

Bible Study Series on.....

*The Letter
of*

I CORINTHIANS
(#1)

13 Lessons

**Produced by:
PAUL E. CANTRELL**

2005

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Lesson One

“The Beauty & Desirability of the Lord’s Church” **(1 Corinthians 1:1-9)**

The church at Corinth was established by Paul on his 2nd mission trip (AD 50-53) (Acts 18:1-18). Corinth was a large city with all kinds of people, including some Jews. He first preached in the Synagogue to both Jews and Greeks every Sabbath after arriving. He was by himself and quickly met and teamed up with Aquila and Priscilla who were Jews and tent makers. Later Silas and Timothy joined Paul which helped to spur the Apostle on in his efforts to preach the Gospel. When the Jewish people rejected his preaching, he turned more to the Gentiles and found a ready reception. The first converts mentioned were Crispus, the ruler of the Synagogue, and his household. Afterwards many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized into Christ. The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision and encouraged him in his efforts to stay and preach in Corinth. He stayed for at least 18 months. While the work at Corinth was very fruitful, it was also very challenging. It was a wicked city that needed the Gospel and large numbers responded to the message of hope.

After some three years, the Apostle received word (while at Ephesus) about the conditions of the church at Corinth that resulted in this first letter (AD 56). It is interesting to notice that even though the church was facing many different kinds of problems (as revealed in the letter), he begins his letter with showing the beauty and desirability of the Lord’s church (1:1-9).

DISCUSSION

I. THE CHURCH IS MADE UP OF SANCTIFIED PEOPLE (1:1-2)

A. They had been sanctified!

- 1) The word means: *“Separated, set apart for holy purposes.”*
- 2) But it also carries with it the idea of being *“purified and cleansed”* first! (1 Cor. 6:11).
- 3) Even the Greek word for “church” carries this idea also.
 - a) “Ek-Klesia”—“To call out”
 - b) The church is called out of the world into a cleansed, sanctified relationship with God and other sanctified people.
- 4) Our sanctification is made possible by the offering of the body of Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10).
- 5) But even though we were once cleansed, sanctified, and set apart unto God upon our obedience to the Gospel...we also need continual cleansing that is secured by our *“walking in the light!”* (1 John 1:7).

B. From this letter it is obvious that Paul was disappointed in their growth in Christ.

- 1) They had some pretty bad problems in their midst.
- 2) But they were still God’s sanctified people.
- 3) They had a long ways to go, but most of them were still trying!

C. It seems that the church was allowing outside influences to affect their thinking.

- 1) They should be influencing the outside world.
- 2) The church needs to be a:

- a) Light in darkness;
- b) Pure among the impure;
- c) Salt to help save the world.

3) This letter was written to help them to truly be such.

D. They needed to see that they could be saints in a wicked Corinth!

- 1) They were made saints by redemption through Christ.
- 2) How they lived from thereon indicates whether they are living up to the term!

II. THE CHURCH IS MADE UP OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE RECEIVED GOD'S GRACE, PEACE AND ENRICHMENT (1:3-5).

A. They had received Grace from God.

- 1) They were saved by the Grace of God, but they needed continued grace.
- 2) Sin is all around us—alluring, easy, exciting, and inducing to indulge.
- 3) We need strength to live righteous lives.
- 4) We need continued forgiveness and reassurance when we fall.
- 5) God's grace provides for this great need in my life.
- 6) God's grace gives us the power to see life through.
- 7) Illustration—A man had lost his young wife with small children. The preacher tried to console him with the words that ***“God's grace is sufficient.”*** But the man had a struggle in accepting the statement. He said to the preacher: *“Could you say that if your own wife was dead and children left crying for a mother who will not return?”* Unfortunately, the preacher's wife died a short time after that. At the grave side he saw the man present. As he brushed aside his tears, he said audibly to the man where all could hear: ***“God's grace is sufficient.”***

B. They had received Peace from God.

- 1) This peace comes when we surrender to God's Will through His grace (Rom. 5:1-2).
- 2) God's continued grace keeps our hearts at peace with Him.
- 3) It is a ***“peace that passes understanding.”*** (Phil. 4:7).
- 4) To have this peace:
 - a) We are indeed rich.
 - b) We have what no one can take away from us.
 - c) We have a beauty & desirability that never fades.

C. They had been enriched by God.

- 1) He says that ***“in everything you are enriched by Him.”***
- 2) They had been privileged to hear the message of Christ and had responded.
- 3) They had been greatly enlightened by God's Truth.
- 4) They had been given spiritual gifts to help build them up until the Word of God could be completely written down for all to have.
- 5) We, today, are also greatly blessed to hear & respond.
- 6) Our lives have been enriched in every way!

III. THE CHURCH IS MADE UP OF PEOPLE WHO WILL BE CONFIRMED TO THE END (1:8)

- A. The dangers of falling from God's Grace is real*** (Heb. 3:12-19; 6:4-6; 2 Pet. 2:20-22, etc.)

- 1) If we fall, however, it will not be God's fault, but our own!
- 2) He fully assures us that He will do His part unto the end (Jn. 10:28).
- 3) God will do His part...and so must we!

B. We can be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1) God can confirm us, strengthen us, keep us standing unto the end.
- 2) But we must look to Him, listen to Him, and follow His bidding.
- 3) If we will; then, in the Day of Judgment we will be blameless.
- 4) We will not need to fear condemnation—our sins have been taken away.

C. We can be blameless—not sinless!

- 1) A saint is not a perfect person, but one who has been saved by God's Grace (1 Jn. 1:8).
- 2) There will be no charge brought against us in that day.
- 3) Our imperfections have been taken away by the blood of Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

IV. THE CHURCH IS MADE UP OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

(1:9)

A. Sinful and imperfect humans can have fellowship with the sinless Son of God!

- 1) For sure....we don't just barge into such a fellowship.
- 2) We are called into it by God.
- 3) It is a great privilege to be invited into such a fellowship.

B. But this fellowship is only possible through cleansing.

- 1) Upon our obedience to the Gospel, we are cleansed and made acceptable.
- 2) We must continue to be obedient in all things to continue the cleansing and keep this fellowship (1 Jn. 1:7).

CONCLUSION

1. Sin is alluring, exciting, and promises much for the time being.
2. Why should anyone want to give up such?
3. What is there in this world that is better than what SIN has to offer?
4. To give these up without receiving something better would not be reasonable.
5. Paul has shown that God is offering something far more precious, desirable, and profitable.
 - a) The privilege to become saints—His sanctified & cleansed people.
 - b) The opportunity to continually experience God's Grace & Peace.
 - c) To opportunity to have our lives enriched:
 - 1) To give beauty to it;
 - 2) To give abundance to it;
 - 3) To give meaning & purpose to it.
 - d) God can give us a sense of more pleasure in being pure than in being impure.
 - e) And in the Day of Judgment, we will have nothing to fear because we are in fellowship with the judge—the Son of God!
6. Are you willing to give up SIN to take on the new BEAUTY for your life?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

1. A “saint” is someone special before God that only few people can attained to.
2. “Ek-Klesia” literally means to be called out of the world into Christ.
3. Once we have been saved by God’s grace, we do not lose that salvation.
4. Paul showed the church at Corinth that they were saints in the midst of a corrupt world—so, live up to the term!
5. “God’s grace is sufficient” means that God is always there willing to forgive.
6. The lives of Christians have been enriched by the Gospel.
7. We can not only be blameless now, but also in the day of Judgment.
8. Only cleansed sinners can have fellowship with God.
9. Sin is alluring, exciting, and makes big promises.
10. God offers us something far more desirable than sin.

Lesson Two

“Saints of God Pulling Together”

(1 Corinthians 1:10-13)

Human beings are different! We come from different backgrounds and homes, we have been taught different ideas and principles, and we have different customs and ways of doing things. This can affect our thinking and acting processes. This is what makes a diverse society in which we all live.

When people become Christians we are brought into the “one body” of Christ. Our oneness is very simple being based on very narrow limits: (1) A common Savior; (2) A common body of people; (3) A common obedience unto Salvation; (4) A common Faith in Jesus as the Son of God, etc. As we mature as Christians we are to strengthen this oneness and even broaden our basis for unity. We will make that unity more dear and meaningful until it becomes a perfected oneness (the ideal).

The only catch to the above is—sometimes we allow our differences to have more sway than the oneness in Christ. We cease struggling and growing in our unity. We emphasize our differences to the destruction of the body. We, then, can bring the wrath of God upon our souls (Prov. 6:16-19).

The struggle to maintain unity of the body is very important. It is in reality a command of God (Eph. 4:1-3). It is a true test of our faith, loyalty, and love for Christ (John 17:1-21). It is also a test of our love and loyalty to our brethren.

The church at Corinth wasn't doing too well in this struggle! They had been in existence for only three years (53-56 AD). But, they were on the verge of having deep problems with division and strife. Paul challenges them to *“Let God's saints pull together, not apart!”*

DISCUSSION

I. THE CONDITION AT CORINTH DESCRIBED

A. Described to Paul by the House of Chloe.

- 1) Did they gossip in telling Paul about this undesirable condition?
- 2) Should they have said anything to Paul about the condition?
- 3) Sometimes we become so afraid to do anything that we allow a condition to get worse.
- 4) Thankfully, they were concerned enough to get some help!

B. “There are contentions among you!”

- 1) Strife, quarrels, rivalry, wrangling, etc.
- 2) They possibly were taking sides in an argument and the feeling of enmity was being expressed.
- 3) A party spirit was being developed in their midst that would disrupt the unity of the church.
 - a) It threatened the very heart and soul of the church.
 - b) Unity is designed to grow into perfection (completeness).

c) Instead, it was being derailed and in danger of tearing up the church.

C. The dangers of such actions:

- 1) Their strength would be used up in opposing each other, rather than sin & Satan.
- 2) It would bring the contempt of the world.
- 3) The head of the church would be dishonored.
- 4) Satan achieves a victory in the very institution founded to overthrow him (James 3:14-16).
- 5) Unchristian feelings are generated such as bitterness, hate, and enmity.
- 6) Saving of a lost world is hindered greatly.
 - a) A crucified Christ invites, and a divided church repels.
 - b) Men can find plenty of division, hate, estrangement, and enmity in the world.
 - c) Why come into a place that only offers the same?

II. WHAT HELPED TO CAUSE THIS CONDITION?

A. “Now this I say, that every one of you say, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”

- 1) They seem to have been showing preferences for certain teachers.
- 2) Favoritism was openly expressed to the putting down of others (4:6; 3:3).
- 3) By exalting men unduly, they created envy, strife, division, and contention.
- 4) Rather than enjoying the strengths of each teacher:
 - a) They exalted one above the other;
 - b) They showed their carnality by acting like the world.

B. There are grave dangers in exalting men above that which is written!

- 1) It is making a “god” out of the teacher.
 - a) There is still too much idolatry still in man.
 - b) They had rather have a “god” they can see.
 - c) But only God is fit to be supreme in our lives.
- 2) It is discouraging the other teachers.
 - a) Men should not seek their own glory, but to glorify Christ.
 - b) But neither should the church exalt teachers above Christ.
 - c) Servants of God should be honored for their work’s sake, but not above their Master.
 - d) It is discouraging to sincere dedicated teachers to see this error.

