13 **No Foundation** - Paul reminds us that if there is no resurrection from the dead then Jesus did not rise again, If He is dead, then everything we believe in comes crashing down around us. If there is no resurrection from the dead, then Jesus Himself is no better than the tens of thousands of others who have claimed to be sent from God. If He did not rise, then His death was the unfortunate end to a misspent life and His teachings are nothing more than the raving of some maniacal madman! If it is true, and there is no resurrection from the dead, then the very system of belief that we cherish so deeply is nothing more than just another religion that offers life and hope to no one. If Jesus is still in that tomb today, then our way of life is a farce and we are among the greatest of fools to have ever walked upon this planet. For, if Jesus is dead, then our system of belief is dead, our foundations have crumbled beneath us and we might as well go home right now!

B. V. 14-16 **No Faith** - In these three verses, the great Apostle moves to paint an even more sobering portrait of how things would be if Jesus were indeed dead today. He tells us three areas that are truly of base if Jesus is dead.

1. V. 14 **Our Preaching Is Vain** - Paul tells us that if Jesus is dead, then all the preachers have wasted their words and time proclaiming the message of the resurrection. From the first witness, Mary Magdalene - John 20:2, to the several hundred mentioned in verses 5-8 of our text, to great men like Spurgeon, Wesley, Sunday, Jones, Graham, Edwards, Talmadge, Moody, Truit, Criswell, Evans, Carroll, and millions of others have been fools, if Jesus did not raise from the dead!

2. V. 14 **Our Faith Is Vain** - Paul tells us that if Jesus is still dead, then we are wasting our time serving Him and worshiping Him. If Jesus is really still dead, then you would be just as well off worshiping a rock, a tree or an image of some type. If Jesus is still in the grave, then everything we do is false, phony and foolish! If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then all the preaching you have listened to over the years is a lie, all your praying, serving, witnessing, and church attendance have all been a waste of your time. If Jesus did not rise from the dead then you are the victim of the most cruel hoax ever played on humanity and the Christian faith is the greatest joke of all time.

3. V. 15 **We Are False Witnesses** - Paul tells us that all those who spread the Christian message of salvation through the crucified and resurrected Jesus are liars if Jesus did not in fact rise from the dead. Every time we open our mouths to sing, to witness, to testify, to preach, or whatever we do in His name, then we are liars if He did not rise from the dead.

C. V. 17 **No Forgiveness** - As if things couldn't get any worse, Paul now tells us that if Jesus isn't alive, then we are still lost, hell bound and still in our sins this morning. The heart of the Gospel message is the great truth that Jesus Christ left Heaven above, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life and died on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. It doesn't stop there! The Bible goes on to say that He rose again the third day for our justification, Rom. 4:25. If Jesus is still dead, then we cannot be justified and we are still lost in sin this morning! If He is dead today, then we are still looking for a redeemer and we are all headed to Hell!

D. V. 18-19 **No Future** - Paul now moves beyond this life to consider things of an eternal nature. He tells us that if Jesus is still dead, then we have no hope for the future at all. Notice 2 terrible things that are true if Jesus did not rise from the dead.

1. V. 18 **Our Loved Ones Who Have Gone Before Are Gone Forever** - One of the blessings of the Christian life is the knowledge that one day, we will participate in a reunion in Heaven which will include all those we have known and loved who knew the Lord Jesus Christ. However, Paul tells us that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then every one who dies is forever lost. Either we are like a dog and go to the grave, or we go to Hell to be forever separated from the Lord. If this is true, then there will be no Heaven, there will be no gatherings on the other side. There will be no hope and there is no future to anticipate. If Jesus is still dead, then we might as well live it up down here and enjoy the time we have left. If Jesus is dead, then we are all but dust and when we die, we are gone forever!

Heaven is a cruel joke, mom and dad are gone forever, sons and daughters are gone, brothers and sisters are gone, grandparents are gone, if there is no resurrection from the dead.

2. V. 19 **We Have Lived Our Lives In Vain** - Paul is saying that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then every child of God has wasted his/her life in living for Jesus. We have believed a lie and are headed to Hell! If the Bible lied about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, then you and I can believe nothing this Book

tells us! (Ill. Matt. 11:28; John 6:37; John 3:16; Heb. 13:5; Psa. 103:12; 1 John 1:9 - All bitter, cruel lies if Jesus did not rise from the dead!)

(Ill. All of this paints a pretty bleak picture for us. If there is no resurrection from the dead, then we are all in real trouble and need to seek psychiatric help to be delivered from the delusions that have gripped and enslaved our minds. But, thank God, aren't you glad that Paul did not stop writing with verse 19? Verse 20 stands like a majestic lighthouse pointing the way to hope, safety and salvation.)

II. V. 20 A BLESSED ASSURANCE

A. Our Foundation Is Firm - The bedrock doctrine of our faith is true. Jesus lives and Christianity stands as the only valid means whereby a lost sinner can reach the God of Heaven.

B. Our Faith Is Genuine - Our preaching has power, our faith is real and our witness is true! Jesus lives and we stand vindicated in our faith and in our claims concerning Him. It is not a waste of time to trust Jesus. It is not an exercise in vanity to believe in the One called Jesus. He lives and because He lives our faith lives also!

C. Our Forgiveness Is Accomplished - Because He lives, we are no longer lost in sin, but we have been delivered by His blood and have been justified by His life. Now, all our sins have been washed away as far as the east is from the west. We have been forgiven and we have been redeemed!

D. Our Future Is Secure - Our loved one, who died in faith, live on and await our arrival in glory. There is a heavenly home waiting all of God's children on the other side. In this life, we can enjoy the victory, but in the life to come we can enjoy the presence of the One who died in our place on the cross. Yes, negatives have become positives, but despair has also been changed into hope for all men who receive Jesus and trust Him by faith.

Spurgeon: When you know what rests on the resurrection, you know why if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

- i. The divinity of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus (Romans 1:4).
- ii. The sovereignty of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus (Romans 14:9).
- iii. Our justification rests on the resurrection of Jesus (Romans 4:25).
- iv. Our regeneration rests on the resurrection of Jesus (1 Peter 1:3).
- v. Our ultimate resurrection rests on the resurrection of Jesus (Romans 8:11).
- vi. "The fact is, that the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the blessings, from regeneration onward to our eternal glory, and binds them together."

MacArthur: But in spite of the clear word of the Old Testament and in spite of the clear word of Jesus, in spite of the clear of apostolic preaching, in spite of the clear word of the apostle Paul, the Corinthians had come to the place where they were denying bodily resurrection. They had bought the bag of Greek philosophers and you remember the

Greek philosophers taught that the soul was immortal, but the body was not.

That the soul would go on forever, but the body rotted in the grave and it was good-bye forever. So that immortality had only to bear on the spiritual. We would live spiritually forever not in any kind of corporeal sense. In fact, verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 15 has basically the statement these critics were making. "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

Lowery: (:15-19) If there were no Resurrection, the pagans would be right. The "*foolishness of the Cross*" (1:18) would be just that, and men such as Paul and the apostles who had suffered for the gospel (4:9-13) could only be **pitied**. Those who lived for the pleasure of the moment would be right and the sacrifices of Christians would only be cruel, self-inflicted jokes (cf. 15:32).

Grosheide: We notice that Paul in his entire argument assumes that the main points of the Christian doctrine were accepted at Corinth; the error had not assumed serious proportions. Not only had the consequences not yet been drawn, but those consequences had been realized so little that Paul, by pointing them out, is able to combat the error itself.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

TITLE: VICTORY IN JESUS

BIG IDEA:

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST GUARANTEES ULTIMATE TRIUMPH

INTRODUCTION:

It is always satisfying to be on the winning team. But life is much more than a game. Our eternal destiny hinges on the validity of the resurrection of Christ. And more than that, the ultimate triumph of God's entire kingdom program derives from the reality of the resurrection of the God-Man.

In contrast to the hypothetical dreaded consequences of no resurrection of Christ as contemplated in the previous paragraph (v.12-19), Paul now moves forward with decisive certainty and assurance to the blessed consequences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Review: Since Christ has been raised from the dead:

- OUR PREACHING MINISTRY IS NOT IN VAIN!
- OUR FAITH IS NOT IN VAIN!
- WE ARE NOT FALSE WITNESSES
- WE HAVE BEEN DELIVERED FROM OUR SINS
- THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN CHRIST HAVE NOT PERISHED!
- BELIEVERS ARE DESTINED FOR GLORY AND REWARD!

I. (:20-23) VICTORY FOR BELIEVERS -- THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST GUARANTEES THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS OVER SIN AND DEATH AS THEY FOLLOW CHRIST IN RESURRECTION

A. (:20A) The Resurrection of Christ is a Certain Historical Reality

"But now Christ has been raised from the dead,"

1. Strong Contrast –
2. Providential timing – in the fullness of time –
3. Bodily Resurrection – Perf. Tense -- past action with abiding results
4. Separation from one state to another that is completely different

B. (:20B) The Resurrection of Christ is the Pledged Pattern for all Believers who have Died

"the first fruits of those who are asleep."

1. OT background of feast of first fruits

Stedman: Paul is referring here to the ritual that was given to Israel in the 23rd chapter of the book of Leviticus, where on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which followed the Passover, on the morrow after the Sabbath, there would be the offering of the first fruits of the barley harvest. The Jews were commanded to bring a sheaf of grain, the first of the harvest, to the priest, who would wave it before the Lord.

Now if you have been carefully following the chronology of Scripture, you know that was the

exact morning of our Lord's resurrection. There, in the feasts of Israel, you have a prediction that the resurrection of Jesus would be the first fruits of the harvest. Paul's argument is that not only did Jesus rise from the dead on the exact day predicted by the ritual, but, furthermore, his resurrection is a sample and a guarantee of the entire "harvest" of resurrection, which would include ours as well.

Guzik: The offering at the Feast of First fruits was a bloodless grain offering (Leviticus 2). No atoning sacrifice was necessary, because the Passover lamb had just been sacrificed. This corresponds perfectly with the resurrection of Jesus, because His death ended the need for sacrifice, having provided a perfect and complete atonement.

