

The Book of 1 Corinthians,

1st Century Solutions
for 21st Century Problems

2012 Victory Lectures
West Virginia School of Preaching

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1st Century Solutions for 21st Century Problems



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The Book of 1 Corinthians,

1st Century Solutions
for 21st Century Problems

West Virginia School of Preaching
Victory Lectures

Hosted by:

Hillview Terrace Church of Christ
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Lectureship Committee:

Elders of Hillview Terrace Church of Christ &
Members of the West Virginia School of Preaching
Faculty

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Dedication



If justice is to be served in history's record, Gene West ought to be known as one of the world's most underappreciated men. For well over sixty years, he has been preaching faithfully the Gospel of Christ. During that time, he has preached thousands of sermons from pulpits, and taught several lessons via the media of television and radio. He has taught classes in congregational, college, and other school settings. He has counseled on an informal basis many souls seeking salvation, and saved seeking guidance. He edited brotherhood publications, often at personal expense. He has directed weeks of Christian Youth Camps and influenced thousands upon thousands of lives. More recently, he has distinguished himself as a voluminous scholar, putting together class notes on the numerous classes he taught for

West Virginia School of Preaching, and publishing volumes on the books of Revelation, Acts, and (in process at time of printing) Romans. As packed as this paragraph is with his work, it only touches the proverbial hem of the garment of the amount of labor of this soldier of the cross of Christ. The objective observer simply does not comprehend how one man could do all that he has done.

Of course, part of that answer might come from the steadfast love, loyalty, and support of his godly wife, Shirley. She has served him as a wife, as mother to their three fine children, Kandi (Davis), Mary Amy (Kessinger), and Todd. She has been a proofreader, filer, secretary, gopher, and tireless worker in many other capacities.

This dedication is brief, Gene and Shirley, but our love is deep. From all over, wherever you have labored—in Moundsville, Vienna, Fairmont, Florida—wherever, people love you. People appreciate you. And therefore, we, for whatever segment of the brotherhood we might presume to represent, dedicate this lectureship and its commemorative volume to you.

Eldership Honored

Bridgeport Church of Christ

This year's Lectureship Committee has chosen to honor the elders of the Bridgeport, WV Church of Christ. For years, this good church has been a shining light in the communities of Bridgeport and the surrounding Clarksburg area and has been unwavering supporters of the truth being spoken in love. In addition they have been financial, emotional, spiritual, and prayerful supporters of the West Virginia School of Preaching since it began. We are thankful for their devotion to the proclamation of the Word which is displayed by their support of the WVSOP and many other good and right venues. Through the years, many elders have served this church; those listed below are those who are currently serving. They stand in a good tradition of good men. We hereby aim to give them honor where honor is due (cf. Rom. 13:7; 1 Tim. 5:17).

Raymond Anderson. Raymond was born May 9, 1956 in Clarksburg, WV. He has spent his entire life living on his family's home place in Bridgeport. Raymond is no stranger to hard work. As a child, continuing through high school, he worked on the neighbor's farm helping to milk 38 head of cattle each morning before heading off to school. When he returned home in the evenings, he helped with the evening milking and other farm chores.

Since graduating from Bridgeport High School in 1974 he has become skilled in many fields, including carpentry, paving, and auto and diesel mechanics. For the last 28 years he has been employed by the Harrison County Board of Education as a mechanic.

In 1976 he married Debra Cunningham; together they have raised two daughters, Nissa and Sabrina. Raymond and Debbie now enjoy five grandchildren.

Baptized in 2003, Raymond quickly became a worker for the Lord at the Bridgeport congregation. In April 2006 he took on the job as deacon regarding the elderly and shut-ins and became an elder in July of 2009.

Bob Moore. Bob was born March 19, 1933 at home in the North View neighborhood of Clarksburg, West Virginia. He was active as a Boy Scout and a paperboy, as well playing sports in junior high and high school. Upon graduation from Victory High School in 1951, he enrolled at West Virginia University.

He was baptized at the Central Church of Christ August 22, 1954. That December he married his high school sweetheart, Jackie Wilson.

While finishing his final course work at WVU they moved to Fairmont, where they worshipped at the Columbia Street Church of Christ with Frank and Rose Higginbotham who had just begun their first located work.