III. PAUL MAKES AN EMOTIONAL APPEAL TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM QUICKLY

A. He appeals to them in meekness: “I beseech you.”

- 1) He begged them, pleaded with them, exhorted them, and asked them.
- 2) Don’t continue this ungodly action in your midst!

B. He appealed to them in love: “brethren!”

- 1) He did not call them “heretics,” “outcasts,” or that they no longer were Christians.
- 2) But, he called them brethren...a term of endearment.

C. He appealed to them in candor.

- 1) He openly stated the problem—“there are contentions among you!”

2) Then, he offered a solution!

D. Solution offered by Paul.

- 1) ***“that you all speak the same things”***
 - a) Be united in what you are saying.
 - b) Turn to the Master Teacher and repeat His words—speak as He spoke.
 - c) 1 Peter 4:11
 - d) Work out a unity of expression.
- 2) ***“that there be no divisions among you”***
 - a) Put away from you the divisive, contentious spirit.
 - b) Don’t let the body of Christ be rent asunder.
- 3) ***“but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”***
 - a) Contribute your part to perfecting unity among you (Eph. 4:1-3).
 - b) Be like an orchestra:
 - Each player contributes his individual part to the whole.
 - If all are in harmony, make beautiful music.
 - If one or more are off—kills beauty of the music.
 - One discordant note can ruin the whole production.
 - c) Be of the same mind & judgment in this matter of keeping & maturing Unity.

E. His appeal was made by logical argument.

- 1) ***“Is Christ divided?”***
 - a) The answer was obvious...no!
 - b) Christ came to bind men together in love, peace, and harmony.
 - c) The spirit of division breaks up the body of Christ.
 - d) There is one head and one body!
- 2) ***“Was Paul crucified for you?”***
 - a) The answer was obvious....no!
 - b) Christ was crucified for them.
 - c) Then give due recognition to Him as the head of the church.
 - d) Give your allegiance to Him, not to men.
- 3) ***“Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”***
 - a) The answer again was obvious....no!
 - b) They were baptized into Christ—buried with him.
- 4) His conclusion was obvious!
 - a) If Christ is not divided, and He died for us, and we were baptized into Him, then:
 - Why are you exalting men above Christ?
 - Why are you dividing up the one body of Christ?
 - b) Unity is not found in men, but in Christ!

IV. WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

A. Avoid a divisive spirit in our midst.

- 1) Christ is the author of unity, oneness.
- 2) Men are the author of strife and division.
- 3) Christ came to make men one and to perfect that oneness.

B. Avoid exclusiveness.

- 1) Accept all teachers and profit from all.
- 2) Exalt none above his Master.
- 3) Christ is Lord and there is no room for another.

C. Listen to words of Christ, not men.

- 1) Men who would teach Christ, must first listen to him.
- 2) Then, and only then, are they capable of passing on His Word.
- 3) To listen to words of men as authority and not Christ is wrong.

D. We must keep working at perfecting our unity in Christ.

- 1) Whatever tends to destroy the harmony of the body is wrong.
- 2) Whatever is contrary to the teachings of Christ is wrong.
- 3) Whenever opinions of men are pushed to disrupt unity, it is wrong.
- 4) The longer we live and work together:
 - a) The more perfectly we will be joined together;
 - b) The more we will be of the same mind and judgment.
- 5) The intolerant person is the divisive person.
- 6) Whatever stops the flow of spiritual fellowship violates the Law of Christ.

CONCLUSION

1. How do we compare to Corinth?
2. Are we progressing towards perfected unity or are there divisions and parties in our midst?
3. Do we each one feel the heavy burden that we each have to perpetuate this unity?
4. What a desirable thing to come into a unified, loving family of God.
5. The Lord has made it possible and invites all to come into this harmonious fellowship.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. Somebody tattled to Paul about the church at Corinth.
- ___ 2. Oneness can be defined as “everybody like me?”
- ___ 3. People come into Christ as a part of the one body.
- ___ 4. Contentious people are not condemned in Scripture.
- ___ 5. People of the world want to come into a peaceful, unified group of people.
- ___ 6. It is not wrong to exalt men.
- ___ 7. Paul’s first appeal was on the basis of his relationship to them as a fellow Christian.
- ___ 8. Paul also used logic to convince them of their wrong attitudes and actions.
- ___ 9. Oneness is maintained when all work together in harmony.
- ___ 10. Men who want to teach Christ must first listen to Christ.

Lesson Three

“The Place of Baptism”

(1 Corinthians 1:14-17)

The church at Corinth had contentions or quarrels among them. Paul made a strong loving appeal to straighten out their thinking. He urged them to work to restore and keep a unified and harmonious spirit among them. He used logical argumentative questions to make his appeal also, such as: (1) **“Is Christ divided;”** (2) **“Was Paul crucified for you;”** and (3) **“Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”** The answers to these questions were obvious, and the point was logically made to an open mind. Paul then added a postscript to the last question (1:14-16) and gives a rather unexpected statement (1:17):

- 1) He thank God that he had not baptized any more people than he did, less they would say that they had been baptized in Paul’s name.
- 2) He does mention some that he remembered baptizing.
- 3) Then, stated, **“Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...”**

Is Paul saying he did not preach for people to be baptized? Is he saying a person doesn’t have to be baptized to be saved? Is he putting baptism into an indifferent category? Just what is Paul saying here?

DISCUSSION

I. NOTICE SOME BIBLICAL FACTS ABOUT BAPTISM

A. Paul did baptize people!

- 1) Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanus.
- 2) He was unsure in his memory about any others.
- 3) So, is Paul contradicting himself?
- 4) Is he saying he was not sent to baptize people....and then did it?

B. Paul, himself, was baptized!

- 1) The Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus.
 - a) It was to make him an eyewitness of His resurrection;
 - b) It was to make him an Apostle.
- 2) But, he was told to go into the city and wait for a preacher to be sent to him who would tell him what he must do.
 - a) Ananias was sent to him.
 - b) He was told to be baptized to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16).
 - c) Seeing the Lord did not save him....he had to obey the gospel like everyone else did.
- 3) Is Paul invalidating what he was told to do and that he did?

C. Paul taught baptism in his letters!

- 1) Passages: Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:8, etc.
- 2) Is Paul invalidating what he wrote in his letters?

D. Christ taught the necessity of baptism!

- 1) Scriptures: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16, etc.
- 2) Jesus, Himself, submitted to John’s baptism **“to fulfill all righteousness.”**
- 3) So, why does Paul say that Christ sent him not to baptize?

II. WE NEED TO LOOK AT OTHER PHRASES LIKE THESE

A. Matthew 4:4; John 6:27

- 1) Is Jesus invalidating the need of physical bread to sustain man?
- 2) Is He invalidating the need to work for physical bread?
- 3) Or is this a unique way of putting an emphasis upon what man should put first in his concern—spiritual food?

B. Matthew 12:38-39

- 1) These words sound strange because we know that Jesus did many other signs after this statement (John 20:30-31).
- 2) But is this His way of emphasizing that among all the signs that He did that there is one supreme sign—look for it—it will be His resurrection!

C. Matthew 15:21-28

- 1) This woman was a Gentile wanting help for her daughter.
- 2) Jesus refused to help and stated:
 - a) I can't help you because you are not a Jew.
 - b) I can only help Jews.
- 3) Is this what Jesus was saying?
- 4) Or was he trying to get across the message of what His main mission was at that time—it was to the Jewish nation.
- 5) He did help the Gentiles at times.

D. Luke 12:51

- 1) Everyone knows that Jesus is called the “Prince of Peace.”
- 2) Why this statement?
- 3) He did come to give peace to mankind.
- 4) But in his context, His coming and teaching would be a means of division also in families—since some would believe and some would not.

CONCLUSION

1. What was Paul trying to get across to these Corinthians?
2. It should be obvious now that we have seen other similar expressions.
 - a) He was not putting down baptism, but putting it in its proper place.
 - b) Paul's primary task was to preach the Gospel.
 - c) But when he preached the Gospel, he also had to tell people how to receive the benefits of the death of Christ by obeying that Gospel.
3. The Corinthians had gotten several things out of place.
 - a) They had exalted men above that which was written—wrong place!
 - b) They were exalting baptism above Christ—His Gospel—wrong place!
4. Baptism is import, but in its proper place.
5. Paul made it clear that if they were going to pervert his services among them this way that he was happy that he only baptized a few less they be called after him.
6. Have you heard, believed, and obeyed the Gospel of Christ?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Paul was glad he had only baptized a few people at Corinth.**
- 2. Paul, himself, was not baptized.**
- 3. Paul was inconsistent in what he taught and what he did.**
- 4. Christ did not teach the necessity of Baptism by word or action.**
- 5. Paul said that he was not sent to baptize.**
- 6. Jesus is inconsistently called the “Prince of Peace” because He came to bring division.**
- 7. Jesus said that He could not help the Gentile woman because she was not a Jew.**
- 8. Paul was putting down baptism.**
- 9. The Corinthians had put baptism in the wrong place, not Paul.**
- 10. Baptism is important in its proper place.**

Lesson Four

“Man’s Great Folly”

(1 Corinthians 1:18-31)

Henry Ward Beecher was a famous preacher in earlier times in this country. Upon one occasion he was in the presence of Robert Ingersoll, a well-known proclaimed atheist. Mr. Ingersoll expressed very strongly his disdain for religion in these words: “*Religion is a Crutch.*” Someone turned to Mr. Beecher and asked: “*Aren’t you going to reply to Mr. Ingersoll?*” Mr. Beecher’s reply was quick: “*I would like to tell you about a deplorable spectacle I witnessed today. I was downtown after it had rained. I saw a lame man with crutches slowly walking across a muddy street. About mid-way, a ruffian reached over and knocked a crutch from under him causing him to fall in the mud—everyone got a big laugh out of it.*” Mr. Ingersoll exclaimed about the person: “*What a brute!*” All joined in with agreeing with Mr. Ingersoll. Then, Mr. Beecher looked straight at Mr. Ingersoll and said: “*You, sir, are the man! The human soul is lame, but with crutches of Christianity, it is able to walk with God again. It is through your efforts that these crutches are knocked out from under people—leaving them helpless and in despair.*”

The city of Corinth was a strong center of Intellectualism, Philosophy, and Human Wisdom. The church had to realize the difference between these and the simple Gospel of Christ and continually guard against these things trying to make inroads into their midst. There is no hope in such things—they only leave man in despair. They are shown to be man’s greatest folly.

DISCUSSION

I. MAN ‘S FOLLY IS SEEN IN TRUSTING IN HIS OWN WISDOM (1:18-21)

A. God gave man plenty of time to find answers that concern his soul.

- 1) Jesus came in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4).
- 2) Mankind was given thousands of years to experiment—to find answers, but did not come up with the answers.
- 3) Man was placed in the midst of the evidences of God’s wisdom for centuries.
 - a) What did he do with it? (Rom. 1:19-32).
 - b) They refused the knowledge of God
 - c) They became vain in their human reasoning.
 - d) They would not give recognition to the handiwork of God about them.
 - e) What a fool man proved to be!