2. Significance of first fruits
3. Concern of believers regarding their fellow Christians who have fallen asleep
Only believers are in view in this context; not speaking of the resurrection of all men to judgment

C. (:21-22) The Resurrection of Christ Mirrors the Causal Relationship Established Back at the Fall of Man

Principle: The Action of One Man Determines the Fate of All Men He Represents

1. Remember the Effects of Our Union with the First Adam in Universal Sin and Death
"For since by a man came death"
"For as in Adam all die"
2. Rejoice in Our Union with the Second Adam in Certain Resurrection to Eternal Life
"by a man also came the resurrection of the dead"
"so also in Christ all will be made alive"

MacArthur: Now watch, it depends upon the link with the man. That's the point. Who died? All who are in Adam. Who live? All who are in Christ. You see the all has to be connected to the individual and his work. Listen by natural descent from Adam, we all die and all who are naturally descendent from Adam will die. And all who are supernaturally descendent from Christ will live. That's the point. It is the all of who...who you're in. All in Adam die. All in Christ live. If you're not in Christ, you're still in Adam, you die. You see?

The first all includes all who are in Adam by the common factor of sin. The second all includes all who are in Christ by the common factor of faith. All who are in Adam die. All who are in Christ live. So Paul's first point is the impact of the resurrection. It deals with the resurrection of the redeemer and it is the first fruits, the guaranty, the source, as Adam was the first fruits and source of death, so Christ is the source of life.

D. (:23) The Resurrection of Christ Provides Confident Anticipation of the Future Resurrection of Believers – there is a prescribed order of future events

"But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming"

1. The Order of Future Events – not exhaustive; many gaps
2. Reference is to the destiny of believers, not unbelievers

3. Anticipation of the Return of Christ

II. (:24-28) VICTORY FOR THE TRIUNE GOD -- THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST GUARANTEES THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF GOD'S KINGDOM PROGRAM AS THE MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM PUTS DOWN ALL ENEMIES AND PASSES RULERSHIP BACK TO GOD THE FATHER

A. (:24) The Resurrection of Christ Sets the Stage for the End Game of Kingdom Transfer

1. What is this "end" that is in view?

"then comes the end,"

2. What is the Difference between the Mediatorial Kingdom and the Eternal Kingdom?

"when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father,"

3. What is involved in this ultimate triumph?

"when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power"

B. (:25-27) The Resurrection of Christ Sets the Stage for His Subjection Over All

1. (:25) Victory Over All Enemies --

The Necessity, Duration and Objective of the Mediatorial Reign of Christ

"For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."

Piper: First, it means that Christ is reigning NOW! He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1). His kingdom does not begin at the second coming. When Christ comes again there will be a thunder clap of great victory in his reign over evil. You can see it in verse 23 -- at his coming those who belong to Christ will be raised from the dead. But that thunder clap of victory will not be the beginning of his reign. His reign is underway now.

The other thing that the word "until" means is that Christ's kingly warfare against his enemies is going on right now. In other words his reign is not passive. If a football player gets injured and the coach wants to take him out of the game, but he says, "No, I am playing until we win," you know two things: you know that he is playing now and that he is playing to win.

So when Paul says Jesus must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, you know two things: he is reigning now and he is reigning to win. . .

There is no disease, no addiction, no demon, no bad habit, no fault, no vice, no weakness, no temper, no moodiness, no pride, no self-pity, no strife, no jealousy, no perversion, no greed, no laziness that Christ does not aim to overcome as the enemy of his honor. And the encouragement in that is that when you set yourself to do battle with the enemies of your faith and your holiness, you will not fight alone.

2. (:26) Victory Over the Last Enemy = Death

"The last enemy that will be abolished is death."

Guzik: Death will be present during the millennial reign of Jesus (Revelation 20:9; Isaiah 65:20). But afterward, death will be abolished. It is truly the last enemy that will be destroyed.

3. (:27) Total Subjection to Christ – With One Exception

a. Total Subjection to Christ

“For He has put all things in subjection under His feet.”

b. One Exception

“But when He says, ‘All things are put in subjection,’ it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.”

C. (:28) The Resurrection of Christ Sets the Stage for the Ultimate Glorification of God the Father

“When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.”

Stedman: But there is coming a day when we will thoroughly understand, emotionally, the makeup of God, and we will understand the great truth God has been seeking to teach us all through this earthly experience that he is all we need, that God is everything to every one.

Guzik: In Ephesians 1:10, Paul reveals God's eternal purpose in history: *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him.* Paul wrote of the "gathering together" of all things in Jesus, or of the "summing up" of all things in Him. Here, in 1 Corinthians, he looks forward to the time when all things are resolved in Jesus Christ and He presents it all to God the Father, giving glory to the God who authored this eternal plan of the ages.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How should our lives be impacted in the present by the assurance of our future resurrection?
- 2) Why are we born with a sin nature?
- 3) Why doesn't this text reference the victory of Christ over Satan?
- 4) How does the subjection of the Son to the Father mesh with the doctrine of the deity and divinity of Jesus Christ?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: Now it makes no sense to say that a person created the universe and upholds it by the word of his power, but that this person has no kingly right or might over it. And so we must say that Christ has always reigned over the world in one sense. So was the opening of his reign at the beginning of creation or at his resurrection from the dead?

There are at least three things new about the reign of Christ since the resurrection and exaltation of Christ:

1) Since the resurrection Christ is now the God-man. He has taken humanity onto himself which he never had before, and now he rules not merely as Son of God, but also Son of Man.

2) As the God-man he has now been openly declared to be the Messiah, the Christ, who will fulfill all the promises of God and will sit on the throne of his father David as a legal heir. Before the incarnation Christ was King over the world incognito as it were. And during his 33 earthly years he was still incognito, except for a few who had eyes to see. But now he is openly declared to all the world as Christ and Lord, which means Messiah and King. It is no secret now. Jesus is Lord!

3) And the third thing that is different about his reign now is that it is based on his finished work of redemption for the forgiveness of sins on the cross. Which means that in this age the word of the King is the word of the cross. His reign is primarily a saving reign. Judgment is delayed. The King reigns in a day of grace.

Deffinbaugh: The argument Paul plays out in verses 12-19 is a purely theoretical one. His “If ... then ...” argument was simply to show the folly of rejecting the resurrection of the dead, a claim which directly contradicts the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Now in verses 20-28, Paul takes up the truth of Christ’s resurrection, a truth he has already set down in verses 1-11. Verses 1-11 point out the historical authentication of the resurrection of Christ. Now, Paul sets down the logical implications of His resurrection. The resurrection of the dead is not only consistent with Christ’s resurrection, it is a certainty which flows out of His resurrection. There are no “ifs” here, but only the much stronger term “since” (verse 21). . .

Paul speaks here of two “reigns”, **the “reign” of Christ**, during which time all of His enemies are defeated, and **the “reign of the Father;”** when Christ hands the kingdom over to the Father, in submission to Him. The reign of Christ is, I believe, the millennium, described in Revelation 20. The reign of the Father is the eternal kingdom of God, forever and ever, described in Revelation 21 and 22.

Are there those who deny the resurrection of the dead and thus also (by implication) the resurrection of our Lord? They cannot be those who look for the coming kingdom of God, for the last and final victory of Christ is His victory over death, a victory achieved by the resurrection of the unbelieving dead and the banishing of death to the lake of fire. The kingdom cannot come until all of our Lord’s enemies are defeated, and His last and final enemy is death itself. The final stage of resurrection, the last fruit of our Lord’s resurrection, is the resurrection of the unbelieving dead. When this final enemy is defeated, the kingdom of our Lord is secured, and it is at this time that our Lord subjects the final “thing” to God—Himself—by handing the kingdom over to the Father. The resurrection of the dead is not only a vital part of the gospel, it plays a crucial role in the establishment of the kingdom of God. Who would dare to deny it?

Lowery: (Re vv. 27-28) The reprise of these verses is found in verse 57. It is by the power of God that the incarnate Christ victoriously mediates His authority (cf. Phil. 3:21). This work of the Son will find ultimate completion in the glory of the Father (cf. John 17:4-5). That too is the ultimate goal of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). When God is all in all (cf. Rom. 11:36), the new creation will be consummated and the resurrected Christ and His church will share in that experience (cf. Rev. 22:1).

Mare: The future aspect of Christ’s subjection to the Father must rather be viewed in the light of

the administrative process in which the world is brought from its sin and disorder into order by the power of the Son, who died and was raised and who then, in the economy of the Godhead, turns it all over to God the Father, the supreme administrative head. All this is to be done so that God will be recognized by all as sovereign, and he – the triune God – will be supreme (cf. Rev 22:3-5).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:29-34

TITLE: *DOCTRINE MATTERS -- NO RESURRECTION . . . NO CHRISTIAN MOTIVATION*

BIG IDEA:

DENIAL OF THE RESURRECTION WOULD KILL ALL MOTIVATION FOR CHRISTIAN BAPTISM, SPIRITUAL SERVICE AND HOLY LIVING

INTRODUCTION:

MacArthur: Before we look specifically at the text, let me remind you that it is axiomatic...that is, it is a given, it is an obvious truth, that unbelievers and hypocrites do not become martyrs. People do not die for something they hold lightly. They do not die for something about which they have doubt. They do not die for things they do not believe are worthy of life and death. People give their lives only for causes that they are wholeheartedly committed to. And one of those great realities is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who said, "*Because I live, ye, too, shall live also.*" And millions of Christians have given their lives in living and given their lives in dying with the hope of that resurrection truth.

I. (:29) FUTILITY OF SALVATION -- DENIAL OF THE RESURRECTION WOULD KILL ALL MOTIVATION FOR CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Why take the risk of identifying with Jesus Christ in Christian Baptism?

"Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?"

On the surface the language seems to speak of some type of mysterious proxy baptism – perhaps for believers who had died before they had an opportunity to be baptized?? Very difficult to make sense of this verse. MacArthur thinks it means baptized with a view to being reunited with those believers who had already died and gone home to be with the Lord.

MacArthur: A reasonable view seems to be that those who are baptized refers to living believers who give outward testimony to their faith in baptism by water because they were first drawn to Christ by the exemplary lives, faithful influence, and witness of believers who had subsequently died. Paul's point is that if there is no resurrection and no life after death, then why are people coming to Christ to follow the hope of those who have died?