Bob received his degree in Mechanical Engineering in January 1956. He and Jackie moved to Aberdeen Maryland where he was stationed in the US Army. Upon his discharge from the military, Bob accepted a job with Hope Natural Gas Company, Clarksburg. During his career with this company he worked in various locations, retiring from CNG Transmission as Vice President of Operations with more than 37 years service.

Bob and Jackie have two children, Cindy and Ben. Both of them as well as Ben's wife, Stephanie, graduated from Ohio Valley University. Cindy and Ben continued their education at Harding University. Their three grandchildren also have strong ties to OVU; as a graduate, a current student, and a future student (2014). All are active members of the Church.

Bob has served as a member of Ohio Valley University's Board of Trustees for 40 years. He has thrilled to recently have Ben join him in this service.

For the past 19 years he and Jackie have worshipped at the Bridgeport Church of Christ, where he has served as an elder 14 years.

Stan Williams. Stan was born January 11, 1944 in Foster, WV (Boone County). Stan has twelve years of education along with several side courses on a variety of subjects. He is a veteran,

having served three years in the U.S. Army, spending most of his time in Germany. He worked for Amax for ten years, then, in 1978, transferred to Ormet to first work in production. He later became a maintenance supervisor. Stan took early retirement at the age of 58 and moved from Tyler County to Lewis County where he built a house in which to retire.

Stan and his wife Linda were married in 1967 and have been happily married for 45 years. They have two sons—Steve, who lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Scott, who lives at home.

Stan grew up in the Lord's church, attending a congregation near his home on a regular basis. He was baptized in the mid-1970s by Clarence DeLoach at the Camden Ave. Church of Christ in Parkersburg. He and Linda have attended a number of congregations over the years, settling in Bridgeport in October 2008, having transferred their membership from Weston. Stan was asked to become an elder in October 2009, accepting at the same time as Raymond Anderson. Stan notes that he, Raymond, and Bob have developed quite the strong bond as an eldership.

It is our privilege to honor these men, and thank them for their loving shepherding of the flock of God in their locale.

Foreword

One never knows the extent and scope of a particular work until it is thoroughly thrust upon him. When first inheriting the editorship of this book, I knew it would be a time-consuming, tedious, intensive responsibility. But, I still had no idea of the magnitude of it. Without a team effort of a whole bunch of people, this would just not be possible.

The team began with Gene West, who, first, graciously edited last year's book—one more than he originally intended. Then, he has been of valuable assistance throughout this year's process. Faithful proofreaders once again—as they had for Gene—stepped up to the plate: Our deepest thanks to Lisa Games, Kelly McCracken, Christie Robison, Elizabeth Robison, Dana Simons.

Lastly, but above all, all involved share in giving deepest gratitude and all glory to Almighty God, with Whom all things are, indeed, possible.

Andy Robison

Introduction

The theme adopted by the Lectureship Committee for the 2012 West Virginia School of Preaching Victory Lectures is apt and timely: *1 Corinthians: 1st Century Solutions for 21st Century Problems*. When first teaching through the book of 1 Corinthians early in my preaching career, I was struck with how things have not changed through the ages. It is, indeed, as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 1:9-10,

That which has been is what will be,
That which is done is what will be done,
And there is nothing new under the sun.
Is there anything of which it may be said,
“See, this is new”?
It has already been in ancient times before us.

The problems “the church of God...at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2) faced were no different than the problems faced by the postmodern brotherhood. They had problems with division over men and personalities. They were carnal and fought amongst themselves (1 Cor. 1-4). They had immorality that overwhelmed and spoiled the enlightening influence of the church (5-6). They had problems over marriage—who should stay married, and who could be remarried (7). Trivial matters turned into contentious, faith-spoiling affairs (8-10). In their worship, they abused the Lord’s Supper (11), skirmished over who was more important (12-14), and struggled with false doctrine (15). They even had trouble discerning the role of women in the church (11:2-16; 14:34-35). There may even have been an issue about giving (16:1-2). Does this sound like any group of Christians you know?

On occasion, the Restoration Plea has been mocked on the basis of this dysfunctional church. The scoffers have asked if we really want to restore such a divided group of people with so many sins in their midst. But, as usual, the scoffers miss the

point. The Restoration Plea seeks not to restore the errors of the early church, but rather the perfect pattern God designed. That is the point of Paul's first missive to the Corinthians. There were things wrong in the church, but God would not be content for those things to remain that way. He demanded correction and repentance. He prescribed the specific solutions to all the problems through the inspired pen. These commandments are to be heeded, and, when heeded, the purpose of restoration is well-served.