B. God calls to the so-called wise & learned men:

- 1) Where are the learned men that are suppose to have the answers?
- 2) All they know to do is to deny the obvious—the existence of the true God.
- 3) Where are the satisfactions for the needs of the human heart?
- 4) Where is the answer to man’s sinfulness?
- 5) Where is the hope that man needs in the face of death?
- 6) What God has done in Christ has shown up man’s wisdom as foolishness.
- 7) Man’s hope lies in God through Christ.

II. MAN SHOWS HIS FOLLY BY CALLING GOD'S WISDOM IN CHRIST FOOLISHNESS (1:22-25).

A. The Jew's folly is seen in their continually clamoring for signs.

- 1) Matthew 12:38-40
- 2) They had witnessed all kinds of signs to prove the Deity & Messiahship of Jesus (John 20:30-31).
- 3) But they rejected Him in spite of such.
- 4) The greatest sign of Jesus' Messiahship and Deity was His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 1:4).
 - a) But Jesus did not fit the picture they had in their minds of a great king.
 - b) They couldn't accept His death—all they could see was humiliation and shame—not the power of God.
 - c) They looked for a Messiah that would manifest great physical power, not a lowly, humble person who died a vile death on a cross.
- 5) So, they stumbled at Jesus in spite of the signs!
- 6) Their folly was made obvious!

B. The Greek's folly is seen in their trusting in human wisdom.

- 1) They sought after wisdom, worshipped it, and worshipped those who had it.
- 2) They glorified the human intellect and produced some of the great philosophers in the world.
- 3) But when the greatest of all wisdom came (Colossians 2:3), they rejected Him and made light of Him (Acts 17:32-34).
- 4) They called God's Wisdom foolishness—so their folly was made manifest!

C. But to those who are willing to listen to God's wisdom.....

- 1) They can see the great wisdom of God made known through Christ.
- 2) Paul gloried in the preaching of Christ crucified—he was not ashamed of it.
- 3) Christ is not only the wisdom of God, but as well the power of God to save.
 - a) His wisdom is shown by allowing Christ to die in our stead, so that He can justly forgive us.
 - b) His power is shown by its ability to convert the human heart.
- 4) "Christ crucified" has explosive capabilities as a force that works in the heart of sinful man to turn him back to God.
- 5) But it never takes away man's power of choice!

III. MAN ALSO SHOWS HIS FOLLY BY GLORIFYING IN HIMSELF (1:26-31)

A. Man takes great pride in his own ability to save himself.

- 1) It was true then as it is also now!
- 2) Men trust in their "worldly wisdom," "their might & power," and "their nobility."
 - a) *"I don't need any help, I can do it all by myself."*
 - b) ***"Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called"***
 - c) Why?—Because they trust in their own power and abilities.
- 3) Their folly is seen in a most obvious fact—They are lost, need help, are unable to help themselves—and don't know it!

B. For man to be saved, God must destroy his boasting in himself.

- 1) As long as he boast in himself, he will not turn to God.
- 2) If he does not realize he is lost, he won't see a need of a Savior.
- 3) He will brand the cross as foolishness.
- 4) Paul could have been describing himself here:
 - a) He was highly educated, intelligent, and wise.
 - b) He had position, power, and prestige.
 - c) He looked upon the cross as foolishness, and even persecuted those who believed in it.
 - d) Thinking all the while that he was saving himself by his good life.
 - e) But he was humbled when Christ appeared to Him.
 - f) He saw his own foolishness.
 - g) Matthew 18:3-4

C. The Gospel has been designed to destroy man's boasting in himself.

- 1) He must give up his pride and admit that he cannot do it by himself—he needs God.
- 2) He must realize that it is “in Christ” that he can find:
 - a) The true wisdom of God that man needs to live by;
 - b) The true righteousness that is imputed to us through Christ's death;
 - c) The true sanctification that gives us the cleansing of guilt from our soul;
 - d) The true redemption from the hold & bondage of sin.

D. Thus, man's boasting, glorying is now in God rather than himself.

- 1) Salvation is of God, not man.
- 2) Glory belongs to God, not man.
- 3) All fall prostrate before Him and give Him the praise rightfully due to Him.

CONCLUSION

1. Man is faced with a choice:
 - a) Continue in his own wisdom, his own ways, and perish!
 - b) Or, turn and accept the wisdom of God in Christ in order to be saved.
2. A choice:
 - a) Continue in his pride and self-sufficiency and perish!
 - b) Or, turn and walk in humility before His God and live!
3. We need to realize that man's greatest need is not his stomach or his physical needs.
 - a) But, his soul that needs saving from sin and death.
 - b) And that Christ crucified is man's only hope of that salvation.
4. Submit to God's wisdom by believing in Jesus as the Son of God and being obedient to Him.
5. To reject such is man's folly!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Ingersoll believed that religion was a “crutch” that men leaned on.**
- 2. Corinth was known for its immoralities as well as its intellectualism.**
- 3. The Jew’s folly was seen in their demand for signs.**
- 4. The Greek’s folly was seen in their trusting in their own ideas.**
- 5. But to the believer, God’s wisdom is the power to save us.**
- 6. Paul gloried in his preaching of Christ crucified.**
- 7. Christ is said to be the wisdom of God.**
- 8. God never takes away the power of human choice.**
- 9. Man’s pride and boasting in himself is his greatest folly.**
- 10. The Gospel is designed to destroy man’s boasting in himself.**

Lesson Five

“The Wisdom of God has been Revealed to Mankind”

(1 Corinthians 2:1-16)

Men have sought to know the meaning of their existence upon earth for centuries. The book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon to illustrate this concept. It was his search for the meaning of life. He tried to find meaning in every thing he could do (Eccl. 1:2-4). He sought after knowledge, pleasure, possessions, building things, wine, riches, etc. (Eccl. 2:11) and in the end said: ***“Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.”*** Why did Solomon draw this conclusion? Possibly, it could be simply stated by saying “man is mortal!” Everything man does ends up with death staring him in the face. Death constantly mocks everything he does by reminding him that in the end it will all mean nothing. Man without God, without a revelation from God, must come to the same despair!

The basic message of Ecclesiastes is that man cannot find an answer to the purpose for his existence apart from God. To attempt to do so is to end in despair. Man’s only hope is found in God (Eccl. 12:13). The Apostle Paul is saying the same thing to the Corinthians (1:21). And now in chapter two he will show that his preaching was not with the wisdom of men, but he preached the wisdom of God that was revealed to him by the Spirit of God.

DISCUSSION

I. PAUL REMINDS THEM OF HIS MANNER & SPEECH AMONG THEM (2:1-5)

A. Paul had been at Corinth some three years ago.

- 1) His preaching was not “dressed up oratory” or “worldly wisdom.”
- 2) He did not try to make the Gospel easier to accept by dressing it up with man’s wisdom.
- 3) His message was simply ***“Jesus Christ and Him crucified!”***
 - a) It was presented in a simple and unaffected manner.
 - b) It was plain and easily understood.
 - c) Human wisdom could not redeem man, but “Christ crucified” could!

B. His manner of presenting himself may not have been the best, but his message was.

- 1) Paul preached to them in weakness, fear, and much trembling.
- 2) He never knew when he would lose his life for his preaching.
- 3) The dangers were always there every day that he preached.
- 4) Past experiences made this clear.
- 5) He could have felt very inadequate in delivering such a great message to lost mankind.

C. His preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and Power.

- 1) 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thess. 1:5.
- 2) Paul had been given miraculous powers to perform to confirm His message as being from God.
- 3) The response to this preaching also showed its power to save those who believed it (Rom. 1:16).

D. The reason given for this kind of preaching.

- 1) He wanted their faith to stand in something that was stable and dependable.
- 2) The wisdom of this world is an empty shell, shifting sand, unstable, and powerless to save.
- 3) God's wisdom is the true wisdom and will endure for ever.

II. PAUL'S MESSAGE WAS THE WISDOM OF GOD (2:6-9)**A. He spoke that wisdom to those who desire the true wisdom.**

- 1) Such were looked upon as more mature people in life.
- 2) They showed their maturity by what they desired.
- 3) The world's great men did not produce Christianity.
- 4) It did not spring from Philosophers, Orators, politicians, or Conquerors.
- 5) Such wisdom comes to naught—it is empty—it cannot stand the test.

B. For a long time, God's wisdom in Christ was a mystery.

- 1) God planned it before time began—before the worlds were laid.
- 2) It was kept secret for ages (Eph. 3:3-5).
- 3) This wisdom had as its design to bring glory to God, but also the redemption of fallen man.

C. None of the world's great men knew God's secret.

- 1) The wisdom of men could not know it, nor contrive it.
- 2) If they had known it, they would not have crucified Jesus, the Lord of Glory.
- 3) He quotes Isaiah 64:4 to illustrate his point.
- 4) Man must didn't know, it was hidden from his understanding.

III. PAUL'S MESSAGE WAS A REVEALED MESSAGE (2:10-16)**A. It was God's Spirit, not man's, that revealed God's hidden wisdom.**

- 1) The Spirit of God alone is able to probe or search out the deep things of God.
- 2) Just like man's spirit alone knows his mind.
- 3) So, only God's Spirit is able to know and reveal what is in God's mind.
- 4) Man can only know the mind of God by revelation from the Spirit of God.

B. Paul said that is where his message came from—the Spirit of God.

- 1) The Spirit freely revealed God's mystery to mankind through the Apostles and Prophets in these last days (Eph. 3:3-5).
- 2) Paul did not go to men to get it (Gal. 1:11-12).
- 3) He preached only what God's Spirit gave him.
- 4) And only in the words which the Spirit gave to him.
- 5) This message was not contaminated by the wisdom of men.

C. Reason why the message could not come from man.

- 1) Man's lower nature is not interested in such a message.
 - a) It makes no appeal to the carnal nature of man—the flesh.
 - b) The fleshly man can see no value in it.
- 2) Its appeal is only to man's higher nature—the spiritual.
 - a) It is designed to save man's soul.
 - b) To those only concerned for the carnal things, these are foolishness.
 - c) Such will not understand nor receive God's truth.

D. The more mature we are spiritually in our outlook:

- 1) The keener our perception of the beauty & glory of God's wisdom.
- 2) It matters little what the world may say—they are not interested in spiritual things.
- 3) Their judgment is of little value.
- 4) The truly wise are those who recognize their need to be instructed of God and thus come to have the mind of God.

CONCLUSION

1. Which interests us—the wisdom of man or the wisdom of God?
2. Which is foolish to us—the wisdom of man or the wisdom of God?
3. Have we recognized that the Gospel is God's power to save those who believe it?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Solomon pronounces the searching's of man as vanity.**
- 2. The wisdom of men and the wisdom of God are basically the same.**
- 3. Paul only preached "Christ and Him crucified."**
- 4. Paul's preaching was accompanied by miraculous signs as proof of his message being from God.**
- 5. John says that the Gospel is God's power to save.**
- 6. God's wisdom for a long time remained a mystery to man.**
- 7. The world's great men have not come up with an answer to man's most pressing questions.**
- 8. Paul's message was a revealed message.**
- 9. Man's carnal nature (concern for this world and what it has to offer) cannot understand God's message.**
- 10. The spiritually-minded person can understand the mystery of God.**

Lesson Six

“Who are we, but Servants?”