Spurgeon: "For as soon as anyone was baptized, the Romans would be looking after him. To drag him away to death. Thus they were baptized as if they were being washed for their burial & dedicating themselves to the grave"

Grosheide: the apostle could hardly derive an argument for the resurrection of the body

from a practice of which he did not approve. The rendering “for the benefit of the dead” does not appear tenable.

II. (:30-32A) FUTILITY OF SERVICE -- DENIAL OF THE RESURRECTION WOULD KILL ALL MOTIVATION FOR SPIRITUAL SERVICE

Why put yourself in danger by zealously serving Jesus Christ?

A. Serving the Lord Can be Dangerous

“Why are we also in danger every hour?”

B. Serving the Lord Involves Taking Up One’s Cross Daily

“I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.”

C. Serving the Lord Requires Spiritual Motivation

“If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?”

There is no historical record of this – could be some type of actual physical ordeal (maybe being thrown into some type of coliseum contest) or could be speaking of the spiritual forces at work behind the opposition that Paul faced.

MacArthur: I mean if there's no resurrection, why in the world am I doing this? Why am I putting my life on the line? Jeopardy means danger. Why am I living in constant danger? Why am I living on the edge of death all the time? Why am I being beaten with rods? Why am I being beaten with whips? Why am I going through shipwrecks? Why am I being thrown in prison? Why am I being put in stocks? Why am I putting my life on the line, as it were, my neck on the chopping block? Why am I putting my life in jeopardy every hour if this is all there is? If it ends right here? If there's nothing else, what am I serving for? Why am I trying to win you to a king that is dead? Why am I trying to populate a kingdom that doesn't exist? If there's no resurrection. It makes a sham out of all Christian service.

III. (32B-34) FUTILITY OF SANCTIFICATION -- DENIAL OF THE RESURRECTION WOULD KILL ALL MOTIVATION FOR HOLY LIVING

Why forego the pleasures of this world by refraining from worldly lasciviousness?

A. Apart from the Resurrection, Hedonistic World View Makes Sense

“If the dead are not raised, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

Stedman: That was the philosophy of **Epicureanism** in that day, and it is widespread today. "Live it up. Get it all now. Don't bother with giving yourself and wasting your time on doing things for God. Enjoy yourself. Spend all your free time having fun and pleasure."

B. Theology Does Affect Morality

“Do not be deceived: Bad company [or teaching] corrupts good morals.”

MacArthur: Thirdly, sanctification, and this is closely related. Verse 33, "Don't be deceived...he says...don't make a mistake. Don't miss this one. 'Evil'...and the word is homalea, from which we get homiletics, and the word homiletic or homalea basically means association. Homiletics is...is a word used to describe how to teach or preach or to organize something into a meaningful, logical flow. And what he is saying here is, "Evil systems or evil association." I think it could mean company, as it's often translated, talking about people. But I don't think that's the intent here. I think the word that we use to speak of sermons and lessons being homiletic has to do with a body of teaching. And what he's saying here is, "Bad teaching corrupts good morals." And what he means by that is, if you don't have a right theology about the resurrection, it's gonna impact your morality. You understand that? If you don't believe right, you won't behave right. If you have a doctrine or a teaching that denies resurrection, that it's gonna affect your living, because if there's no eternal accountability, you're liable to sink to the lowest level...

C. Sanctification is Worth Pursuing – Purge Out Bad Doctrine

“Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you answer those who claim that water baptism is essential for salvation? How would you counsel those who place too little emphasis on the importance of baptism?
- 2) If we emphasize the teaching of sound doctrine, are we in danger of not being well-balanced in terms of promoting practical Christian living?
- 3) How are churches today being *deceived* about thinking that it is better to tolerate false doctrine in the hopes of promoting Christian love and unity?
- 4) What was Paul pointing out as so “*shameful*” about the church of Corinth here?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: [Note: I came to my outline before reading this commentary note from Dr. MacArthur – that is how expository preaching should work! It should be no surprise that we arrive at the same destination when we are examining the same text!] And because He is risen, we now come to verse 29 to 34, our text. Because He is risen, there is motive for three things. Because He is risen, there is motive for **salvation**.

There is motive for **service**, and there is motive for **sanctification**. And here are the practical implications of the resurrection. They come right down to practical aspects. The motive for salvation, the motive for service, the motive for sanctification in our lives is built on the resurrection.

Ray Stedman: The Mormon church bases a major part of their religious activity on this one verse. Unless you are a "good" Mormon you are not permitted to enter one of their temples. People ask, what goes on in them? Well, one of the things is that they are being baptized on behalf of the dead. The Mormons believe that you can go back through history and be baptized for all your ancestors. That is why they put great reliance upon genealogical tables and spend a lot of time tracing their ancestry, because they believe they can be baptized on their behalf and thus save them. I met a woman once who said that she had saved more people than Jesus Christ because she had been baptized for so many thousands of people! Some Mormons pick out the well-known figures of history and are baptized for Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Napoleon, etc., all based on this one verse; there is no other reference in the Bible to being baptized on behalf of the dead.

Gil Rugh: Doctrinal Error Corrupts Morality

Some confusion in the church at Corinth about the bodily resurrection of believers; some have infiltrated the church and promoting a teaching that there will be no bodily resurrection for the believer. Vv. 20-28 the eschatological plan of God for future events that will culminate in the kingdom to be established on this earth; vv.29ff -- the consequences of denying the resurrection – has dramatic ramifications for the way we live our lives, for our moral conduct; you can't have too much doctrine because it impacts how you live.

Vs. 29 – What it cannot mean (based on comparison to other scriptures)

Not you accomplishing by proxy the salvation of someone who has died
Rom. 4 -- salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone;
You did not have to be circumcised to receive this blessing of righteousness;
There is only one God and one way of salvation

What could it mean – over time, some believers have died and some new believers have come up and been baptized and taken the place of those who have died; if there is no resurrection, what is the point in this process of making new disciples?

vv. 30-32 -- Paul talks about his own personal experience of danger in the ministry – not just every day, but every hour; beaten times without number; paid a great price for his testimony; surrendered his body to tremendous suffering; take up your cross = life of scorn, suffering, rejection; I face the possibility of death every day; open door does not mean no adversaries; 2 Cor. 1:8 – the worse they can do is kill me; hope of the resurrection fortifies him

vv. 33-34 -- the bad company in the church at Corinth = those teaching bad doctrine about the resurrection; the church is in sin because it is not dealing with the false doctrine in their midst; sober up; don't be deceived; don't tolerate bad doctrine; the

church is the pillar and support of the truth; our doctrine shapes our conduct

David Silversides: Doctrine, Hope and Godliness

There is an inevitable connection between right doctrine, Christian hope and the practice of godliness. There can be no godliness if the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of the believers is denied.

3 Aspects:

1) Baptism is not a Blunder because there is a bodily resurrection of the dead (:29)

The practice of vicarious baptism was practiced later on by a minority that followed heretics; no record of it until the second century; probably derived from a misunderstanding of this verse; Unlikely that the apostle would refer to such a practice and not condemn it in this letter.

Correct view: those who are baptized take the place on earth of those who have left the earth and passed on into glory; cycle of replacement over time; stock of church members constantly being replenished on earth; Ps. 110:3 – out of the womb of every morning there is the birth of new recruits; Ps. 44:22 – suffering for the sake of truth – “*we are killed all the day long*” – speaking of church as one body; martyr application; Why join the ranks of those who have identified with Christ and gone on to death (some as martyrs) if there is nothing beyond the grave? Resurrection of soul only is not an option for the Apostle Paul.

2) Suffering as a Christian is not Futile (:30-32)

Why jeopardize his body in the pursuit of serving Christ if there is no glorious future for the people of God? I would be wasting my time. All their joy is misplaced if no resurrection. Your joy and my joy would be nonsense. I suffer the danger of death daily. He prepared for death daily. The hostility was so great – “fought with wild beasts” = probably a figurative expression for these hostile forces. 2 Cor 1: 8; Why bear the reproach of Christian baptism and the sufferings of serving Christ; Is. 22:13;

3) Practical Godliness is not Irrelevant (:33-34)

Quotation from Greek poet; applied to the people of God; bad company corrupts good habits; 2 Tim. 2:17 – listening too much to heathen philosophers; body is not just a prison for the soul; Wake up out of a drunken stupor of doctrinal indifference; Have you not caught on? See where this false doctrine leads = to despair and ungodliness; Some people in the church have no knowledge of God; Doctrine matters; truth rightly used will do us good; this is an anti-doctrinal age; Sanctify them in Thy truth – John 17

Thomas Leake: How Our Future Resurrection Motivates Believers Now

Introduction: What motivates you in your Christian life?

You must look to something that is permanent and off in the future; we have precious and magnificent promises that should motivate us;

Today look at the promise: “*though you will die, yet you will live*”

This future resurrection body will never fail you or disappoint you; not a flashy kind of motivation; but a more compelling kind of motivation than the world pursues; 1 John 2:15-17 – the world is passing away

3 Motivations that the Resurrection of the Body Provides:

I. Motivation to Christian Baptism

(:29) difficult verse; over 30 different interpretations with multiple variations; most of the Bible is easy to understand;

Sample of some views :

- 1) most common interpretation: some type of vicarious water baptism to try to bring some blessing or benefit to those who have already died; unlikely because it goes against Paul's theology; unlikely he would suggest this without condemning this wrong view
- 2) young converts filling in the church as the old ones died and passed along; strange idea
- 3) baptized in the name of a deceased saint – that came along later in church history
- 4) immersed in such severe persecution in a non-water sense with reference to the dead
- 5) metaphorical – means the resurrection??
- 6) people are saved and baptized because of those who have gone ahead and preached and evangelized them – Dr. MacArthur's view
- 7) the dead refers only to the bodies of those who have been baptized – they come up out of the water to symbolize the new resurrection life they possess; they symbol of baptism reenacts what has happened spiritually – Leake prefers this view; commonly held in early church; Rom. 6:3-7; 8:10

Point: Practice of baptism indicates belief in bodily resurrection; the water itself does nothing; just a symbol

Baptism is commanded by Christ; be motivated to Christian baptism

II. Motivation to Facing Danger

Why suffer if there is no reward; you have to believe in the reward in order to suffer
Heb. 12:1-3 Christ endured dying; you have to look through this life unto the next life in order to live this Christian life; look through the pain to the glory;

"I die daily" – I put my life on the line constantly; today could be the very last day I have in the world and that is OK; the sacrifices are worth it for Paul; my life cannot be precious to me; 2 Cor. 4:7

"Paul fought with wild beasts" – literal or figurative?? *"many adversaries"* – Acts 19:23ff; we have been called to greater and greater sacrifice as we get older in Christ; not talking about convenient service that fits our schedule

III. Motivation to Living Holy

If it all ends tomorrow, then life is just a party to be enjoyed now; that type of thinking is utter foolishness because there is going to be a resurrection; God gave you your life as a stewardship; don't waste your life

1 Cor. 10:31 = a better philosophy of life

Avoid those who deny the bodily resurrection – wrong thinking will lead to immorality

Need to be a companion of all those who fear the Lord

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

TITLE: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

BIG IDEA:

**UNDERSTANDING OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION BODY --
TWO AREAS OF ANALOGY AND TWO AREAS OF CONTRAST**

(:35-36A) INTRODUCTION: TWO MOCKING QUESTIONS REGARDING THE RESURRECTION BODY

A. #1 – How is the Resurrection of the Body Even Possible?

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised?’”