You'll see great lectures in this book from some of the most capable men in the 21st Century brotherhood. It is our hope and prayer that this volume will help in that ever-fluid process of restoring the church to the way God wants it to be.

Table of Contents

Dedication	ix
Eldership Honored	xi
Forward	xv
Introduction:	xvii
Introduction to First Corinthians <i>Dan Jenkins</i>	2
The Resurrection and Evidence (15:1-11) <i>Dan Jenkins</i>	16
The Tragedy of a Divided Church (1:10-17) <i>Jefferson Sole</i>	30
Power of God vs. Wisdom of Men (1:18-31) <i>W. Terry Varner</i>	40
Discipline in a Permissive Culture (5:1-13) <i>Emanuel Daugherty</i>	62
The Value of Marriage (7:1-9) <i>Dan Jenkins</i>	74
Gender Relations (11:2-16) <i>Dr. Charles J. Aebi</i>	88

Unity in the Body (12:1-30) <i>Sam Bartrug</i>	106
The Resurrection and Emptiness (15:12-19) <i>Dan Jenkins</i>	116
The Right View of Preachers (3:1-15) <i>Jack Gilchrist</i>	128
Jesus Christ and Him Crucified (2:1-5) <i>Charles C. Pugh III</i>	138
Loose Litigation (6:1-8) <i>Brad Poe</i>	164
Separation and Divorce (7:10-16) <i>J.D. Conley</i>	174
The Lord's Supper (11:17-34) <i>Terry Jones</i>	190
Charity for All (13:1-7) <i>Paolo Di Luca</i>	202
The Resurrection and End-Time (15:20-28) <i>Gary Hampton</i>	216
Sacredness of God's Temple (3:16-23) <i>Van Sprague</i>	228
Revelation and Inspiration (2:6-16) <i>D. Gene West</i>	240

Maintain Sexual Purity (6:12-20) <i>Eddie Cooper</i>	258
In View of Present Distress (7:17-38) <i>Gary Hampton</i>	270
Matters of Opinion (8:1-9:27) <i>Glenn Hawkins</i>	282
Idolatry and Ethics (10:1-11:1) <i>Dan Kessinger</i>	290
The Resurrection and Evil Company (15:29-34) <i>Denver E. Cooper</i>	304
Understanding Apostolic Ministry (4:1-21) <i>Dale Parsley</i>	318
The Complete Revelation (13:8-13) <i>Gregory Tidwell</i>	328
Hating Sin— Loving the Sinner (6:9-11) <i>Gary Hampton</i>	336
When a Spouse Dies (7:39-40) <i>Rick Tincher</i>	346
Revelation Concerning Miraculous Gifts (14:1-40) <i>Andy Robison</i>	352
Generosity and Fraternity (16:1-24) <i>Jeff Tucker</i>	366
The Resurrection and Expectation (15:35-58) <i>Frank Higginbotham</i>	380
Scripture Index	394

Introduction to First Corinthians

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Dan Jenkins

The City of Corinth

Visitors to the ruins of Corinth today have great difficulty in imagining the glory and splendor of that ancient city. While one can walk upon the very stones Paul's feet touched and see the Corinthian Acropolis which towers over the city, he has trouble imagining the grandeur of one of the most amazing cities of the Roman Empire.

The city attained its importance because of its unusual geographical location. The first century world was dominated by the use of ships, both for transportation of people and of merchandise. A casual look at a map reveals the fact that commerce from Macedonia and Asia Minor was forced to sail around the treacherous waters south of Greece to reach Italy. In the winter months there were many storms on the Mediterranean Sea which further complicated such efforts. There was an alternate route and that is what made Corinth such an important city. There was an isthmus, a "land bridge," which shortened the shipping distance which was located at Corinth. As the Panama Canal removed the necessity of sailing around South America, so this land bridge shortened the distance in the first century. Ships literally sailed into Corinth and were transported across the narrow strip of land then resumed their journey westward toward Rome in the Adriatic Sea. There were attempts made in the first century to dig a canal at this place (60,000 Jews captured in fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 were forced to work as slaves to dig the canal), but it was not completed until the 19th century.