(1 Corinthians 3:1-9)

The letter to the church at Corinth gives excellent insights to help us today. They had a lot of problems, but they were still the Lord’s people, his saints, that were still trying to learn, grow, and do what was right. However, some changes in attitudes and actions were being called for and evidently came as a result of this letter. One of the main problems that they had to deal with was their wrong views about their leaders. They had a carnal view or outlook. It was one that promoted partyism, strife, and division. Instead of bringing glory to God, they were seeking to get and give glory to men.

DISCUSSION**I. THEIR OUTLOOK TOWARDS THEIR LEADERS (3:1-4)*****A. Spiritual versus Carnal outlook.***

- 1) It could be looked upon as the mature versus the immature (Adults versus babes).
- 2) Their carnal outlook showed their immaturity—their lack of spiritual maturing.
- 3) They had to be fed with milk at first, for they were babes in Christ.
- 4) But they had not grown as they should have—so they still had need of being fed milk of the world.

B. Evidence of their carnality.

- 1) Their outlook had caused envy, strife, and divisions.
- 2) Where such is seen, there is carnality or immaturity.
- 3) They had begun forming parties after men instead of being one in Christ.

II. THE PROPER VIEW OF THEIR LEADERS (3:5-9)***A. Verse 5***

- 1) They are ministers (DIAKONOI)—servants!
- 2) They are God’s servants and your servants!
- 3) They are servants whom God has endowed & commissioned to labor in His vineyard.
- 4) God gave them their individual abilities or miraculous gifts—He is to be praised!

B. Verse 6

- 1) Each man has his special talents or abilities given him by God.
- 2) Paul could plant—Apollos could water.
- 3) Both were needed—both were valuable.
 - a) It is wrong to think too highly of one’s work.
 - b) But it is also just as wrong to under-rate one’s work & ability.
- 4) Both were used by God to bring people to salvation.

C. Verse 7

- 1) Servants are servants—they are not masters—God is the Master!
- 2) Their importance is far inferior to that of God’s importance.
- 3) Only God can give the increase—all really depends upon God.

4) Even the planning & watering is made possible by God.

D. Verse 8

- 1) All servants are on an equal footing—all are one in Christ.
 - a) All are children of God—in His family.
 - b) All are valuable.
 - c) No one is more important than another.
- 2) But, they are servants—not party leaders to gain their own following.
 - a) They do not make followers of self.
 - b) They make followers of Christ.
- 3) A servant's reward is according to his own labor.
 - a) He gains nothing by being envious of his brother.
 - b) He gains nothing by being elevated above his brothers.
 - c) His reward comes from what He Does! He is a servant!
 - d) A servant's praise is not for his position, but his faithfulness.
 - e) Reward goes to the worker, not the shirker.
 - f) The increase that God gives depends upon the planting and the watering.

E. Verse 9

- 1) Paul states a great truth—we labor together with God.
- 2) God allows us to be co-laborers.
- 3) The reason is that there is reward in such.
- 4) There is a sense of joy in this great truth.
 - a) It is a privilege to serve with God.
 - b) We were not drafted and forced to serve—we volunteered to serve.
 - c) We have the assurance that our labors will not be in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

III. LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

A. Every one in the church is a servant of Christ!

- 1) There is no big I and little you!
- 2) We do not start at the bottom and work up to the top.
- 3) Servants are servants—always servants!
- 4) We begin at the top—***“the greatest among you is servant of all.”***

B. As servants, we all have work to do.

- 1) We have been given responsibility by God—we need to do it.
- 2) Servants do not loaf and get praise from God.
- 3) Servants get praised for their faithfulness—their steadfast laboring.

C. Jesus set the pattern for servanthood in his words and life.

- 1) Matt. 20:20-28
 - a) Apostles were concerned with who would be the greatest among them.
 - b) Or, who will exercise authority over others.
 - c) Or, who will be the top dog, make the decisions, and rule the people.
 - d) Who will everyone be looking up to.
- 2) Jesus' statement must have startled them.
 - a) ***“The greatest among you is servant of all.”***
 - b) The Gentiles were concerned over ruling over people.

- c) God's people are concerned of saving people.
- d) Satisfy your desire for greatness by becoming a servant to others.
- e) "*Weak men tyrannize; strong men serve.*"
- f) Servanthood is not weakness, but strength.

3) John 13:3-5

- a) Luke 22:24 tells us why he washed their feet: "***And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.***"
- b) The custom of that day was—servants wash feet, masters don't!
- c) But Jesus, who was their Master, washed their feet!
- d) Only the secure can voluntarily become a servant!

D. The mission of the church is servanthood!

1) Eph. 5:21

- a) Submission is the foundation of servanthood.
- b) True obedience is submission to God.

2) Eph. 5:22-25

- a) Wives are to submit, not as inferiors, but as a common servant of God.
- b) Husbands are to love their wives by becoming her servant—willing even to die for her.
- c) The church obeys Christ because Christ suffered for the church.

3) Gal. 2:20

- a) The church was born on a Cross.
- b) But the church can only live by staying on a Cross.
- c) Jesus could only save us by serving us.
- d) The church can only save the world by serving the world the Gospel.
 - The attitude of evangelism is not "holier than thou."
 - But rather, a servant reaching out humbly to serve others.

4) This principle is illustrated in nature.

- a) There is a saying: "*He will have his way, but only over my dead body.*"
- b) There is an element of truth in that.
- c) Two goats met each other in a narrow path on a hill side above a river.
- d) What do they do?
 - They cannot turn back.
 - They cannot pass each other—no room.
 - If they butt each other, they both may fall into the river.
- e) Nature teaches them the answer.
 - One goat lies down and lets the other pass over his body.
 - Both will get to their destination safe and sound.

CONCLUSION

1. Some day, we look forward to hearing: "***Well done, good and faithful servant...***" (Matt. 25:21).
2. It is only the good & faithful servant that will be praised and rewarded in that day.
3. Are you a good & faithful servant of God?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION'

True or False

- 1. Carnality and immaturity go hand in hand.**
- 2. The Corinthians carnality was shown by the contentions among them.**
- 3. All Christians are servants—only servants!**
- 4. Only God can save a person who has been properly taught and matured to the point of obedience to the God.**
- 5. True servants do not make followers of themselves, but followers of Christ.**
- 6. A servant's reward is according to his labor, not his position.**
- 7. The reward is in the serving.**
- 8. The greatest is the servant among us.**
- 9. The Apostles were squabbling over who would be the greatest.**
- 10. The mission of the church is servanthood!**

Lesson Seven

“God’s Beautiful Temple” (1 Corinthians 3:10-23)

While living in Pittsburgh area in the 80s we had lunch down-town one day with one of the members of the church. He worked in the Pittsburgh Plate Glass building. I not only got a beautiful view of the city from his office window, but I was quite impressed with the PPG building and its beauty. I don’t know how durable it will be, but it was a beautiful sight at the time I was there.

We often see buildings that are magnificent structures. We comment on them, admire them, and call other’s attention to them. But all of the marvelous structures designed and built by man cannot compare with a building that has been built by God—God’s Temple! We are not talking about His Temple under the Old Covenant, but the New Temple of God—the Church! In these verses for our study today (3:10-23) there are four things that describe its beauty.

DISCUSSION**I. ITS FOUNDATION IS FLAWLESS AND STRONG (3:10-11)*****A. Paul, like a wise master builder, laid the foundation.***

- 1) He was able to do it by the grace of God.
- 2) This foundation that he laid was Christ! (1 Cor. 2:2; Matt. 16:18)
- 3) There is no other foundation that is flawless & perfect like Jesus.
- 4) The church is built upon the truth: **“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”**

B. Jesus is the only foundation to be laid.

- 1) He is sure, dependable, steadfast, and strong.
- 2) He holds up through all kinds of conditions.
- 3) There is no other true foundation that can be laid—for man’s soul’s salvation.
- 4) All else is spurious, worthless, undependable.
- 5) Without Christ, the structure will fall (John 14:6).
- 6) All efforts are fruitless if not built on Christ (Isaiah 28:16).

II. ITS SUPERSTRUCTURE IS BUILT OUT OF REDEEMED PEOPLE (3:12-15)***A. The Temple proper is made out of living stones (1 Peter 2:4-5).***

- 1) Potentially, all of God’s redeemed people should be good building material.
- 2) Unfortunately, this is unrealistic!
- 3) But, what a gorgeous structure if it were built out of the best material.

B. Contrast of material in the superstructure.

- 1) Paul contrasted two basic kinds of structures:
 - a) One made out of the best material that can stand the test of time and ravages.
 - b) The other is poor material that doesn’t last long.
- 2) With people:
 - a) It takes a little time to reveal which kind of material they are.
 - b) Matthew 13:36-43
 - c) The Wheat is gathered into the barn.

d) The Tares are burned.

C. This superstructure is built by the teaching process.

- 1) We all become Christians by being taught the Gospel.
- 2) The superstructure of the Temple of God continues to be built by teaching.
 - a) If we are taught well, we will stand the test of time.
 - b) If not, we may be cast off as unfitting of the Temple structure.
- 3) So much depends upon the right teaching being done.
- 4) The fruits of a divisive teacher is destruction of the Temple.

D. The reward and disappointment of teachers.

- 1) If our teaching takes and is thorough:
 - a) The person remains steadfast unto death.
 - b) We will be greatly rewarded by the knowledge of this fact (3 John 4).
- 2) But, if our teaching does not take as it should:
 - a) And the person doesn't remain faithful through the trials of life;
 - b) We will be greatly disappointed in knowing this.

E. But what about the teacher, himself?

- 1) He must also pass the same test of time—the trials of life.
- 2) For he also is a result of the teaching done by someone else.
- 3) If he is to be saved, it must be because he is faithful to God (Phil. 2:16; 1 Cor. 9:27).

F. As teachers of God's word, we are encouraged to:

- 1) Take heed how we build upon this foundation;
- 2) Build in harmony with the corner-stone.
- 3) Build into the walls of this Temple such material as will endure the test of time.

III. IT IS A BUILDING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD (3:16-17)

A. Redeemed people are the Temple of God today.

- 1) God does not dwell in a material temple built by men (as in the Old Testament)
- 2) We compose the house of God now.

B. This Temple is filled with God's Spirit.

- 1) His Spirit is constantly being manifested in the lives of His people (1 Jn. 3:24).
- 2) How do we know God's Spirit is within us?
 - a) We cannot see Him or smell Him or feel Him.
 - b) We know because God said so!
 - c) We know by the fact that we keep God's commandments.
 - d) Would you say that God's Spirit is in a person who is disobedient to God?

C. This Temple is not to be defiled.

- 1) It is holy unto God—a sacred place—not to be defiled by sin (Eph. 5:26-27).
- 2) We defile it by disobedience, rebellion, indifference, neglect, etc.
- 3) The man who defiles it will answer to God.

IV. NO MAN CAN IMPROVE UPON THIS BEAUTIFUL BUILDING (3:18-23)

A. God designed it, created it in Christ, it is perfect in design.

- 1) Man's wisdom cannot improve upon it.
- 2) God has clearly shown this to be true.