B. #2 – What will the Resurrection Body Look Like?

“And with what kind of body do they come?”

C. Mockers Labeled as Fools

“You fools!”

Stedman: For twenty centuries now the skeptics of all ages have asked these same questions. Of course, they amplify them by imposing various obstacles they see. They say, for instance, "We can understand, perhaps, that a body that has been carefully embalmed and placed in a grave might possibly be brought back to life, but what about those that have been destroyed? What about all the people that have been cremated?" . . .

These questions always arise when unbelief faces this question of the resurrection of the dead. "How can it be?" That is what some of these Corinthians were asking. The clear implication was, "It cannot be; it is impossible." The Greeks, of course, were teaching that it was a good thing, an advantage, to lose the body. The body was a prison-house, they taught, where we are limited and restricted. The Oriental religions, on the other hand, were teaching that many bodies were needed in a process of salvation, that you return to earth many times. Their question would be, "Which body is raised from the dead? Is it the 'cow' body you once had, or the 'gorilla' body you may have had, or the one you are walking around in now?" Reincarnation would, for them, pose an entirely different question concerning the resurrection of the body.

**UNDERSTANDING OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION BODY --
TWO AREAS OF ANALOGY AND TWO AREAS OF CONTRAST**

**I. (:36B-37) ANALOGY OF PLANTING –
TWO MAJOR CORRECTIONS REGARDING THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE
PRESENT BODY AND THE FUTURE RESURRECTION BODY BASED ON THE
ANALOGY OF SOWING**

A. The Seed Planted Must First Die

“That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies”

B. The Seed Planted is Only a Microcosm of the Different Product that will Result

“and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.”

Ray Pritchard: Paul uses the analogy of the seed to correct two common errors:

- 1) That the resurrection body will be identical to the one that was buried.
- 2) That the resurrection body will be completely unrelated to the original.

Stedman: Nature teaches us two obvious lessons.

First: Death is a necessary part of the process. Far from being an obstacle to resurrection, death is essential to it. You can put that in the form of an axiom: Nothing that has never died shall ever be raised from the dead. Obviously if it is going to be raised from the dead it has to die. Therefore, death is not an obstacle to resurrection. It is an ingredient of it and necessary to it. To balk at the fact that people die and the body loses its ability to function and its form and consistency as a body, ought never to be any hindrance to believing that life will emerge from it. The body must die just as the seed must die.

The second lesson that nature teaches us is this: The body that emerges from the seed that dies is different from the one that was planted. Put a grain of wheat or a kernel of corn into the ground and what comes up? Another grain of wheat or another kernel? No! What comes up is a green stem which does not look at all like what you put into the ground. Nevertheless it is tied to it; it is continuous from it; it has an identity with it. There is an undeniable tie with that which you put into the ground, and yet it is not the same; it is the "same" without being similar. Now, if you had never seen that process before, would you have believed it if somebody had said that that is what would happen? You would have looked at him as though he were mad and said, "How can that be?" because you can put almost anything else into the ground and that will not happen. It is one of those miracles that is so familiar to us that we miss the miraculous part of it. But Paul says it happens so frequently there should therefore be no struggle with believing in the resurrection of the dead.

Zeisler: Here Paul is testifying to the fact that although humans are planted in the ground when they die, they will be raised very different beings indeed. Bodies may be burned or suffer decay, but what was planted will not be the same as what will be raised. Yet there is continuity, however. The one who was buried will be the one who will be raised. Wheat seed will produce wheat. What you are right now, everything you are becoming inside, all of the changes which God is making in your character, will be there upon your resurrection. You will be raised, but not with the same body. In the resurrection, you will be gloriously different.

Goins: But there is a continuity, and that's the point of verse 38: "...To each of the seeds a body of its own." The seed changes radically, but it does continue the same life form. A wheat seed doesn't turn into a barley plant, and a kernel of corn doesn't turn into flax. The identity of the seed continues into the full-grown plant. In Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in his resurrection body, none of his disciples and followers recognized him until he chose to reveal himself to them. But once he told them who he was, they did recognize him. They saw the wound in his side and the nail prints in his hands. They knew his face. The promise for us is that we will have some kind of continuity of our personhood, our personality, our unique individuality, after death.

II. (:38-41) ANALOGY OF CREATION – GOD GRANTS EACH TYPE OF CREATION ITS OWN DISTINCTIVE QUALITY AND ITS OWN UNIQUE GLORY

A. (:38-39) God Grants Each Type of Flesh its Own Distinctive Quality

1. The Creator Makes Everything Unique
 - a. Nature of each body determined by God – a Sovereign Gift
“But God gives it a body just as He wished”
 - b. Independence of each individual body
“and to each of the seeds a body of its own”
 - c. Uniqueness of each type of flesh
“All flesh is not the same flesh”

Look at the implications for the erroneous theory of evolution

2. Four Examples of Different Types of Flesh
 - a. Men – *“but there is one flesh of men”*
 - b. Animals – *“and another flesh of beasts”*
 - c. Birds – *“and another flesh of birds”*
 - d. Fish – *“and another of fish”*

Zeisler: Think for a moment about the animal world, says Paul. Take earthworms, for instance. They are uniquely adapted to their environment. Humans could not survive in the same circumstances. We cannot ingest what worms eat; such a diet would not be suitable for us. In the same way, polar bears are uniquely adapted to their environment. They can swim and hunt in the frigid waters of the Antarctic. Humans, of course, would die if they tried that. Fish also are uniquely adapted to the water. They have gills, not lungs like humans have. From this, Paul concludes that when we are raised, we are going to be given bodies quite unlike the bodies which we now have which enable us to survive on earth, but rather we will have bodies uniquely fitted for heaven very different environment. Christians should expect this. God creates bodies to fit their environment.

Stedman: . . . this difference is a result of the inner difference of nature, or personality, that these beings have. It says, "to each kind of seed its own body." In other words there is a correspondence between what the body looks like and what the being inside is like. That is why animals have various natures. For this reason, animals are used in Scripture as symbols of corresponding qualities about human beings -- wolves are always ferocious and dangerous, sheep are always helpless and needing protection, and pigs are always dirty. All these qualities are there because God wants to demonstrate to us truth about ourselves that we see reflected in the natural world.

Goins: I remember a Broadway musical in which there is a love song. The lady sings, "Fish gotta swim, and birds gotta fly, and I gotta love one man till I die." Each one uniquely fulfills the purpose for which it was created. Fish are created to swim in the seas, birds to fly, and human beings to know love relationships with other human beings. Fish don't fall in love. Fish swim in the ocean. And we are created to love another human being, but we are not created to flap our arms and fly around like an bird. The sun generates tremendous light and energy in our solar system. The moon is just a rock that reflects the light of the sun toward the earth. And all this variety and diversity in the worlds of biology and astronomy is a marvelous hint of the same

diversity of resurrection glory in our heavenly bodies.

B. (:40-41) God Grants Each Type of Creation its Own Unique Glory

1. Distinction in Type and Glory Between Heavenly and Earthly Bodies = Two Major Divisions

“There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.”

2. Distinction in Glory Among the Unique Heavenly Bodies

a. Sun – *“There is one glory of the sun”*

b. Moon – *“and another glory of the moon”*

c. Unique Stars –

“and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.”

Grosheide: Among the celestial bodies themselves also there is a difference of glory. Not only between the sun, the moon and the stars, but also between the various stars. This goes to prove that though there may be equality between the one body and the other, yet there is a great variety because of a difference in quality and in glory.

Summary and Transition: Resurrection Body is Unique in Type and Glory

“So also is the resurrection of the dead.”

**III. (:42-44A) CONTRAST OF INNATE QUALITIES –
FOUR DISTINCTIONS HIGHLIGHTING THE SUPERIORITY OF THE
RESURRECTION BODY**

A. #1 **Indestructible** -- Perishable vs Imperishable – Permanent, **not Transitory**

“It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body.”

B. #2 **Triumphant** -- Dishonor vs Glory

“it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory”

Goins: This contrast addresses value or potential. We know that as sinful men and women we are dishonorable. At the fall our potential for pleasing, serving, and glorifying God was drastically reduced. Genesis tells us we were created in the image of God, designed to reflect his glory and perfection, created to honor him. But we know that sin is at work in us now. Even though we've been redeemed from the penalty of sin by Jesus Christ, we still struggle with fleshly patterns of sinful rebellion. Even the most faithful follower of Jesus Christ knows that his body, his intellect, his emotions, and his will are in a sense dishonorable or imperfect or incomplete. We live in a fallen, flawed world, and we reflect that fallenness. But we will one day be raised in glory, to use Paul's phrase. When we get to heaven we won't be sinful anymore.

C. #3 **Transformed** -- Weakness vs Power

“it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power”

D. #4 **Transcendent** -- Natural vs Spiritual (transcending material existence)

“it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body”

MacArthur: Focusing directly on the resurrection body, Paul gives 4 sets of contrasts to show how the new body will differ from the present ones (cf. v. 54; Php 3:20,21):

- 1) no more sickness and death (“*perishable*”)
- 2) no more shame because of sin (“*dishonor*”)
- 3) no more frailty in temptation (“*weakness*”)
- 4) no more limits to the time/space sphere (“*natural*”)

Goins:

- 1) Durability
- 2) Value or Potential
- 3) Abilities
- 4) Sphere of existence

Bruce Goettsche:

Paul tells us about some of the differences between the physical and spiritual bodies.