Thus the location of Corinth gave it unusual importance. Whoever controlled this isthmus, the Isthmus of Peloponnesus, controlled much of Greece. Another geographical feature of Corinth was its Acropolis. While not as well-known as the famous Mars Hill of Athens, this mountainous outcropping of rock dominated the surrounded area. At one time there were 150

military towers which fortified and secured the safety of the city. Corinth had a strategic military importance, troops were stationed there and the city provided amusement and activities for these soldiers.

Corinth was also a port city with all of its attendant vices. It was made up of many nationalities with each having their own gods and standards of morality. It was a very multi-cultural city and with a large population of the city estimated at 250,000 to 400,000. The city joined northern Greece and Macedonia with southern Greece and Achaia. Its importance is seen when we consider that it joined the western part of the Roman Empire, Italy and Spain to the eastern part of that empire. It was indeed a wealthy, commercial city. All of this contributed to the debauchery of the multitudes that flocked to the city. There was so much vice in the city that there was a word was created to describe those who became the vilest of mankind. They had been “Corinthianized.” This word, more than any other, gives insight into the immorality of Corinth.

There was also a religious life in Corinth. While there was a Jewish population with its attendant synagogues, the focus of the pagan worship was Aphrodite (Venus). On the top of the Acropolis was a temple served by a thousand temple priestesses. We would more likely view them as temple prostitutes, for they served at the temple for the sexual pleasure of all who came to worship at that shrine. They were not viewed as prostitutes by the Corinthians. It was an honor for the women who served as the priestesses and they were seen, not with disdain, but as women devoted to their gods. That which Paul addresses as fornication in his letters to Corinth was viewed so differently from the average citizen of that city.

One other matter should be remembered as we think of this city. Greece was revered for its wisdom and oratory. The impact of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates still flourished in its culture. The goal of many was to attain great wisdom, but tragically, they failed to understand that the beginning of all wisdom and knowledge is the fear of God (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). It was into this city that Paul entered to establish the church.

The Beginning of the Church in Corinth

Paul arrived in Corinth during his second missionary journey. Leaving Antioch of Syria he and Silas departed to visit some of the same cities where Paul had established the church on his first journey (Acts 15:36). He evidently had baptized Timothy on that first missionary journey (1 Tim. 1:2) and thus when he came to Lystra this young man was asked to become part of the team. When they were forbidden by the Spirit to preach in Asia and its capital city, Ephesus, they headed northward toward Bithynia, but the Spirit again kept them from entering that country. Thus they arrived at Troas and Paul received that vision we call the Macedonian call. How excited they must have been as Luke joined them and they arrived in Philippi! Imagine what your expectations would have been had you received such a call. Their response to the call must have been so frustrating to them, for shortly after their arrival Paul and Silas were arrested and placed in the inner prison. True enough, Lydia and her household had been converted, but then persecution and opposition came. In the midst of such adversity, it is so refreshing to find them singing and praising God, even while suffering. The Macedonian call just might not have turned out as they expected!

Departing from Philippi they went to Thessalonica, another city of Macedonia, to establish the church, but persecutions forced them to leave just three weeks later. Berea was better and the church was established, but in just a short time the Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and forced Paul to leave the city, though Silas and Timothy stayed. We would be wise to consider that the common view of the Macedonian call as being one of fertile fields is not always as we expect.

Paul left Macedonia and headed toward Achaia, the southern part of Greece. His reception in Athens was not that great, and thus Paul left that center of Greek culture and arrived at Corinth. Unlike the short period of time Paul had spent in the cities of Macedonia, the apostle stayed in Corinth for the next 18 months (Acts 18:11).

When Paul arrived in Corinth he met a couple who were to impact his life for many years. He had no place to stay, but Aquila and Priscilla were Jews who had come to Corinth because

Claudius Caesar had forced all Jews to leave Rome. The fact that the text says that Paul stayed with them because they were tentmakers is likely proof that they were not Christians at that time. This remarkable couple touched the lives of so many. Paul described them as “fellow workers” and adds that, at some unknown time, they had “risked their own lives for my sake” (Rom. 16:3-4). When and how this happened is hidden from us, but the churches of the Gentiles were so thankful for what they had done. They traveled with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus where they were instrumental in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:18-19, 24-26). Evidently they stayed for a time in that area for Paul mentions the church which met in the home of this noble couple (1 Cor. 16:19). Later they were returned to Rome for Paul sent personal salutations to them in his epistle to the Romans (Rom. 16:3).