B. Therefore, don't look to men.

- 1) Men didn't build it, so don't glory in men, but in God.
- 2) All things that the Apostles are preaching came from God, not their own ideas.
- 3) So, don't form parties around them or other teachers of the Word.

C. Rather, rejoice in all servants of Jesus Christ!

- 1) All things are yours.
- 2) All Christians everywhere belong to us, and we to them.
- 3) All great Christians in the church are our brothers & sisters in Christ.
- 4) We can benefit from all.
- 5) We should rejoice in them all.
- 6) Rejoice, because we possess all, because we are possessed by Christ.
- 7) Let's don't under-rate the grandeur of our privileges in the Temple of God.

CONCLUSION

1. All men are to be given the opportunity to become a part of this Temple (Mark 16:15-16).
2. It is not enough to become a part of this superstructure, but we need to also let God fit us and prepare us to help give greater beauty to this Temple.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ **1. Jesus is the perfect foundation for the Temple of God.**
- ___ **2. A foundation needs to be dependable, steadfast, and strong.**
- ___ **3. To build upon any other foundation is useless.**
- ___ **4. Christians are called "living stones" in this Temple of God.**
- ___ **5. The kind of material that we are in the superstructure depends altogether on the one doing the teaching.**
- ___ **6. All faithful teachers will be able to rejoice because their students remain faithful too.**
- ___ **7. A teacher will be lost if one or more of those he teachers is lost.**
- ___ **8. God's Temple has His Spirit abiding in it.**
- ___ **9. We know the Spirit is in us because He gives us directions directly.**
- ___ **10. To defile this Temple will result in great loss to the person who defiles it.**

Lesson Eight

“Evaluating Servants of God”

(1 Corinthians 4:1-21)

Up to this point the Apostle has been dealing with the problem of contentions among them. He had pointed out the wrongness of such. He had given strong arguments, logically, to help them see the wrongness of such. He had showed them what true wisdom was—the Gospel of Christ! And...that is what Paul and the other Apostles had been preaching. And yet, some in the church were depreciating Him and others for their work. He showed them how carnal that kind of thinking was. And now he will try to help them have a right view of those who minister to them. This chapter will help us today to see how to be fair in our evaluation of those who serve in the church. It was not in exaggerating the importance of these people; nor was it done by setting one up against another; or of putting down others.

DISCUSSION**I. THEY ARE NOT MASTERS OR LORDS, BUT SERVANTS (4:1-2)*****A. Such are not to be unduly magnified, but not unduly depreciated either.***

- 1) As servants of Christ:
 - a) They were not to divide the body of Christ;
 - b) They were to be subject to Christ just like everyone else;
 - c) They were to make every effort to please Christ.
- 2) They are stewards of the “mysteries” of God.
 - a) They reveal God’s hidden mysteries.
 - b) Their work is honorable—greatly needed.
 - c) Truth did not come from them, but through them.
 - d) They give an accounting to Christ for their work.
 - e) They have been entrusted with a great work & responsibility.
- 3) They are first & foremost servants of Christ.
 - a) Much of the problem can be solved here.
 - b) They minister to the church, but they are primarily responsible to Christ
 - c) They are not to be men-pleasers, teaching to satisfy itching ears, nor to be concerned for their own “belly.”
 - d) The man who yields to men rather than to Christ degrades his name as a minister of Christ.
 - e) His value is found in the Master he serves.

B. Stewards are required to be faithful.

- 1) His faithfulness is shown by:
 - a) An obedient life;
 - b) A life of zeal in his service;
 - c) Faithfully proclaiming God’s Word;
 - d) Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all longsuffering & teaching.
- 2) Men may ask: *“Is he able, eloquent, or attractive?”*
- 3) But the Lord asks: *“Is he faithful?”*
- 4) Fidelity does not depend upon the quality or quantity of gifts, but:
 - a) On the use of what he has!

- b) Illustrated by the men who were give talents to use.
- c) *“Well done, good and faithful servants.”*

II. PAUL’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THOSE WHO JUDGED HIM (4:3-5)

A. He was not concerned about their shallow judgment of him.

- 1) This was not a spirit of arrogance, pride, or superiority.
- 2) Especially true in regards to his apostleship.
 - a) God had chosen him, not man.
 - b) What right do men have to pass judgment on his qualifications?
- 3) Besides—man’s judgment of other’s worth is too narrowly limited.
 - a) It is fallible.
 - b) Information is too defective at times.
 - c) Our minds are too subject to bias.
- 4) Man is just not fully capable of judging the character, motives, and deserts of men.
 - a) Man judges from the outward: brilliance, eloquence, profoundness of knowledge, popularity, honor, preferment, etc.
 - b) God judges from the inward—the heart!
- 5) If we are judged wrongly or depreciated by our brethren, we have a higher court to which we can appeal.
- 6) Man’s judgment is a small thing anyway.
 - a) Human judgment can have some value.
 - b) But it is a small thing in comparison to God’s judgment.

B. Paul points out the inadequacy of his own judgment of himself.

- 1) He did not know anything that disqualified him as a servant of Christ.
- 2) Yet, this did not justify him.
- 3) It is the Lord who must make that judgment.
 - a) It is the final judgment.
 - b) It will reveal all things, even the hidden things.
 - c) Due praise will be given at that time.
- 4) Even a person’s own judgment of himself can be biased & fallible.

III. GOD, THE GIVER OF GIFTS (4:6-7)

A. Paul chose to use himself and Apollos to illustrate his points.

- 1) He did not choose to call the names of those who opposed him.
- 2) He wanted to deal with the problem, not personalities.
- 3) He wanted them to see that what was being done was wrong.

B. Their practice was uncalled for.

- 1) Instead of honoring all alike as ministers of Christ, they were exalting those of more endowments.
- 2) But where did they get those gifts?
 - a) They didn’t invent them.
 - b) They came from God
- 3) You are being unfair & unjust in your evaluations.
- 4) Even when one is gifted above another:
 - a) It is still a gift, not something he merited.

- b) He has nothing that wasn't given him by God.
- c) It is something to be grateful for, not arrogant over.

IV. THE NEED FOR HUMILITY (4:8-13)

A. Paul uses sarcasm to help them see their need for humility.

- 1) You think of yourselves as full, rich, reigning as kings without us.
- 2) You think you have already arrived—you are there—you need nothing from us
- 3) We who begat you and taught you have become needless to your lordly independence.
- 4) You have arrived, while such like me are still struggling under humiliating experiences.

B. An observation: "Treat a vain man, not according to your judgment, but according to his own."

- 1) This is what Paul did.
- 2) Contrast of conditions:
 - a) You are wise, strong, honorable—We are fools, weak, despised.
 - b) You are reigning in your self-exaltation & self-importance—We are depreciated and made a spectacle to the world, angels, and men.

C. Paul returns to reality:

- 1) I only wish you did reign and I reigned with you.
- 2) But you are not there yet.

V. PAUL EXPRESSES HIS CONCERN FOR THEM (4:14-17)

A. His primary purpose was not to shame them, but to warn them.

- 1) Even though these things did shame them, it was not his primary intentions.
- 2) His strong condemnation is tempered by his feelings of being their spiritual father.

B. He reminds them:

- 1) You may have many teachers in your life;
- 2) But you will only have one spiritual father.

C. He was sending Timothy to them.

- 1) Who was also his son in the faith.
- 2) Who knew Paul intimately?
- 3) Who would correctly tell them of his ways.
- 4) Who will show you what I have taught in all the churches.

VI. A THREAT AND A QUESTION (4:18-21)

A. Paul intended to deal with those who continued in their rebellion.

- 1) Some thought Paul was afraid to come back.
- 2) He makes it clear he would soon be there to face these people.
- 3) His presence and the power of the Word of God would be shown.

B. The true contrast will be obvious at that time.

- 1) Just talk is not enough.
- 2) They will have the choice:
 - a) Do I come with a rod to chasten you?
 - b) Or, do I come in love and meekness?

CONCLUSION

1. Exalt men above that which is written and there will be trouble.
2. Let's use the gifts and abilities faithfully to the glory of God.
3. Let God be the judge of our faithfulness at that last great Day.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Servants unduly magnified become lords.**
- 2. Teachers of God's Word reveal God's hidden mysteries.**
- 3. The teacher who yields to men degrades his name as a servant of Christ.**
- 4. There is no sure way of judge one's faithfulness as a steward.**
- 5. Fidelity depends upon the quality and quantity of gifts.**
- 6. Paul was concerned about their judgment of him.**
- 7. Neither Paul, nor Apollos, were the cause of the contention at Corinth.**
- 8. God said: "Treat a vain man according to his own judgment."**
- 9. Timothy was being sent to further rebuke the dissidents.**
- 10. Paul gave his opposers a choice in how he would come to Corinth.**

Lesson Nine

“Being Moral in an Immoral World”**(1 Corinthians 5:1-13)**

What do we do when immorality spills over into the church? That such can happen is obvious from our own experiences in the church. But God also gave us an example of such and how to deal with it. What is my God-given responsibility in regards to such immorality? Do I ignore it and hope it will go away? Do I pride myself on being broad-minded about such matters? Do I place the responsibility of doing something about the condition upon others and not feel any responsibility myself? More importantly, what does God tell me to do? Do I really care what God says about the matter? Let's see what God says about this matter.

DISCUSSION**I. CORINTH'S ATTITUDE REGARDING IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH (5:1-2)*****A. The condition in the city of Corinth.***

- 1) Corinth was known for its gross immorality (1 Cor. 6:9-11)
- 2) Many in the church had evidently come out of such immorality.
- 3) They had been cleansed and made acceptable to God.

B. The condition in the church at Corinth.

- 1) “Reported commonly”
 - a) Everyone knows about it—common knowledge.
 - b) It is not hidden, but open sin.
- 2) “Fornication among you.”
 - a) This is a general word that encompasses all kinds of sexual sins.
 - b) In this case, it was an unusual kind of immorality.
- 3) “That one should have his father's wife.”
 - a) To have, to possess, or married to her or living with her.
 - b) Such was forbidden by Moses (Lev. 18:8).
 - c) The same principles evidently apply today.
 - d) She may not have been a Christian, since nothing is said about her.
 - e) They were living in open sin.
 - f) It was allowed to continue.
- 4) “Not so much as named among the Gentiles”
 - a) It was known of, but very rare.
 - b) It was repugnant and not accepted by society generally.
 - c) Even the heathen do not commonly practice this.

C. Attitude of the Church towards such.

- 1) “You are puffed up”
 - a) They had the gifts of the Spirit; yet, they showed much unspiritualness.
 - b) They prided themselves on their open-mindedness about such matters.
- 2) “Have not rather mourned”
 - a) They were not broken-up over this sinful condition in their midst.
 - b) The Jews would rend their clothes, sit in sackcloth & ashes, and cry unto God.
 - c) There was no mourning over such a grievous sin.

- 3) "Might be taken away from among you."
 - a) Nothing has been done about the condition.
 - b) The church is not at liberty to receive or reject whosoever they choose.
 - c) Christ determines this through His Word.