- the earthly body wears out (decay, corruption, ruin). . . the heavenly body will not
- the earthly body knows embarrassment and all kinds of sinful desires . . .the heavenly body will know glory
- the earthly body is limited and weak held captive by the forces of the world such as disease and aging . . . the heavenly power will know power and strength.
- the earthly body is natural (or anchored to nature)...the heavenly body is spiritual

IV. (:44B-49) CONTRAST OF PROTOTYPES – JUST AS OUR PHYSICAL BODY IS PATTERNED AFTER ADAM SO OUR RESURRECTION BODY WILL BE PATTERNED AFTER CHRIST

A. (:44B) Certainty of the Resurrection Body –

Reality of the Existence of both the Natural and Spiritual Body

“If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”

B. (:45-47) Case for the Superiority of Christ as the Prototype of the Resurrection Body --

Three Distinctions Between Adam and Christ

1. Supreme Distinction – Self Sufficient, Self Existent Life-Giving Spirit

“So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”

Psalm 36:9 *“For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.”*

2. Sequence -- Order of Appearance on Earth

“However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.”

Deffinbaugh: True spirituality in the present is our identification with our Lord’s earthly body. We must identify with Him in His weakness, in His dishonor, in His death, and (partly) in His resurrection. This is why Paul speaks of his ministry in terms of dishonor and weakness. This is the calling of the Christian: to identify in body, soul, and spirit with the Lord in His earthly coming, in His rejection, weakness, shame and death. Spirituality cannot be separated from what we do in and with our bodies:

Stedman: The Mormon church teaches that we were once spirit beings who then came to earth and became men, but this verse flatly contradicts that. It is not the spiritual which is first, it is the

physical.

We came into existence on a physical level, but designed by God, beyond that, is the spiritual. That is next, and death is but a stop in that process, and necessary to it. So now we are in a state of transition, as Paul goes on to describe,

3. Source

“The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.”

C. (:48-49) Consistency in Matching the Prototype –

Two Very Different Prototypes – But in each case they establish the Pattern

1. Adam is the prototype for all earthly bodies

“As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy”

“Just as we have borne the image of the earthy”

2. Christ is the prototype for all resurrection bodies

“and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly”

“we will also bear the image of the heavenly”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What kind of resurrection body do you anticipate receiving?
- 2) What is the importance of the principle that death must precede resurrection? How does this impact our understanding of our resurrection body?
- 3) What are the implications for the theory of evolution from the teaching that there are fundamentally different types of flesh created by God?
- 4) What is involved in the *“image of the heavenly”* that we will bear in our resurrection body?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: On the occasion reported in the book of Acts where Paul is defending himself before King Agrippa, he says to the king, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" {cf, Acts 26:8}. And why should it, when we have the testimony of nature all around that this kind of thing can and does happen? If it was not incredible in the 1st century how much more should it be believable today, when, by the efforts of science, we know a great deal more about the processes of transferring energy and of retaining life. We are now familiar with a process called "cloning." Scientists say that it is possible to take a single cell of the human body, any cell, it does not have to be a sex cell, and by a process now known in theory, though not yet in practice, to restore that body completely as a human being. Why then should it be thought incredible that God can do it, that all he needs is a single cell from a body to restore the body exactly as it was? Man can do it; surely God will catch up with man one of these days. . .

Paul now faces the skeptics' second question, "*With what kind of body do they come?*" All right, supposing there is a resurrection, they said, "What is the resurrection body like? How will it differ from the one we have now?"

Paul's answer is found in the next ten verses, Verses 39 through 49. He takes it in three movements:

First, he goes back again to the lessons which are visible in nature itself;
Then he draws the parallel with the reality of resurrection;
Finally, in a great theological argument, he establishes the absolute certainty that this is going to happen.

Ray Pritchard: I love the epitaph that **Benjamin Franklin** wrote for himself while still a young man. It wonderfully catches the spirit of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15.

The body of
B. Franklin, printer,
(like the cover of an old book,
its contents torn out and
stripped of its lettering and gilding)
lies here, food for worms.
But the work shall not be lost;
for it will (as he believed)
appear once more,
in a new and more elegant edition,
revised and corrected
by the Author. . .

He's right. God will not let death win. **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** expressed the same truth in his poem "**God's Acre**." Here are the first and last stanzas:

I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's-Acre! It is just;
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

With thy rude ploughshare, Death, turn up the sod,
And spread the furrow for the seed we sow;
This is the field and Acre of our God,
This is the place where human harvests grow.

What an image that is: "the place where human harvests grow." Go to any graveyard where Christians are buried and there you will find "God's acre." Take off your shoes. It is holy ground. Human harvests are growing there. I close with the words of **Thomas Watson**: "We are more sure to arise out of our graves than out of our beds. Oh! how precious is the dust of a believer!" Amen.

Deffinbaugh:

Paul responds to the questions which have been raised, turning first to nature, to God's creation, to make several very powerful points.

(1) *Death and physical decay are not an insurmountable barrier to resurrection life, but rather the means to it.* Would we suppose that death and decay are some kind of insurmountable problem for God, rendering Him incapable of resurrecting our bodies from the natural processes of corruption and decay? We need only to look at the realm of nature to see the folly of such logic. If we reason that death and decay renders resurrection impossible, all we need do is trace the steps of the farmer, who every year sows seeds in the soil to undergo the process of “dying” so that a new plant can be produced through its “death.”

(2) *There is a transformation process which occurs in nature so that the seed which dies comes to life in a different and vastly better form. This is a most important point.* There is a direct connection between the seed that is “buried” and the plant which results from the “resurrection” of that seed. Wheat seeds produce wheat plants; rye seed produces rye plants, and so on. But in the process of dying and being “resurrected” as a plant, the once “naked” or “bare” (verse 37) seed becomes something much more beautiful. There is nothing particularly beautiful about a grain bin filled with wheat seed, but there is great beauty in a wheat field!

(3) *God is the giver of bodies.* The grain of wheat which “dies” in the ground and comes to life in a new resurrected “body” comes to life in a body which God Himself has given (verse 38). It is important to notice that in the question raised in verse 38, God is not mentioned: “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?” I do not think the Corinthians dared to ask the question the way they should have: “How can God raise the dead? And what kind of body does God give those He raises?”

It is better for the skeptic to reject the resurrection of the dead as a natural phenomenon. And yet Paul uses “nature” as an example of just such resurrection. But when he does so, he specifies that the body which is given is the body God has given. Paul goes even further, indicating that the body God gives is just exactly the body He wishes to give. Would anyone dare to deny the resurrection? Then let them dare to deny that God raises the dead. Would anyone dare to question the quality of the body God gives those whose corpses He raises? Then let them hear that God gives them just the body He wants!

(4) *God is the Creator, the giver of all life.* God created not only the plant world, but the animal kingdom as well, and beyond this, the heavens above. Does the mention of plants, each containing their own seed, of mankind, of beasts, of birds, of fish, and of heavenly bodies not take us back to the first two chapters of Genesis? Surely Paul has the first creation in mind. The God who called creation into existence is surely the God who can cause a decaying corpse to come to life. To put it a little differently, God created man from the dust of the earth. Death turns man back to dust. And out of this “dust,” God can create anything He purposes and promises to fashion.

(5) *God, the Creator, is the One who gives each form of life its own distinct and unique body, and each body is perfectly suited for its function and environment.* Think back on the creation account in Genesis. God created the heavens and the earth. He created man. He created birds and fish and beasts. Each of God’s creatures has its own beauty and its own glory. Birds fly, and so a part of their “glory” is that they have a lightweight structure with hollow bones. Whales live deep beneath the sea. Their glory does not come from their light weight, but from their design which allows them to endure the pressures of the depths. Each member of the animal kingdom has a body whose glory is found in relationship to its domain and function. Seeing this glorious design in the bodies God made in the first creation, do we dare to doubt the glory of the bodies God will create in the new creation? We can be assured that our resurrection body will be the perfect body, the glorious body which ideally suits us for heaven.

Boyer: Here, as in Romans 5:12-21, Paul makes a typological connection between Adam and Christ. In the Romans passage this connection is seen in their respective relationships to sin. Here he draws a comparison in their relationships to our bodies. From Adam we received our present, natural bodies. From Christ, by way of resurrection, we shall receive our spiritual, heavenly bodies. Christ, the last Adam, was made a quickening Spirit when He was raised from the dead (cf. Rom. 1:4; 6:4, and especially the whole context here. Before resurrection He too had a natural body). Thus Paul leads us to the most instructive illustration of all to teach us what the resurrection body will be like. “*We shall also bear the image of the heavenly*” (v. 49). He will “*change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body*” (Phil. 3:21). What was His resurrection body like? “*We shall be like Him*” (1 John 3:2). Meditate on that, and rejoice!