Because Apollos is mentioned more than once in First Corinthians it should be noted that after Aquila and Priscilla taught him about the fact that Jesus had come, he left Ephesus and came into Achaia, the southern part of Greece. It is obvious that some of the members in Corinth had been baptized by Apollos (1 Cor. 1:12-14), and that he worked in that city and “watered” that which Paul had “planted” (1 Cor. 3:5-6).

Paul began his work to establish the church in Corinth by preaching in the synagogue (Acts 18:4). It was his customary way of evangelism to first take advantage of the opportunity to speak in the synagogue where there were those who believed in God (Acts 17:2). However, as in most other places, there was immediate opposition from the Jews. He refused to waste his time and told them, “Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6). Thus we should not be surprised that some of the problems in the church at Corinth came from those who had paganism in their background. Paul’s preaching in the synagogue was not fruitless, as shown by the conversion of Crispus. This ruler of the synagogue, became a Christian and he was one of the few people Paul actually baptized with his own hands (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14). Paul’s work among the Gentiles was so fruitful for many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8).

At this point in Luke's narrative, we learn of a vision Paul received during the night. The message given to him by the Lord gives greater insight into the heart and life of Paul. He was told to not be afraid. He was urged to speak and not keep silent. He was reminded by the Lord of His presence. He was promised that no one from that city would attack him. Finally the Lord gave the apostle assurance that He had many people in that city (Acts 18:9-10). These words give us such insight into Paul's heart and should encourage us whenever we become discouraged and fearful as we seek to serve the Master. Our view of the great apostle must recognize even he had times characterized by discouragement, fear and a hesitancy to speak openly.

Near the end of the eighteen months Paul lived in Corinth opposition from the Jews became so strong that an insurrection arose and Paul was brought before Gallio, the Roman proconsul in charge of the city. The Roman government, for the most part, allowed freedom of the various religions in the empire. Thus when Gallio heard the charges against Paul, he immediately dismissed them and refused to get involved in disputation between Paul and Jews over the use of the Old Testament. He actually drove them out of his presence. The words of the Lord in the night vision He gave to Paul that no one would attack him were literally fulfilled. Frustrated by their inability to use government to stop the work of the Lord, the Jews attacked, Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue who replaced Crispus, beat him and attempted to bring him before Gallio, who ignored them. Certainly there is a strong possibility that Sosthenes himself became a Christian as this name appears in the opening words of Paul's letter to Corinth.

The Church in Corinth

We should not be surprised that the diversity of the population of Corinth would be reflected in the great diversity in the church at Corinth. Every culture has its problems and many of them are brought into the church by those who are converted. As the cities of America become more diverse, this is being noticed in the Lord's church in our land.

There was a strong Jewish influence in the first century

church. Those who were Jews before becoming Christians would bring that influence into the church. In addition to this there were those Gentiles who had been part of the synagogue worship before becoming Christians. These are specifically mentioned as being impacted by Paul's preaching in the synagogues in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:42-44), Iconium (Acts 14:1-2), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4), Berea (Acts 17:10-12) and Corinth (Acts 18:4).

The matters discussed in First Corinthians show a strong Jewish influence. It is seen in at least six areas.

There was the attempt of the Jewish Christians to bind circumcision on the entire church at Corinth. While not as widespread as in other places (consider how often this is discussed in Romans and Galatians), it was still a source of conflict in the church. In the midst of Paul's discussion of marriage in chapter seven, he turned his attention to this matter. He told the Corinthians that if they became Christians when uncircumcised there was no need for them to become circumcised as a religious act. The same principle was applied to the Jews. There was no need for Jews to become uncircumcised. Why was this? In one brief sentence Paul summed it all up. "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision nothing." What really mattered was the keeping of God's commandments by both Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 7:18-19). The fact that this is mentioned shows that some Jews were attempting to bring in Judaism and make it part of Christianity.

The term often used to refer to these teachers is Judaizers or Judaizing teachers. The word is rarely found in most English translations, but in Young's Literal Translation it is found in Gal. 2:14. The book of Galatians shows that they wanted every Christian to become a Judean and to keep the Law of Moses like it was observed in Judea. The tactic used in many places to thwart Paul's influence was to deny Paul's apostleship. This same tactic is shown in his letters to Corinth. One argument used to deny his apostleship was that he had not demanded support from the church in Corinth like others had. Thus Paul devoted much of chapter nine to defend himself. In his second letter there is an even greater discussion of this matter (2 Cor. 11:5-12:13). The presence of this problem is evidence of the Jewish influence in

the church.