II. HOW DO THEY TAKE THIS PERSON AWAY? (5:3-5)

A. How?

- 1) Realized that he is judged already.
- 2) "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"—By His authority—His Word.
- 3) "When you are gathered together"—Whole church to be involved.
- 4) "To deliver such a one unto Satan"
 - a) Let him know he has been put out of God's fellowship by his sin.
 - b) That he is cut off from righteous people and righteous activities.

B. Why?

- 1) "For the destruction of the flesh"
 - a) Not to destroy his body.....but
 - b) To destroy the evil desires of the flesh.
- 2) "That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."
 - a) Help him realize he is lost, so he will come to repentance and be saved.
 - b) This action is merciful, not wrathful.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ACTION FOR THE CHURCH (5:6-8)

A. The danger of leaven!

- 1) "A little leaven leavens the whole lump."
 - a) Their boasting about this was bad enough.
 - b) But this could affect the whole church.
 - c) The purpose of leaven is to influence the whole lump of bread.
 - d) Sin can be a leavening influence among God's people, if unchecked.
 - e) It could encourage laxity & impurity on the part of others.
- 2) "Purge out therefore the old leaven"
 - a) Jews knew about this concept—Day of Passover Feast required the removal of leaven from their house.
 - They would clean house intently to get rid of all leaven.
 - They would eat unleavened bread for 7 days.
 - b) The sinning person must be purged out of the church so he cannot have a leavening affect upon it.
 - c) Put away the immoral person from your fellowship.
- 3) "As you are unleavened."
 - a) They had been completely cleansed of sin.
 - b) They had been purged from their past life by the blood of Jesus.
 - c) They are now a new lump, unleavened, without gross sin.
 - d) Christ was the Passover Lamb that cleansed them.

B. Christians have a new Feast to celebrate.

- 1) "Keep the feast"
 - a) Put away the old leaven of wickedness among you.
 - b) Put away malice and wickedness.

- 2) Serve God with sincerity and truth, not hypocritically.
 - a) Show sincerity by purity and desire to follow truth.
 - b) No compromise or truce with sin.

IV. **A REMINDER (5:9-13)**

A. "I wrote unto you in an epistle"

- 1) He had written to them about abstaining from fornication.
- 2) But also that they not fellowship with fornicators.
- 3) But not altogether with the fornicators of this world.
- 4) Not with the covetous, extortioners, idolaters, railers, drunkards.
- 5) If so, would have to go out of the world.
 - a) We have families, businesses, jobs, society, etc.
 - b) We are a part of these situations.
 - c) We cannot isolate ourselves from the world like the Essenes had tried to do among the Jews.
 - d) Monasteries were another attempt to do this among Christians.
- 6) We are not limited just to the society of Christians.
 - a) We are to live among all men righteously to impact them.
 - b) We are to take a firm stand for truth & righteousness.
 - c) There are always dangers to beware of...need to be fortified with the armor of God.
- 7) We are to be light, salt, and leaven in an immoral & sinful world.

B. "Not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother."

- 1) We do have a choice not to fellowship with a brother that is guilty of immorality.
- 2) Not to keep company—requires both public and private action.
- 3) "Not even to eat with" (2 Thess. 3:6).
- 4) Talking about those guilty of open sin and who continue in it.
- 5) With such people—do not even eat.

C. Those outside the church are left to God's judgment.

- 1) We have an obligation to make a judgment upon a brother guilty of these sins.
 - a) We are to pass sentence on him.
 - b) We are to expel him from our fellowship.
 - c) To be done with a spirit of hatred for sin that is destroying the soul.
 - d) Out of a spirit of compassion.
- 2) Leave the judging of the world up to God.

CONCLUSION

1. We live in a world with immoral people, but we do not have to engage in their sinful ways.
2. The church must keep itself pure from obvious sins such as Covetousness, Extortioners, Idolaters, Railers, or Drunkards.
3. It is important that we see God's reasons for withdrawing from the unrepentant.
4. When this is done correctly, it will accomplish one or both of the reasons God gives:
 - a) Save a soul from death.
 - b) And/or cleanse the church of immorality.

5. The church is made up of redeemed sinners, but it is not to be filled with continued immorality and sinfulness (Rom. 6:1-3).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Fornication is a generic word that covers all kinds of sexual sins.**
- 2. It is imperative that the wages of sin be emphasized to all.**
- 3. To be “unleavened” is to be made free of sin.**
- 4. The destruction of the flesh is a way to overcome the evil desires of the body.**
- 5. Only the spirit is saved, not the body.**
- 6. We should not associate with sinful people in the world.**
- 7. Eating with an immoral person can harm our spiritual well-being.**
- 8. Monasteries were an effort to get away from association with immoral people.**
- 9. The Sect of the Essenes had separated themselves from the rest of the Jewish people.**
- 10. Isolation from the world cuts off opportunity to influence the world.**

Lesson Ten

“How to Settle Disputes”

(1 Corinthians 6:1-11)

Chapter five ends with the thought of making judgments in the church and with whom we should and should not associate. This led Paul into his next topic of correction for some in the church at Corinth. There were brethren that were evidently taking one another to Law Courts of the land. Paul starts out by shaming and rebuking them and gives God’s instruction on how such differences should be handled among His people.

DISCUSSION**I. PAUL’S REBUKE (6:1-6)****A. *Don’t you know better?***

- 1) “I can’t believe you did it.”
- 2) He is showing strong disapproval of such actions.
- 3) They had set aside God’s Law and turned to heathen courts for justice.

B. *What Jesus taught (Matthew 18:15-17)*

- 1) If the matter cannot be settled by two Christians talking it out.....
- 2) Then, get one or two others in the church to help settle the matter.
- 3) If still unsuccessful, take it before the whole church.
- 4) If person will not accept decision of the church, treat him as an unbeliever.

C. *This was a question with an understood answer!*

- 1) It was not that they could not obtain justice before heathen courts.
- 2) But that they shouldn’t be there at all.
- 3) They had no business going there with their problems.

D. *The saints shall judge the world!* (Matthew 19:28)

- 1) If we are going to judge the world, can’t we judge the small matters among us?
- 2) Can’t we see how insignificant these things are in comparison?

E. *The saints shall judge Angels!*

- 1) They are higher beings that we are.
- 2) How much easier should it be to make discernments among ourselves over material things?
- 3) The inconsistency should be obvious.

F. *The least esteemed among you should be able to judge in such matters.*

- 1) In view of whom we will judge, even new Christians should be able to handle these small matters among you.
- 2) Since Corinth prided themselves on their great wisdom, where is it?
- 3) Don’t you have one wise person that can judge such matters?
 - a) Who can judge fairly and justly?
 - b) Who knows the principles of righteousness?
 - c) Who understands love and mercy?
 - d) Who can help bring about a fair, just, and loving solution?
- 4) It is bad enough that you should have such differences between each other.
- 5) But, then, to bring such before unbelievers—such is wrong!

II. THE RESULTS OF THEIR ACTIONS (6:7-8)***A. Such actions are uncalled for.***

- 1) You are already defeated by going before unbelievers about such matters.
- 2) Whatever the decision, you have lost the battle.
- 3) You have shamed the church and God by such.
- 4) It shows you have no wise men among you.
- 5) It shows an absence of sufficient love to settle the matter.
- 6) It indicates that the church has failed in what it claims to be.
- 7) You have shown by example what the church should not be like to the world.

B. It would have been far better to suffer wrong or loss to one another!

- 1) Rather than to go before unbelievers this way!
- 2) Matthew 5:39-40
- 3) The wrong is to take your brother to court.
- 4) The wrong is not to let the church decide in the matter.
- 5) The wrong is shaming the church before the community.
- 6) It shows your covetous and selfish heart.
- 7) You want unbelievers to side with you to defraud your brother.

III. A STRONG WARNING IS ISSUED (6:9-11)***A. The unrighteous are those who won't listen to God!***

- 1) It is unrighteous to take a brother to court before unbelievers.
- 2) It is just as wrong as other sins that he list.
- 3) We cannot continue in disobedience to God and remain in the kingdom.
- 4) Such cannot inherit the kingdom of God!

B. The reason why they were in the kingdom:

- 1) They had repented—changed their mind about continuing in sin.
- 2) They had died with Christ and buried with him.
- 3) They were washed, justified, sanctified by the blood of Jesus.
- 4) Made acceptable to God.

C. This change is what makes them capable and wise judges among themselves.

- 1) Your minds, hearts, and lives have been turned to God and His ways.
- 2) You are willing to be taught of God.
- 3) Your minds and hearts are filled with God's Will.
- 4) Thus, you are more than capable of making decisions about temporal things among you.

CONCLUSION

1. God wants us to realize who we are!
 - a) We are saints of God.
 - b) This is not only a great privilege, but a grave responsibility as well.
2. In becoming saints of God:
 - a) We have committed ourselves to be obedient to God's will in our lives;
 - b) We have obligated ourselves to one another to help solve problems in our midst;
 - c) We must never defraud one another by going before unbelievers with these problems.
3. It is very important that we solve problems in our midst in God's way.
 - a) Thereby, we bring glory to God.

b) We also let the world see that Christ's teachings are practical and they work.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Taking a brother to law court of the land is a sin—just as much as any other sin!**
- 2. Christians could get better justice before the law courts than among themselves.**
- 3. Saints are going to judge the world and angels.**
- 4. The Christians at Corinth prided themselves on their wisdom.**
- 5. To go before the unbelievers to settle a matter brings shame on the church.**
- 6. Such action would indicate that there is not a wise person among us.**
- 7. Paul said it would be better to suffer wrong than to go to court with a brother.**
- 8. Unrighteous people are those who don't listen to God.**
- 9. A sinful person can be cleansed without repentance.**
- 10. Homosexuals and adulterers can continue in their sinful practice even after becoming a Christian.**

Lesson Eleven

“Redemption of Both Body & Soul”

(1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

The city of Corinth was known for its sinful indulgences. Idolatry was made very attractive by advocating immorality in the name of religion. Sin was justified by identifying it with religion. But when the Gospel was preached to them, a large number were converted from these sinful practices. They had turned from such to the living God and thereby cleansed, sanctified, and justified before God. But there was always that danger of sin creeping in under a false guise. For example: It is pointed out that a man satisfies his desire for food when he is hungry; so, it is acceptable to satisfy the desires of the body sexually. It is as though the body and the spirit were separated from each other. Paul shows in these verses that the body is deeply involved in the concept of redemption.

DISCUSSION**I. LIBERTY IN CHRIST MUST BE USED WISELY (6:12-14)*****A. In becoming a Christian we are delivered from a lot of restrictions.***

- 1) We have liberty or freedom in Christ.
- 2) Yet, we are warned not to use that freedom to do unrighteous things!
- 3) We must not push that liberty beyond limits to do harm.

B. The question of right and wrong are fixed, absolute, and changeless!

- 1) What the Law of God states to be right and wrong cannot be gainsaid.
- 2) But, there are many other matters that are “indifferent in themselves.”
- 3) They are neither right nor wrong in and of themselves.
- 4) Therefore, they are all lawful or allowable!