Thomas Leake: Our Future Resurrection Body

Introduction: Human pride has a way of blocking out truth; Prov. 18:2; 12:15 “*wise man listens to counsel*”; Often what man asserts to be true is later found out to be not true; Understand some of the reasons for our belief in the resurrection of the body; many people deny this; this is a cardinal Christian doctrine

2 Objections to the Resurrection and Paul’s Defense

I. (:35) 2 Objections to the Resurrection

The Fact of the Objection – 2 Questions

1. The How Objection – *How are the dead raised?* Resurrection is Impossible – scientific and naturalist would offer this objection;

Not a genuine question due to the tone; it is a mocking objection; intimates that the resurrection is a scientific impossibility; Science is a great subject, but a limited subject – cannot investigate certain areas; has its boundaries; science can only take you so far; an open mind should take into account all the evidence – including evidence from history; just because we can’t give a scientific formula for the How, does not mean it is impossible with God

2. The Nature of the Resurrection Body – *with what kind of body?*

Resurrection is Inconceivable – philosopher or false theologian would offer this objection; Matt. 22:23ff; Do you ever struggle with the supernatural elements in the Scriptures? Nothing in the Bible is unreasonable when you understand the infinite power of God and His purposes. John 17:17

II. (:36-49) Paul’s Defense of the Resurrection—4 Answers

⊕36 – Paul gives these objections no hearing – strong language – “*you fool*”

1. (:36-38) There is evidence from nature that helps to explain the change that takes place in resurrection – Analogy from nature

Think of how God operates in the world

You just plant the little seed; change happens; you don’t plant the whole oak tree

2. (:39-41) Evidence from nature for diversity of bodies – Does it all look the same to you? It’s all different

Glory = aura, radiance, shining ability

3. (:42-44) The human resurrection body will be gloriously different

The stuff of the resurrection body will be different; cemeteries are seed beds for resurrected saints; look at 4 descriptive adjectives:

Imperishable – 2 Tim. 1:10; *Glorious* – beautiful, shining, impressive; *Powerful* – old folks can’t even lift themselves up – won’t need food or sleep – *dunamis* = refers to a greater set of capabilities; *Spiritual* – opposite = natural (not physical) = same as Adam’s body, formed from elements of the earth – originates from spiritual realm = heaven

4. (:45-49) The Resurrection Body will be like Christ's resurrection body

First Adam vs Last Adam – 2 Different Races – we all originate from the same man Adam; this NT passage is strong support against evolution; Creation accounts in Genesis are both historically and biologically accurate; 4 comparisons

- a. (:45) Their capabilities – John 5:26; 1 John 5:11
- b. (:46) the order in which they came; the second is the improvement on the first
- c. (:47) the origins are different
- d. (:48-49) comparison made with our identification with these two men – Gen. 5:3; 1 John 3:2

Conclusion: Death is not the end of the story; never doubt the truth of the resurrection body; we serve a glorious God; *“I am the resurrection and the life ...”*

Believe this; Rejoice in this; Anticipate this; Desire this

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

TITLE: FINAL VICTORY OVER MORTALITY

BIG IDEA:

TRANSFORMATION OF THE BODY EQUIPS ALL BELIEVERS FOR GLORY

INTRODUCTION:

Zeisler: All of our efforts to halt or even retard the aging process—the sagging flesh, the balding pate, the wrinkled face—are doomed to failure. The sure word of Scripture is that we are destined either to be raised imperishable in the resurrection, or that we will suffer eternal death.

I. (:50) MAIN PRINCIPLE: THE NECESSITY OF A RESURRECTION BODY -- PHYSICAL BODY MUST BE TRANSFORMED INTO A BODY SUITABLE FOR THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM

A. Transition – Closing out this section on the Resurrection of the Body

“Now I say this, brethren”

B. Main Principle Stated Twice

1. Mortality must be Transformed to Immortality – Fit for the Kingdom of God

“that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,”

Piper: "*Flesh and blood*" simply means "human nature as we know it"--mortal, perishable, sin-stained, decaying. Something so fragile and temporary as the body we now have will not be the stuff of the eternal, durable, unshakable, indestructible kingdom of God. But that doesn't mean there won't be bodies.

2. Perishable must be Transformed to Imperishable

“nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”

II. (:51-52) THIS TRANSFORMATION APPLIES TO ALL BELIEVERS – BOTH THE DEAD AND THOSE STILL ALIVE AT THE TIME OF CHRIST'S RETURN

A. Mystery Truth

“Behold, I tell you a mystery”

A truth that was not unfolded in the Old Testament, but now God is making it known; we would never come to know this truth apart from God's gracious revelation.

(Matt. 13:11; Luke 8:10; Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; Col. 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16; Rev. 1:20; 10:7; 17:5)

Stedman: We have already come to understand that the word "mystery," when it is used like this in Scripture, does not refer to something murky or mysterious or hard to understand. What it means, of course, is a truth that our human sense can never discover, that no scientific investigation will ever reveal, that no amount of intense research on the part of human beings will ever unravel.

B. Same Transformation – Despite Two Very Different Conditions

1. Condition of Death for Most – but not All

“we will not all sleep,”

There will be one unique group of believers that is alive at the Return of Christ

2. Reality of Transformation for All

“but we will all be changed”

C. Suddenness of the Transformation

1. Time Reference

“in a moment”

2. Physical Analogy Reference

“in the twinkling of an eye”

Stedman: There is a generation of Christians that is never going to die. Scripture constantly anticipates this. There are some who will not even have to pass through the portals of death, such as we know it, but will instantly, while they are walking around, suddenly, without warning, be changed -- "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." That phrase refers to the little change of light that occurs when you blink. It is one of the fastest speeds known to our human experience, and that is how fast the change will take place to some.

D. Certainty of the Transformation for All Believers

1. The End of the Church Age and the Return of Christ Will Come

“for the trumpet will sound”

Lowery: The **trumpet** in the Old Testament, signaled the appearance of God (cf. Ex. 19:16). It is the last blast for the church because this appearance shall never end (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). (There is no basis for posttribulationists equating this trumpet with the seventh trumpet in Rev. 11:15-19. The trumpets in Rev. pertain to judgments during the Tribulation, whereas the trumpet in 1 Cor. 15:52 is related to the church.)

2. The Dead will be Transformed – Implies a measure of Continuity

“and the dead will be raised imperishable”

Piper: When he says *“the dead will be raised”* he means we—the dead--will be raised. If God meant to start all over with no continuity between the body I have now and the one I will have why would Paul say, "the dead will be raised"? Why would he not say, "The dead will not be raised" (since they are decomposed and their molecules are scattered into plants and animals for a thousand miles) and so God will start from scratch since there are no bodies to raise, and he will make totally new bodies that have no connection with the old ones? He did not say that, because it is not true.

3. The Raised Dead and Those Still Living will All be Transformed

“and we will be changed”

III. (:53) MAIN PRINCIPLE REPEATED – THE NECESSITY OF A RESURRECTION

BODY -- COMPLETION OF CHIASMUS

A. Perishable must be Transformed to Imperishable

“For this perishable must put on the imperishable”

B. Mortality must be Transformed to Immortality – Fit for the Kingdom of God

“and this mortal must put on immortality”

Zeisler: Because we are destined to die, as human beings we face two dilemmas:

- 1) our lives will end (we are mortal), and
- 2) our bodies deteriorate (we are perishable).

Solomon looks at life under the sun; but the Apostle Paul takes us to the next level – that of what awaits after death.

The fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies, so dies the other. Indeed they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast. For all is vanity. All go to the same place. All come from the dust, and all return to the dust. Eccl.3:19-21

IV. (:54-57) THIS TRANSFORMATION DEFEATS SIN AND DEATH FOREVER

A. (:54) Victory Culminates at the Time of this Transformation

1. The Time of Transformation

a. Perishable Transformed to Imperishable

“But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable,”

b. Mortality Transformed to Immortality

“and this mortal will have put on immortality,”

2. The Triumph of Transformation

“then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

B. (:55-56) Victory Crushes All Enemies – Death, Sin, the Law = things we cannot defeat on our own

“O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?

The sting of death is sin,

And the power of sin is the law”

Zeisler: But the law offers no praise for good or even improving effort. It always demands absolute obedience and always condemns anything that falls short of that. This is why sin is so powerful, and why we fear death so much.

C. (:57) Victory Comes as a Gift from God through Christ

“but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Mare: If it were not for sin, death would have no sting. It is the law of God with its stringent moral demands that strengthens the power of sin by showing us how sinful we are, and thus condemns us. But death does not have the final victory!

Lenski: "Victory" connotes enemies and battle, but it is not for us, for we should never win. This stupendous victory is being given to us. The last phrase therefore names the Victor, names him as the medium through whom the victory gift becomes ours.

(:58) APPLICATION: PERSEVERE IN SERVING THE LORD

A. Transition to the Application

"Therefore, my beloved brethren"

B. 2 Exhortations to Perseverance in Serving the Lord (first two are very similar)

1. Stand Firm -- *"be steadfast" / "immoveable"*

Don't give up; Don't be distracted

2. Serve to the End -- *"always abounding in the work of the Lord"*

Stay Focused and Engaged

Assurance that Spiritual Ministry Matters

"knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What is so different and unique about the *kingdom of God* that *flesh and blood* are not suitable or fitting for such an existence?

2) How is our life today different because of the confidence we have in this future transformation?

3) How has the *power of sin* already been broken in our life?

4) How was Paul able to persevere in his Christian service despite all of the physical suffering and persecution he experienced?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: The Victory of the Mystery

When is this going to be? Paul's answer is, *"at the last trump."* The next question, of course, is "When is the last trump?" That is what everybody wants to know. The answer of Scripture is, "at the return of Jesus." Paul says it in First Thessalonians, Chapter 4:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. {1 Th 4:16 KJV}

That is the last trump you will ever hear, the trump of God, when the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain so shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. {1 Th 4:17a KJV}

That is the great event, the great change that is coming. I believe, as I have already stated, that this occurs for every one of us when we step out of time into eternity, but it will also occur when Jesus steps back out of eternity into time. This is the event that the apostle refers to. . .

We are afraid of death because it is an unknown, over which we have no control. We cannot evade it -- it is beyond us. We are in the grip of other forces, and, what bothers us is, we have a sense that we are being plunged into accountability. Beyond death lies a settling, and an answering, for where we have been, and how we have lived, and what we have done. That is why death is such a fearsome thing. It is made all the more so by the law that says you cannot escape the evil of your past. God cannot set it aside nor can any man. It must be faced. There can be no deliverance from it. That is what makes us afraid of death.

But the good news coming to us from the resurrection of Jesus, following his crucifixion, is that this power of sin is broken. We are no longer helpless; we are no longer unable to change. Many people today are troubled by an unending struggle they feel within to try to be different, but they cannot find the way.

Piper: Why does God go to all the trouble to dirty his hands to reestablish your body and clothe it with immortality? Because his Son paid the price of his life so that God could be glorified in your body for ever and ever. "You were bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your bodies." God will not dishonor the work of his Son. That's why he will raise your body.

The sting of death is sin (15:56), but Christ bore the curse of sin. The power of sin is the law (15:56), but Christ satisfied the demands of the law. Therefore Paul cries out, "Thanks be to God who gives the victory through Jesus Christ." When Christ died he forgave sin and fulfilled the law and defeated death and obtained not just our souls but also our bodies.

Therefore God will honor the work of his Son by raising your body from the dead, and you will use your body to glorify him for ever and ever. That is why you have a body now. And that is why it will be raised imperishable.