There was a third matter which shows the presence of Jews in the church in Corinth and that is the matter of eating meats. This was a problem for both Jews and Gentiles, but the Jewish concept of clean and unclean food resulted in their believing that meats offered to idols, and then sold in the market place were defiled and Christians must not eat of it. In chapters eight and ten he reveals that all meat is created by God and was therefore fit to eat. His discussion of those who were forbidding the eating of meat in his first letter to Timothy showed that the prayer of thanksgiving sanctified all food (1 Tim. 4:1-5). Yet he told those Corinthian Christians that they should respect the conscience of those who could not eat meat which had been associated with idols. Both positions were told to respect the right of others. “Give no offence, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32).

A fourth matter shows the Jewish presence. The early Christians struggled to understand the absolute distinction between the Old Law and the New Covenant. In Paul’s second letter there is that discussion of the veil Moses used when he came down from Mt. Sinai. This historical event would have little impact of Gentile Christians, for they likely knew little about it. Yet Paul used it in a powerful way to affirm that the New Testament is far more glorious than the glory of the covenant revealed by Moses in the wilderness (2 Cor. 3:7-18). There were Jews in the Corinthian church.

Another Old Testament story used by Paul was the crossing of the Red Sea and the provisions God made for the Jews during the exodus. The Jews knew about these events, but failed to understand that they serve as examples for Christians. They drank water from the rock yet we drink water from the fountain of life. They ate manna from heaven but we eat the Living Bread Who descended from heaven to bring us redemption. They were baptized into Moses but we were baptized into Christ. The sins they committed—idolatry, fornication, tempting Christ and murmuring—are eternal Old Testament lessons of how we must avoid these.

A sixth evidence of the presence of Jewish influence in the

church was the denial of the resurrection. One of the largest “denominations” in Judaism was the Sadducees. It should not surprise us to see that some in Corinth struggled with this fundamental truth of Christianity, the resurrection from the dead. When we see individuals in the church today bringing denominational ideas in the church, we must remember that this is not something new. That is what was happening in Corinth. Paganism had little trouble dealing with life beyond the grave, but such was not the case with many of the Jews. They had been taught and believed for many years that there was no resurrection. In chapter fifteen, Paul shows the consequences of such teaching, with the most important one being that Christianity stands or falls upon the truthfulness of a resurrected Jesus.

There were likely far more Gentiles in the church in Corinth than there were Jews. Consider these six matters discussed in this book to see the presence of Gentiles in that church.

The culture of the Greek world placed great emphasis on wisdom. The renowned scholarship and wisdom of Plato, Socrates and Aristotle had been part of the Greek culture for three hundred years prior to the coming of the Lord. There was also great emphasis on oratorical skills in Greek cities. Paul’s discussion of wisdom in the first two chapters of this book is evidence of the ongoing influence of these matters in the Corinthian church. The preaching of the cross and a crucified Savior ran counter to all of that part of the world. They considered the preaching of the cross, the very heart of Christianity, as foolishness. Yet even the “foolishness of God” put to shame the wisdom of the smartest man (1 Cor. 1:27).

Paul’s preaching was not with excellency of speech, but simply presented Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-2). He proclaimed the mystery of God. This mystery of God was so deep that it had not even entered the imagination of any mortal. It could only be known by the revelation given through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:7-10). There was simply no way that the natural man using all of natural wisdom to fathom the foolishness of the God, the preaching of the cross. The Greeks who relied upon mortal wisdom failed to understand that the means of understanding the message was through inspiration. It only came through a spiritual

man (1 Cor. 2:14-15).

The second evidence of Gentiles in the church is seen in the role women played in the Greek culture. The Jewish women never participated openly in the synagogue, but such was not characteristic of the Greek practice in pagan worship. Women often occupied places where they were highly visible (Acts 17:4, 12, 34). Women were also the spokesmen, the oracles, for the idols. Those who advocate that Paul's teaching about women being silent in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34-35) is simply cultural, fail to see that Paul's words run counter to the culture of Corinth. It was the Greek influence, not the Jewish influence, which necessitated the Spirit specifically regulating women speaking in the assembly.