C. However, not all of these things may be expedient to do.

- 1) Even the indifferent things must be carefully evaluated.
- 2) We must not use our liberty to hurt others.
- 3) It may be Lawful (allowable), but not profitable for others.
 - a) “I may, but I will not because of the possible harm to another.”
 - b) “I have a right, yet for others’ sake, I must not do it.”

D. Paul warns against being brought under the power of any of these things.

- 1) Moral freedom can be misused.
- 2) Things must be our servants, not our masters.
- 3) We must not allow ourselves to be brought under bondage to anything.
- 4) Must be able to say with definiteness: “I can give up anything I need to.”

E. We are designed to eat food to survive.

- 1) But all bodily needs should be satisfied in a proper way—even food.
- 2) We must not make a god out of our belly—it must not rule us (Rom. 16:18; Col. 3:19).
- 3) Both the food and the body will perish someday.
- 4) So, put them in their proper place.

F. The body is not designed for fornication.

- 1) The body needs food to survive, but not fornication.
- 2) Fornication is an abuse of the body—an insult to the Lord.

- 3) The body of the Christian has a higher purpose.
- 4) It has been redeemed to serve God, not self or sin (Rom. 6:13).
- 5) We have been redeemed—both body and soul to be used to glorify God.

G. The Resurrection shows this.

- 1) The body of Jesus was raised up.
- 2) Our bodies will be raised up also—to be eternally redeemed.

II. THE SACREDNESS OF THE BODY (6:15-17)

A. The redeemed are called the “body of Christ”, “members” in particular (1 Cor. 12)

- 1) The significance of such is that the body is sacred.
- 2) It is in close union with Christ Himself—holy, sanctified.
- 3) Do you take this sacred body and join it to a harlot?
- 4) God forbid—may it never be.
- 5) Such makes no sense at all.

B. God ordained marriage in the beginning for a man and woman.

- 1) It is the only relationship in which sexual intercourse is acceptable to God.
- 2) All others are sin.
- 3) Harlotry, fornication, sexual immorality of all kinds are not what God intended.

C. Oneness is emphasized in both situations.

- 1) The Christian is closely joined with Christ as one when he is redeemed.
- 2) But that involves his body as well as his spirit.
- 3) The Lord dwells in us (Gal. 2:20; 3:27).

III. WARNING—DO NOT DEFILE THIS REDEEMED BODY (6:18-20)

A. Fornication is a sin against our body.

- 1) Much of the sins that men commit do not affect the body directly.
- 2) But fornication involves the body directly.
- 3) It is a polluting of the sacred—that which has been redeemed.
- 4) Other sins of the body usually involve an excess—which makes it wrong.
- 5) But fornication is wrong, period!
- 6) Therefore, flee it—there is no victory except in flight from it.

B. The Godhead has taken up His abode in us.

- 1) He emphasizes again the sacredness of the redeemed body.
- 2) Under the Old Covenant, the Temple was God’s dwelling place among His people.
- 3) His presence sanctified the whole temple and its environs.
- 4) Nothing was to enter that would defile it.
- 5) Our bodies are also sanctified by God’s presence.
- 6) We need to keep our body pure, clean, holy.

C. Paul also reminds them that they have been purchased.

- 1) You are not your own—you’ve been bought!
 - a) Your heart, thoughts, time, abilities, influence, possessions, etc.
 - b) All are dedicated to God...now!
 - c) We have given up our will to do God’s will.
- 2) There was a time when:
 - a) We thought of ourselves as our own;

- b) We were going our own way;
 - c) We were free to do as we please;
 - d) But, in reality, we were in bondage to sin!
- 3) Christ's blood redeemed us from that bondage.
- a) God has the right of possession now.
 - b) Therefore, we ought to glorify God in our body and spirit.
 - c) Show our gratitude and love by being obedient children.

CONCLUSION

1. Man can't have his cake and eat it too!
 - a) If he wants redemption of his body, he must pay the price!
 - b) He must die to the practice of sin.
2. The privileges are great however:
 - a) God's Spirit takes up His abode in our bodies;
 - b) We become a part of Christ (identify with His body—the church);
 - c) We become the peculiar possession of God.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ **1. The Christian has liberty in Christ because he is delivered from law keeping.**
- ___ **2. The sincerity of a Christian is measured by how he uses or abuses his freedom.**
- ___ **3. We are not free if we allow things to bring us into their bondage.**
- ___ **4. Eating food is a necessity for life, but not over-indulgence.**
- ___ **5. Fornication is a sin against one's own body.**
- ___ **6. Redemption involves both body and spirit.**
- ___ **7. The Resurrection proves that the body is involved in our eternal redemption.**
- ___ **8. Sex in marriage is acceptable, but not outside of marriage.**
- ___ **9. The Godhead abides in the Christian.**
- ___ **10. We belong to God because He has bought us.**

Lesson Twelve

“Marriage versus Singleness”

(1 Corinthians 7:1-24)

The city of Corinth not only had justified fornication in the name of religion, but they had also perverted marriage and singleness. Some were even advocating asceticism because sexual intercourse was impure. They felt that it was beneath the dignity and spiritual outlook of holy people. Some seemed to have advocated that you can't serve God acceptably in the married state. Others were advocating singleness as the most desirable way to live because you would be unencumbered. But at the same time, they were advocating it was okay to commit fornication to satisfy the desires of the flesh. This may have been a danger that the church at Corinth was facing. Some of these same questions need to be dealt with today in our society and even in the church.

DISCUSSION

I. COMPARISON BETWEEN SINGLENES & MARRIAGE (7:1-7)

A. Singleness:

- 1) “It is good for a man not to touch a woman”
 - a) Possibly, speaking of marriage or an immoral relationship of some kind.
 - b) This is not commanding singleness.
- 2) Celibacy or singleness was widely practice at this time in Corinth.
 - a) It may have been advocated in the church at a doctrine to be followed.
 - b) Paul dealt with this in 1 Timothy 4:1-3.
 - c) Paul did state, however, that Celibacy is good.
 - d) Later in the chapter he will point out some advantages of such.
 - e) He even encourages singleness on the part of some.
- 3) However, Paul does not say that celibacy is a necessity in order to be a Christian.
 - a) Celibacy is not better than marriage.
 - b) In fact, common sense shows that trying to be single can cause much evil.
 - c) The reason is that some people cannot deal with it properly.

B. Marriage:

- 1) Marriage can prevent immorality.
- 2) Temptations to immorality are all around us.
- 3) It is better to married that burn in our lust.
- 4) Neither is elevated over the other—both have their positives and negatives.
- 5) God recognized that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18).

C. Sexual responsibilities in Marriage:

- 1) When one marries, there are obligations, dues to be paid, or debts owed.
 - a) Each partner has his or her rights.
 - b) Each is called upon to pay their due to the other.
- 2) There needs to be the concern about satisfying the desires of their mate.
- 3) In so doing, they diminish the possible temptation of seeking unlawful gratifications elsewhere.

- 4) The idea is that a mate does not have sole authority over their own bodies.
 - a) They belong to each other.
 - b) Marriage is for two, not one.
 - c) Neither has exclusive power or say over their own bodies.
- 5) It is a surrendering of self to each other.
 - a) It is to show unselfish concern for their mate.
 - b) It is to show a desire to please their mate.
- 6) It is not to be a power one holds over the other's head for their own ends.
 - a) To withhold one's body from a mate is to defraud the mate.
 - b) An exception:
 - Where there is a mutual consenting to forego for a time.
 - In order to spend special time in prayer and fasting.
 - c) Main thrust—don't give Satan an opportunity to tempt you by refraining too long.

D. To marry or not to marry—that is the question.

- 1) Paul could not command marriage or singleness.
 - a) It is a matter that each person has to decide for themselves.
 - b) Paul could make recommendations to them and give good reasons for such, but he could not require such.
- 2) In fact, it was Paul's wish that all could be as he was.
 - a) This is not saying that singleness is better than marriage.
 - b) Paul had the gift to be celibate—he could handle it.
 - c) Not every man has the ability to contain himself.
 - d) There has to be strength to control appetite or lust.

II. PAUL'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UNMARRIED & WIDOWS (7:8-9)

A. Let them abide even as Paul—single!

- 1) This is his judgment, not a command of God.
- 2) He was inspired to write what he wrote.
- 3) But, it was advice not a command.
- 4) He says that it is good, not a necessity, to remain single.

B. If a person cannot contain let them marry!

- 1) It is not a sin to marry!
- 2) It is a choice that God has given to us.
- 3) There is no advantage to singleness if the mind is constantly having to deal with the problem of desires.
- 4) Even under the "present distress" (whatever that was)—Paul said it was better to marry than to burn in lust.

III. LEGISLATION TO THE MARRIED (7:10-11)

A. Paul is now able to give a command from the Lord.

- 1) The wife is not to leave or separate from her husband.
- 2) The wife might get caught up in the idea of being celibate.
- 3) Such was not a justifiable reason for leaving her husband.
- 4) You are married and you have obligations—fulfill them.

B. Exceptional situations in the marriage negate the above.

- 1) This verse would seem to assume that there was a grave problem for the wife in the home.
 - a) For some reason she could not live under the same roof with her husband.
 - b) Possibly, he is terribly mistreating her, etc.
- 2) So, if she does leave under these circumstances:
 - a) She is not permitted by God to remarry.
 - b) To do so would be adultery.
- 3) If she has a problem living a single life, then put forth an effort to be reconciled to her husband.
- 4) The husband is warned not to divorce his wife for leaving him either.
 - a) Divorce finalizes the marriage relationship.
 - b) It permits people to legally marry again that would be wrong—sin!

IV. REGISTRATION TO THE CHRISTIAN WITH AN UNBELIEVING MATE (7:12-16)***A. Keep the marriage in tact!***

- 1) The believing mate is not to divorce or leave the unbeliever.
 - a) Some may have thought that their marriage was unacceptable to God.
 - b) Under the Old Testament such were put away (Ezra 10).
 - c) They were not permitted to marry outside of Jewish people.
- 2) But under the New Testament this is not true.
 - a) Your marriage is acceptable to the Lord.
 - b) The unbelieving mate is a privileged person being married to a believer.
 - c) Children born to this relationship are also acceptable.

B. When you have no choice!

- 1) If the unbelieving mate chooses to leave, then what?
 - a) In some instances, when a person became a Christian, unbelievers were unhappy.
 - b) The believer would not be able to do things with them that they had done before.
 - c) Thus, making the marriage no longer desirable to the unbeliever.
- 2) What should the Christian do?
 - a) Let them leave if you cannot dissuade them.
 - b) “Not under bondage”—Not under obligation to hold the marriage together at all cost.
 - c) That cost might be to give in to the unbeliever and turn from Christ.
 - d) Christians should not turn their back on Christ to save a marriage.
- 3) God has called his people to peace—not contention.
 - a) God wants peace and harmony in the home—not contentions that destroy.
 - b) Sometimes, the only way to peace is to separate.
- 4) One good reason for staying together is the possibility of saving your mate (1 Peter 3:1-4).