Zeisler: The English writer **Malcolm Muggeridge** was standing by his father's grave once, beside which was his own future grave. As he mused about death, here are the words he wrote on this occasion; may they serve to encourage us:

Death is a beginning, not an end. The darkness falls, and the sky is a distant glow, the lights of St. Augustine's City of God. Looking towards them, I say over to myself John Donne's splendid words, 'Death, thou shalt die.' In the graveyard the dust settles. In the City of God, eternity begins.

Lenski: "Incorruption" is the new heavenly condition and form which ever remain perfect. Every trace of sin and of its effects is gone, and in their place there are the glory, beauty, and power of an imperishable life, "*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*" 1 Pet. 1:4. Its other name is "immortality," a condition and a corresponding form that are free from the power of death and from any deterioration or change which death works, they are fadeless because of the unchanging powers of eternal life.

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

TITLE: LOOSE ENDS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

BIG IDEA:

APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTION, EXHORTATIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS CLOSE OUT PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

I. (:1-4) FINAL INSTRUCTION: COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS IN JERUSALEM – CONSISTENT GIVING

A. (:1) Consistent Directions for Support Spread Across All Churches – One Pattern

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.”

Barnes: The use of the article here shows that he had mentioned it to them before, and that it was a subject which they would readily understand. It was not new to them, but it was needful only to give some instructions in regard to the manner in which it should be done, and not in regard to the occasion for the collection, or the duty of making it, Accordingly, all his instructions relate simply to the manner in which the collection should be made.

B. (:2) Consistent Discipline of Orderly Collection – One Practice

1. Priority of Giving – Repeated Each Week

“On the first day of every week”

Christians by this time had begun to meet on Sunday every week

2. Participation by Everyone – No Exceptions

“each one of you”

3. Purposeful Savings – Protected Gift

“is to put aside and save”

Stedman: He is referring to the fact that, in that culture, people got paid every day. They were to go home and put aside, in the sugar bowl, each day a certain amount of money so that on Sunday they would have a larger amount to bring to the services, and contribute to the needs of others. Now the principle, of course, is that they had an objective they had determined upon. They were not merely giving to nothing or everything, but they had determined that they would have a part in a specific need and they were giving regularly to meet that need.

4. Proportional Giving – Expectation of God's Favor

“as he may prosper”

Stedman: Nowhere in the New Testament do you find tithing taught or laid upon Christians. But proportionate giving is, for God does not give us wealth in order to lavish it in abundant measure upon ourselves but that we might share it more abundantly with those who have pressing needs. If this simple principle were thoroughly grasped, all the needs of Christendom would be abundantly met by those who give as God has prospered them.

Zeisler: If we recognize that it is God who has been responsible for the degree of prosperity

which we have, and if we are grateful for that, then our response ought to be proportional to what he has bestowed upon us. Jesus declared that the widow who gave two copper coins had contributed much more in proportion to the rich and prosperous who stood about congratulating themselves for their generosity. This passage does not give any absolute percentages or amounts here. Christians should give, says the apostle, as God has prospered them. My recommendation is that not only should the absolute amount of giving go up as we grow more prosperous over the years but the percentage ought to go up, too. The government operates that way. The more you make, the higher tax bracket you find yourself in. But the apostle's directions are simple: every week, having thoughtfully determined the amount, each one should give, as he may prosper.

5. Unpressured Giving – not based on trying to impress the Apostle Paul
“so that no collections be made when I come”

Zeisler: There should be no tear-jerking appeals, no threats, power plays or stern lecturing or thundering from the pulpit.

Deffinbaugh: Think about it for a moment. What is the most difficult sales pitch to reject? It is the face-to-face presentation of someone we know and love. We find it a little easier to say no on the phone, and it is quite easy to throw a sales-oriented letter into the trash. Paul wrote a letter so they would not have to give when he arrived and saw them face-to-face. Paul really wanted their decision to give to be divinely prompted, rather than prompted by human persuasion. Paul set aside the means and methods which the world knows to work well in fund-raising.

C. (:3-4) Careful Delivery of the Funds to Jerusalem – One Presentation – Responsible Stewardship and Fiscal Accountability

1. (:3) Approved Delegates Dispatched with the Relief Funds
“When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem”
No administrative fees subtracted from these gifts; 100% given to the need
2. (:4) Accompanying Paul if Appropriate
“and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.”

II. (:5-12) FINAL ITINERARY ISSUES: POTENTIAL PERSONAL VISITS TO CORINTH – MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

A. (:5-9) Paul’s Personal Intentions – Wants to Spend Time with Them

1. (:5) Plans to Visit Believers at Corinth after going through Macedonia
“But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia.”
Paul made very definite plans; purposeful, strategic
2. (:6-7) Wants to Stay for Extended Time
“and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.”
Paul submitted to the Lord’s providential will; was not presumptuous;
Grateful for the support and encouragement of the brethren

Deffinbaugh: Paul did not claim to have received any direct divine guidance which communicated God's travel plans for his next visit to Corinth. The supernatural guidance Paul occasionally received was not normative. Paul's words here do not indicate any sense of need for such guidance on his part or any distress that such guidance was not given. Paul speaks as though he is confident that he will know when and how to reach Corinth when it is necessary.

3. (:8-9) Ministering Effectively in Ephesus until Pentecost

"But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."

Open doors for ministry do not mean easy sailing

We need to be opportunistic to take advantage of potential for effective service

Stedman: [Acts 19:9-10] -- Paul himself was teaching in a rented hall, the hall of Tyrannus, where he taught, some manuscripts say, five hours a day, six days a week. Can you imagine the church that must have crowded and jammed into that hall to hear this mighty apostle? It was an urban church in the heart of Ephesus, and it sent greetings together with all the spin-off churches that had come out of that remarkable ministry throughout the province.

Stedman: We do not know how far in advance that would be, but there is a reason why he chose Pentecost. As you read some of the literature of that day, you discover that Pentecost, which comes 50 days after the Passover time, is the time when shipping resumed in the Aegean Sea. During the winter months it was impossible for these frail little boats to survive in the great storms that would sweep through the Mediterranean, but by Pentecost the weather had calmed and shipping would resume. Paul is simply taking that into account, and he is basing his plans on that fact. This in line with the normal circumstances of life.

Stedman: Principles about Ministry Planning

- (:5) Make immediate short range goals
- (:6) Make flexible commitments
- (:6) Trust God to provide the necessary funds as you pursue the ministry; not all up front --
If we are really convinced that there is a need for something, God has promised to supply our needs, therefore we do not have to have everything in hand before we start. We venture on the power and the provision of God.
- (:8) Take into account the normal circumstances of life
- (:9) Look for a combination of a wide door and many adversaries = effective ministry

B. (:10-11) Timothy's Travels – Needs Encouragement in the Ministry

1. (:10) Timothy Deserves Good Treatment at Corinth

a. Expectation of Visiting Corinth

"Now if Timothy comes"

b. Tendency to be Fearful

"see that he is with you without cause to be afraid"

Stedman: But I do not think it was timidity so much as it was really a temperament that was quiet and unassuming and did not force its way to the front.

c. Fully Engaged in Christian Ministry

“for he is doing the Lord’s work, as I also am”

2. (:11) Paul Wants Timothy Returned to Him

a. Respect and Support Him in His Ministry

1) Negatively

“So let no one despise him”

2) Positively

“but send him on his way in peace”

b. Return Him to Paul in a Timely Fashion

“so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.”

C. (:12) Encouragement to Apollos to Visit

“But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.”

Stedman: That is a most remarkable verse, especially in view of the attitude many today have that the apostles were, in a sense, "generals" in the army of the Lord, sending out people, ordering them here or there, and commanding these younger Christians to go at their beck and call, and so forth. But you do not find that here. This verse indicates that Paul does not command Apollos at all; he has no authority over him. He urges him, rather. In several places in the New Testament we are reminded by the apostle that he was not "lord" over anybody else.

Lording it over the brethren is, in my judgment, one of the great curses of the church today. Some men assume, for instance, that the office of pastor gives them an authority over other people. I believe that a redefining from the Bible of the issue of authority is going to be one of the hottest issues the church will face in the next decade. Having just come from Southern Baptist country, I was very much confronted with this last week, and was challenged on it. Yet it was interesting to see how the word of the Scripture, in turn, shook men who had long assumed that they had an authority that the Word really did not give them. This is a good verse in support of that. . .

I find Christians everywhere under the authority of men who seem to be dictators -- much like Diotrephes, whom John mentions in one of his letters, who loved to have the pre-eminence among them {cf, 3 Jn 1:9}. I am becoming much more bold in my speaking along this line, because of the widespread nature of this problem. I have to tell congregations at times that:

No pastor has the right to tell them what they can do with their spiritual gifts.

No pastor has the right to tell you that you cannot have a meeting in your home and teach the Word of God to whoever will come and listen.

Now you should listen to him as a wise brother who understands the nature of truth, perhaps, and can give you great suggestions. But no pastor ever, anywhere, has the right to tell you that you yourself cannot follow the leading of the Lord as to the ministry that you have. Paul makes that clear in this passage.

III. (:13-18) FINAL EXHORTATIONS – TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS – COMBINATION OF STRENGTH AND LOVE

A. (:13-14) 5 Closing Commands:

1. Be Vigilant -- “*Be on the alert*” 1 Pt. 5:8

Barnes: The term is frequently used in the New Testament, and the duty frequently enjoined, Matthew 24:41,42; 25:13; Mark 13:35; Luke 21:36; Acts 20:31; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 2 Timothy 4:5. The sense here is, that they were to watch, or be vigilant, against all the evils of which he had admonished them--the evils of dissension, of erroneous doctrines, of disorder, of false teachers, etc. They were to watch lest their souls should be ruined, and their salvation endangered; lest the enemies of the truth and of holiness should steal silently upon them, and surprise them. They were to watch with the same vigilance that is required of a sentinel who guards a camp, lest an enemy should come suddenly upon them, and surprise the camp when the army was locked in sleep.

2. Be Steadfast -- “stand firm in the faith” 2 Thess. 2:15

Barnes: Be firm in maintaining what you believe to be true, and in holding on to your personal confidence in God, notwithstanding all the arts, insinuations, and teachings of seducers and the friends of false doctrine.