One additional matter should be noted when we consider pagan prophetesses in the Greek religious world. It will help us understand why the Christian women thought it was proper to remove their veil when prophesying. Since the pagan prophetesses removed their head covering when they spoke for their gods, Christian women thought they too should do this when they prophesied for the true God. Such was forbidden by the Spirit, for the removal of the veil also indicated a lack of moral purity. The women in Corinth had seen pagan prophetesses remove their veil and thought they should do the same. This shows the great influence the Greek culture had brought into the church.

A third evidence of the Gentile influence in the church at Corinth was the teaching about idolatry. While idolatry had plagued the Jews in the Old Testament, it was not a problem among them in the New Testament age. Yet Paul repeatedly mentions idolatry in this letter (1 Cor. 8:1-10; 10:10-28). The church was faced with members tempted to worship idols, and this shows the influence of the Gentiles in that church. Paul says of them, "You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led" (1 Cor. 12:2).

The fourth evidence of the presence of Gentiles in this church was the trouble presented by prostitution in Corinth. He wrote to them, "There is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles...the body is

not for sexual immorality but for the Lord...flee fornication...he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body... nevertheless, because of sexual immorality...let us not commit sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2; 10:8). Before the arrival of the Gospel in Corinth the Gentile men viewed fornication as a means of worshiping their gods! The temple priestesses (prostitutes), mentioned earlier, were always available for acts of devotion to Aphrodite (Venus). When they became Christians they were washed, sanctified and justified (1 Cor. 6:12) but the temptation was still there. There was a powerful Greek influence in the church.

A fifth evidence of the Gentiles in the church is found in Paul’s reference to athletic sporting events in that society. The Olympics were born in ancient Greece, and the Romans had perpetuated them in the first century. Thus, when Paul makes reference to running and boxing (1 Cor. 9:24-26) he brings illustration from the Gentile world and makes spiritual application of them. To the Jews, he referenced the crossing of the Red Sea and life in the wilderness. To the Gentile he referred to the Greeks involvement in racing and boxing.

The sixth evidence of the Gentiles in the church is seen in the many times speaking in tongues is mentioned. In a Jewish church their one language would have been enough, but Corinth was populated by many nationalities. Thus God supplied the Gospel to this diverse audience in many languages. The church in Corinth had a vast number of Gentiles in it.

The Spirituality of the Church in Corinth

The discussion above indicates much about the church in Corinth, but this matter deserves more comments, specifically about some of the situations addressed in this book. One aspect of this church was the abundance of spiritual gifts. It is easy for us to overlook the fact that evidently, as far as possible, the apostles laid hands on first century Christians everywhere.

Evidence of this widespread impartation of spiritual gifts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles is in the detailed description of the events in Acts chapter eight. When the persecution arose following Stephen’s death, the members of

church were scattered and they went everywhere preaching the Word. Luke looks specifically at the events surrounding the work of Philip in Samaria. This was not Philip, the apostle, for verse one shows that the apostles remained in Jerusalem. This Philip, later called Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8), was one of the seven men chosen in chapter six to minister to the Grecian widows. He left Jerusalem and went to Samaria where his preaching and the accompanying miracles he performed, resulted in the beginning of the church. In order that the new church might function, for soon the apostles returned to Jerusalem and Philip went to teach the Ethiopian, the apostles came to Samaria and imparted spiritual gifts on *every* person who had been baptized. This should not surprise us for Joel's prophesy promised gifts to all flesh, young and old, bond and free, male and female.

Because Paul had the power to impart the Spirit through the laying on his hands, we would expect the apostle to lay hands on those who became Christ. This would explain why Paul affirmed about the Corinthian church, "You come short in no gift" (1 Cor. 1:7). There was no church which surpassed them in these miraculous manifestations of the Spirit. Paul said, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one..." (1 Cor. 12:7). The King James translates this as the Spirit being given to every man. These gifts became the source of several problems discussed in chapters 12-14. When the whole church came together in the one place for worship, there was chaos as they tried to use their gifts wrongly (1 Cor. 14:23, 26).

Yet in spite of the abundance of these gifts, the church was not spiritually minded. Those in our day, in what is commonly called the "charismatic movement," teach that great spirituality is assured by the spiritual gifts they claim to have. The church at Corinth shows just how false such an idea this is. No church had more spiritual gifts, yet, in chapter three, Paul reminded the church that they were still spiritually babes in Christ. They were babes when Paul taught them and they had not grown any since he left! Consider his words. "I, brethren, could not write to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1). The presence of those gifts did not immediately bring spirituality. The same is true in our day. While there are no

spiritual gifts, we must remember that the possession of the Bible does not bring spirituality.