V. CHRISTIANS ARE URGED TO ABIDE IN THE SITUATION THEY WERE CALLED IN (7:17-24)***A. The Gospel calls men that are in all kinds of circumstances in life.***

- 1) Being a Christian does not demand that you change your situation in life, but rather use it to glorify God.
 - a) Especially when this change would require a revolution.
 - b) Christ is not advocating overthrow of slavery—but live a Christian life in the midst of such.
 - c) Let Christ help you deal with your undesirable situation or circumstances.
- 2) He gives illustration:
 - a) Are you called being a Jew (circumcised)?
 - Don't be ashamed of it.
 - Don't try to hide or do away with it.
 - b) Are you called being a Gentile (uncircumcised)?
 - Don't be ashamed of your uncircumcision.
 - Don't feel obligated to become circumcised.
 - Circumcision is nothing any more.
 - Uncircumcision is not wrong any more.
 - This outward sign that God formerly required is no longer required.
 - What is important—is keeping the commandments of God.
- 3) So, stay like you are—in the situation you were called in.
 - a) Live a devoted Christian life in that situation.
 - b) You can serve God married or unmarried.
 - c) You can serve God circumcised or uncircumcised.
 - d) You can serve God as a slave or as a free man.
 - e) The emphasis is on serving God in whatever situation you are in.
- 4) More thoughts about being a Christian slave.
 - a) If you were a slave when you became a Christian, don't let that bother you. God will give you grace to live as a slave.
 - b) If you were a freeman or have gained your freedom when you became a Christian, then serve God.
 - c) Even if you are a slave:
 - You are God's free man—He has set you free!
 - If you will remember this, nothing can hinder your faithful service to God.

B. Light needs to shine in all walks of life.

- 1) In the family setting, at work, on the farm, at school, etc.
- 2) Christ's teaching will help you shine as lights in all walks of life.
- 3) Keep remembering:
 - a) You have been bought with a price.
 - b) You are to be the willing slave of God.
 - c) Serve God, no matter what your situation is.
 - d) Outward circumstances are not all that important in being a Christian.

C. Challenging questions:

- 1) If we are to abide in the condition we were called in:
 - a) Does that mean that I can continue to live in a sinful condition?
 - b) The answer should be an obvious NO!
- 2) When our occupation is inconsistent with the Law of God, what should I do?
 - a) Get out of it!
 - b) This passage does not justify sinful practices.
- 3) If God calls me to become a Christian and I am in a false religious system, what should I do?
 - a) You should leave it!
 - b) We are to practice true religion.
- 4) If my marital or sexual relationship is not right, what do I do?
 - a) Do I remain in a sinful relationship before God?
 - b) Or, do I leave it?
 - c) The answer should be obvious!
- 5) Is the Lord trying to check my desire to do better in life?
 - a) If I am called being poor, must I remain poor the rest of my life?
 - b) If I am called being uneducated, must I remain uneducated?
 - c) The answer should be obvious!

CONCLUSION

1. Marriage or singleness is acceptable with God
 - a) Neither can be bound as commands of God.
 - b) Each have their advantages and disadvantages that need to be looked at.
2. Singleness takes a special gift from God to live it correctly.
3. Marriage has its obligations that must be fulfilled.
4. Separation or divorce is not what God wants of His people.
5. Becoming a Christian does demand that I turn away from sin (2 Pet. 3:9).
6. But thankfully, I don't have to change my circumstances in life to become a Christ or to live the Christian life.
 - a) I can serve God in all walks of life that are not sinful.
 - b) God needs his people in all walks of life to be a light.
7. Christianity adapts to society, it does not advocate the violent overthrow of it.
8. Proper conduct on the part of Christians:
 - a) Would keep the people & rulers from persecuting unjustly.
 - b) Would also help them to realize that Christianity was a spiritual challenge first of all, and then society will change for the better.
9. On the other hand, if Christians became radicals and:
 - a) Cast off family obligations or disrupt social ties;
 - c) Break up earthly relationships, etc.;
 - d) They would be justly persecuted by society at large.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Singleness is extolled and thought to be better than marriage.**
- 2. Marriage is God's way of avoiding fornication.**
- 3. Marriage responsibilities must be shouldered by both husband and wife.**
- 4. Defrauding a mate leaves the door open for Satan to enter.**
- 5. Paul actually wished that all were single like him.**
- 6. Paul commanded that the unmarried and widows remain celibate.**
- 7. God does not want the believer to leave the unbelieving mate just because they are an unbeliever.**
- 8. If the unbeliever leaves the believer, the believer is free to marry again.**
- 9. If I am called being a homosexual, I can remain a homosexual and be acceptable to God.**
- 10. If I am called living in an adulterous marriage, I can remain in such and be acceptable to God.**

Lesson Thirteen

“Circumstances help to Determine Decisions”

(1 Corinthians 7:25-40)

Paul continues to either point out God’s commands or his advice in certain circumstances that must or might be followed. He next deals with virgins and fathers of virgins. He then turns to give advice to widows as well. A clear cut understanding must be kept between God’s Law and Paul’s advice. In most instances such is clearly stated.

It is important to also remember that Paul is not commanding or recommending anything that would advocate a violent overthrow of society. But he also makes it clear that a Christian can serve God in all kinds of situations that are not sinful in and of themselves.

DISCUSSION

I. PAUL’S REASON FOR ADVISING SINGLENESS (7:25-35)

A. It was primarily because of the “present distress.”

- 1) Some circumstances make singleness more desirable for the Christian.
- 2) But in other or better circumstances, marriage may be the more preferable.
- 3) Persecution had already scattered the early Christians in Palestine.
- 4) Isolated persecution had flared up in various places when the church was started.
 - a) Nero’s persecution would come in the near future that would cause provinces to take up persecution as well.
 - b) Thus, any conditions that make it hard on married people might advise against marriage.
 - c) You have a right to marry—it would not be a sin.
 - d) In general, it is best that all people marry.
 - e) But in certain circumstances, marriage may be harder to cope with than singleness.

B. What to do in light of what was happening?

- 1) If you are married—stay married—no choice.
- 2) If you are loosed from a wife—do not seek to marry.
- 3) But, in either case, if they married, they have not sinned.
- 4) Paul was merely trying to spare them the heartache that would come soon.
- 5) Married people are going to have tribulation because of the conditions coming.
 - a) He wanted to spare them of these additional problems & sufferings.
 - b) It is easier to suffer and even die for the faith when it is you alone.
 - c) But when you have to witness your wife and children die, it is harder.
 - d) Some even give in and deny the faith under such circumstances.
 - e) Thus, the possibility of deep sorrow and despondency.

C. How soon would the conditions worsen?

- 1) It is not too far in the future—Nero’s persecution was about AD 64.
- 2) The husband could lose his wife in a moment.
- 3) Their marriage brought to an abrupt end.
- 4) Sorrow and rejoicing are for a short time.

- 5) The things we buy are fleeting and gone.
- 6) The secure and eternal things are spiritual (Col. 3:1-2)
- 7) Earthly things & relationships can bring unhappiness, sorrow and temptations in certain situations.
- 8) Spiritual things can bring us into eternal joy.

D. The cares connected with the married state can make it harder in some situations.

- 1) The single care for things that belong to the Lord only.
- 2) The married must care for things of the Lord, but are also encumbered with the cares of their mate and children.
- 3) And when times of trial come, we may be tempted to be unfaithful to the Lord.
- 4) Paul did not write these things to place a stumblingblock before them.
 - a) He was concerned about their welfare.
 - b) He wanted them to be able to serve the Lord effectively.
 - c) He was not putting marriage down.
 - God instituted it for the good of mankind.
 - It was He who said that it was not good for man to be alone.
 - We must have marriage to replenish the earth.
 - Marriage can be a great support, strength, encouragement, and consolation.
 - It can have a great influence for good.
 - d) Neither was he overstressing singleness.
 - It can have its problems too—its disadvantages.
 - But singleness should not be put down either, nor dishonored, nor ridiculed.
 - It has its values to those who can live that kind of life.

II. ADVISE TO FATHERS OF VIRGINS (7:36-38)

A. Fathers do not sin in giving their consent for their virgin daughters to marry.

- 1) If that is what they desire, let them marry.
- 2) To try to force singleness upon them is not what God wants.

B. Neither is it wrong to encourage your virgin not to marry.

- 1) If this seems to be the best for all concerned;
- 2) If your virgin is not under necessity to marry;
- 3) Don't force marriage upon her.
- 4) Let her remain single, which is good.

C. Either way is acceptable to God.

- 1) If give virgin in marriage, you do well.
- 2) If you can keep your virgin in singleness, you do better. (in view of what is coming).
- 3) Parental counsel and guidance are wise and well.
- 4) But parental compulsion is gross folly.

III. ADVISE TO WIDOWS (7:39-40)

A. According to the Law of God:

- 1) If your mate is dead, you are free to marry again if you so choose.
- 2) But he gives a qualification—***“Only in the Lord.”***

- a) Some understand this to mean she can only marry a Christian.
 - b) Common sense tells us that a Christian married to another Christian will find it easier to live the Christian life.
 - c) Passage that is often used to substantiate such (2 Cor. 6:14).
- 3) But there are problems with this approach:
- a) In 1 Cor. 7:12-13, God condoned the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever.
 - If it was wrong, why wouldn't they have to separate?
 - Even if one became a believer after marriage, it still would be wrong if such a relationship is sinful.
 - b) In Eph. 6:1, a child is to obey his parents "in the Lord."
 - Does the child only have to obey if his parents are both Christians?
 - Or, obey as long as they are directing him in the way of the Lord?
 - c) In 1 Cor. 5:11, Christians are to withdraw fellowship from those who are unrepentant of sinfulness in their lives.
 - Then, would we not have to withdraw from a widow who marries a non-Christian?
 - She is in as much rebellion as those mentioned in 1 Cor. 5.
- 4) Does this mean:
- a) She is free to marry whom she chooses.....
 - b) As long as she can freely continue in the way of the Lord without problems?

B. However, Paul advises such widows to remain single, if possible.

- 1) This was Paul's judgment, not a command of the Lord.
- 2) He thinks that she would be happier, free from cares, distractions and entanglements.

CONCLUSION

1. Remember....whatever state we choose to be in (Married or Single):
 - a) That time is short on earth at best;
 - b) Do not settle down in this world as though it were our final abiding place;
 - c) Eternity is upon us...be concerned about preparing for it;
 - d) Marriage or Singleness is but a flash in comparison.
2. Concerning the cares of this life:
 - a) We are warned against allowing them to make us unfruitful as Christians.
 - b) Whether single or married, keep life as simple as possible.
 - c) Serve the Lord faithfully in fruitfulness (Col. 3:1-2).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. The coming persecutions may have been the main reason for advising singleness.**
- 2. To witness the martyrdom of a mate and children could be a great challenge for a married person.**
- 3. It would have been a sin for widows and virgins to married under the present circumstances.**
- 4. Paul's unusual advice was for their welfare primarily.**
- 5. Father's of virgins should force them not to marry in view of the "present distress."**
- 6. Widows can only marry a Christian and be pleasing to God.**
- 7. Paul advises widows not to remarry.**
- 8. Serving the Lord faithfully should be our chief concern.**
- 9. Those who have been buried with Christ and raised with Him should be seeking the things which are above.**
- 10. A single person can be a better servant of the Lord.**