3. Be Manly -- “act like men” 1 Cor. 14:20

Barnes: It means, to render one manly or brave; to show one's self a man; that is, not to be a coward, or timid, or alarmed at enemies, but to be bold and brave. We have a similar phrase in common use: "Be a man," or "Show yourself a man;" that is, be not mean, or be not cowardly.

4. Be Strong -- “*be strong*” Eph. 6:10

Adam Clarke: Put forth all the vigour and energy which God has given you in maintaining and propagating the truth, and your spiritual strength will increase by usage. The terms in this verse are all military: *Watch ye, and be continually on your guard, lest you be surprised by your enemies; keep your scouts out, and all your sentinels at their posts, lest your enemies steal a march upon you. See that the place you are in be properly defended; and that each be alert to perform his duty.*

Stand fast in the faith—Keep in your ranks; do not be disorderly; be determined to keep your ranks unbroken; keep close together. On your unity your preservation depends; if the enemy succeed in breaking your ranks, and dividing one part of this sacred army from another, your rout will be inevitable.

Quit yourselves like men—When you are attacked, do not flinch; maintain your ground; resist; press forward; strike home; keep compact; conquer.

Be strong—If one company or division be opposed by too great a force of the enemy, strengthen that division, and maintain your position; if an attack is to be made on any part or intrenchment of the foe, summon up all your courage, sustain each other; fear not, for fear will enervate you. Your cause is good; it is the faith, the religion of Jesus; he is your Captain in

the field; and, should you even die in the contest, the victory is yours.

5. Capstone: Be Loving -- *“Let all that you do be done in love”* 1 Pet. 4:8

B. (:15-16) Respect and Submission Due to Ministry Care Providers

“Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.”

Addicted to ministry of the saints; showing hospitality; supporting itinerant missionaries

Zeisler: It is an unvarying principle in the Christian life that service to others is what gives a man or woman the right to speak and to be an example to others. Paul makes no mention of wealth, social standing, personality, degrees, or to any natural ability or attribute. The only qualification is servant-heartedness; a heart given over to God in service to others. Those who have had a lifestyle of such service, who year in and year out seek ways to build up others and meet their needs, should be respected and followed.

Adam Clarke: That ye have due regard to them, and consider them as especial instruments in the hand of God for countenancing and carrying on his great work. The submission here recommended does not imply obedience, but kind and courteous demeanour. Kypke vindicates this sense of the word from Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5.

C. (:17-18) Appreciation and Recognition Due to Sacrificial Encouragers

“I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.”

Deffinbaugh: Appreciation and respect are certainly due such men, but Paul seems to have more in mind. I believe that he is indicating to the church that these men should be formally recognized as leaders. It is the Holy Spirit who makes men elders (Acts 20:28), but it is the church which formally recognizes this divine appointment (compare Acts 13:1-3). Here is the kind of leadership the Corinthian church needs. Here is the kind of leadership every church needs, and it is our task to identify and recognize such men.

IV. (:19-24) FINAL GREETINGS AND FAREWELL

A. (:19-21) Final Greetings

1. From Churches of Asia

“The churches of Asia greet you.”

2. From Aquila and Prisca and their House Church

“Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house”

Zeisler: But the point I want to focus on is the fact that their home was always open. Paul lived and worked with them in Corinth. In Ephesus, they had a house church in their home. In Rome, they had another home church. They consistently invited others to come among them and see

them interact in their own home. God works in unique ways in godly homes, among godly families. This is how change is wrought in society. It is not accomplished by massive, staged meetings addressed by captivating and eloquent speakers, but is brought about as mature Christian men and women invite non-Christians into their homes and give them opportunity to see a believing home go about the business of Christianity.

3. All the Brethren

“All the brethren greet you”

4. Mutual Greeting

“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

5. Personal Greeting from Paul

“The greeting is in my own hand – Paul”

Stedman: This greeting is Paul's way of authenticating his letters. From the letter to the Galatians, we know that he had the habit of taking the pen from the secretary and adding in his own handwriting a greeting to the people to whom he wrote. And since, as many feel, Paul was almost blind, he wrote with large letters, scrawled across the bottom of the manuscript, words like this: *“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.”*

B. (:22-24) Farewell and Benediction

1. Directed to False Professors of Faith or Apostates – A Curse – Gal. 1:9; Rom. 9:3

“If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed.”

[Adam Clarke applies this to the Jews based on 1 Cor. 12:3]

Guzik: In fact, *anathema* was the third of three levels of discipline among the ancient Jews. The first level was a simple separation of a man from the synagogue for thirty days. If one did not repent in the thirty days, he was under the second degree of discipline, giving him still an undefined time to repent, but warning him of the dire consequences to come. The third level was the *anathema*, and with that all hope of reconciliation and repentance was cut off. The man could never be reconciled to the synagogue, and was no longer accounted as a Jew at all.

2. Directed to the Lord

“Maranatha” – Our Lord is coming; Our Lord is at hand; Come, Lord Jesus

Word play here – similarity between *accursed* and *Maranatha*

We serve in light of our expectation and longing for the imminent return of Christ

Maclaren: his first clause is not an imprecation, nor any wish on the part of the Apostle, but is a solemn prophetic warning (acquiesced in by every righteous heart) of that which will certainly come. The significance of the whole may be gathered into one simple sentence—The coming of the Lord of Love is the destruction of the unloving.

3. Directed to Genuine Believers – Final Benediction

a. Divine Grace

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.”

b. Brotherly Love

“My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.”

“Amen.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why does the giving in the NT seem to be more oriented towards relief funds for saints in financial difficulty than support for the leaders of the local church and the maintenance of the local ministry?
- 2) Why does Paul judge it to be unseemly for collections to be made while he is present?
- 3) Why such an emphasis on strength in the closing exhortations?
- 4) Why does Paul close with pronouncing a curse?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: Verses 1-4 of chapter 16 flow very logically out of Paul’s teaching on the resurrection in chapter 15. Paul concluded by assuring the Corinthian saints that due to the resurrection of our Lord, and thus the resurrection of the dead, our labor and toil is not in vain in the Lord. No wonder Paul can now speak to his readers about making a contribution to the poor. This is one of the ways the Christian can “lay up treasure in heaven” (see Matthew 6:19-21). Furthermore, the contribution to the saints, which Paul has instructed the Corinthians to prepare for, is that which will be delivered after he arrives at Corinth, so Paul’s discussion of his travel plans logically follow in verses 5-9. Giving to the poor is an eternal investment, which will be delivered to the saints after Paul has returned to Corinth.

Stedman: He is talking, of course, about the collection that was being made in many churches to send to the troubled, discouraged, and afflicted church in Jerusalem. This is a theme very close to Paul’s heart, and he mentions it in several of his letters. He is very anxious that these Gentile churches, scattered in the Roman world, should have a part in meeting the needs of the afflicted saints in Jerusalem. As you read the book of Acts, you can see there are two reasons why this church in Jerusalem was having trouble -- one of them was circumstantial, and the other is consequential, that is, one they are to blame for, and the other they are not.

The one they were not to blame for was a series of famines that had occurred. These are also mentioned in the book of Acts -- times of drought such as we went through recently here in California. Crops did not grow adequately, and with a limited system of distribution, they were without food.

But then there was another reason why the church was suffering, and that was their own failure to obey what the Lord had said. Just before his ascension, Jesus said to this church, “*begin in*

Jerusalem and then go to all Judea and Samaria and then reach out to the uttermost part of the earth," {cf, Acts 1:8}. Reading the record of Acts, you can see that they totally ignored those words. They were having a great time in Jerusalem. They had all the apostles teaching them; they had all the gifts of the Spirit manifest in their midst; they were experiencing miracles and wonders and signs, and they had tremendous numbers of people, thousands, converted at a time. Nobody wanted to leave. They were enjoying their privileges and clinging to them, so the Lord, in his wisdom, sent a time of persecution. Acts tells us that at the time of the death of Stephen there broke out a great persecution against the church which forced them out. In the process they lost their resources. All the wealthy people were driven away or they lost their wealth. So this church was reduced to poverty, to penury, and they were unable to pay their bills. It became at last the privilege of the Gentile churches who had profited from them spiritually to minister to their material needs.

Zeisler: Giving, Greetings and Good-byes

Chapter 16 flows naturally from this closing word in verse 15. Here in this section the apostle is specific in his directions, following the more general counsel of 15:58. Two principles surface in this chapter. As we go through this life as Christians, says Paul, some things will always be constant and unchanging; but other things will be uncertain and changeable. Some things remain the same. Patterns do not change in our approach to ministry, no matter what the circumstances. But in God's calling there are many things that are uncertain and are forever changing. God sends us off in directions which we could never have anticipated. We make plans and God changes them. There will be both the predictable and the unpredictable in our Christian walk.

Recognizing these twin truths, however, we are still to be "*abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our toil is not in vain.*" . . .

Giving is to be a regular, habitual responsibility for all Christians at all times, according to the apostle.

Maclaren:

Terror and tenderness are strangely mingled in this parting salutation, which was added in the great characters shaped by Paul's own hand, to the letter written by an amanuensis. He has been obliged, throughout the whole epistle, to assume a tone of remonstrance abundantly mingled with irony and sarcasm and indignation. He has had to rebuke the Corinthians for many faults, party spirit, lax morality, toleration of foul sins, grave abuses in their worship even at the Lord's Supper, gross errors in opinion in the denial of the Resurrection. And in this last solemn warning he traces all these vices to their fountainhead—the defect of love to Jesus Christ—and warns of their fatal issue. ‘Let him be Anathema.’

But he will not leave these terrible words for his last. The thunder is followed by gentle rain, and the sun glistens on the drops; ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.’ Nor for himself will he let the last impression be one of rebuke or even of warning. He desires to show that his heart yearns over them all; so he gathers them all—the partisans; the poor brother that has fallen into sin; the lax ones who, in their misplaced tenderness, had left him in his sin; the misguided reasoners who had struck the Resurrection out of the articles of the Christian creed—he gathers them all into his final salutation, and he says, ‘Take and share my love—though I have had to rebuke—amongst the whole of you.’

Is not that beautiful? And does not the juxtaposition of such messages in this farewell go deeper

than the revelation of Paul's character? May we not see, in these terrible and tender thoughts thus inextricably intertwined and braided together, a revelation of the true nature both of the terror and the tenderness of the Gospel which Paul preached? It is from that point of view that I wish to look at them now.

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