The lack of spirituality is seen in the many problems discussed in this epistle. There was not only jealousy over another's spiritual gift, there was covetousness. This covetousness had led some in the church to go to court against other brethren (1 Cor. 6). The carnality of this church was also manifested in the presence of "preacheritis." Some thought their association with Peter, Paul or Apollos elevated them above others. Instead of every man growing from these great teachers, they had stopped maturing and thought being of Paul or Peter made them as mature as they needed to be. It is ironic that some in the church have this same problem, believing that having been baptized by "brother Z" or attending a congregation where this same brother preached, or being kin to him is equivalent to spirituality. Human nature has not really changed that much.

Practical Lessons to be Learned from this Book

There is more that could be said, but before ending this study let's take time to look at some practical lessons which can be learned from the study of the church at Corinth.

In the first place, let us learn that "Macedonian calls" may not always work out as we see them. That souls in Macedonia were saved is obvious, but one cannot help but imagine that Paul and his companions envisioned a far greater response to their preaching in Macedonia. He left behind, as far as we know, only two families at Philippi. Yet a closer study of the letter he wrote to the Philippians shows how great the church became. He reminded them that they were foremost in supporting him in the work he did after leaving Macedonia (Philip. 4:15). He specifically mentions two times they sent support for his work in Thessalonica. Then, years later, from the prison in Rome he wrote and thanked them for the support this church had sent to him in Rome (Philip. 4:18).

The same lesson can be learned from the church he established in Thessalonica as a result of the Macedonian call. His stay in that city was shortened by the uproar caused by the Jews, and the brethren immediately sent him away from that city. How

could he have ever imagined that just a few years later Paul would speak so gloriously about that church? He described them as being a base from which “the word of the Lord had sounded forth...in every place” (1 Thess. 1:8). They were examples to every other Christian throughout Greece (1 Thess. 1:7). He was so thankful for them that boasted of that church to other congregations (2 Thess. 1:2).

He also used these churches in Macedonia to motivate the Corinthians to immediately finish gathering the contribution for the needy saints in Judea (2 Cor. 8:1-9:5). Truly, we can never see the fruit of our labors simply by looking at immediate results.

A second lesson to be learned is equally important and that is love of the Lord within our hearts makes it possible for the church to be a place for the blending of people with diverse backgrounds. We have already discussed the presence of the Jews and Gentiles in the congregation at Corinth, yet love enabled them to work together. This love was shown to them by Paul and is summed up in his words about becoming a servant to all. To the Jews he became a Jew. To those Gentiles outside of the Jewish Law of Moses, he became like them, to win them to Christ. It is the spirit of “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:19-22) that must permeate the church in our day.

We would be wise to learn another lesson from this study. Many have the view that there was Roman oppression from the time the church spread outside of Palestine, but this is wrong. Rome practiced freedom of religion and how Gallio dealt with the riot in Corinth is typical. The Romans persecuted Christians, but that only happened because the Jews brought them into the picture. Study the twenty cases of persecution in the book of Acts, covering the first thirty years of the church. You will be amazed how few actually reflect Rome’s opposition to the church in the first three decades of its existence.

One final observation might be in order. Sometimes we look at the beginning of the church on Pentecost as being typical of the early church. Those thousands who obeyed the Gospel came from an audience of the most devout Jews from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5). Never again do we see such response. It is

more likely that the church in Corinth is more typical of the early church than we might have thought. At least, it is far more like congregations in our day—godly people doing their best to solve problems within the congregations.

If those things written in the Old Testament were recorded for our learning, how much more so the things written in the New Testament. Study the Bible. Study New Testament congregations and you will grow into the fullness of His stature.

Works Cited:

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Biographical Sketch

Dan Jenkins was born in Huntsville, AL in 1939. His grandfather was a Gospel preacher, and his father was an elder in the church. Thus, Dan, following in their steps, started preaching when he was 14. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman and David Lipscomb Universities.

Following his graduation, the Jenkins went to New Zealand and worked in the mission work there for almost ten years. Returning to the States in 1974, he preached in Birmingham, Alabama for seven years, but made three mission trips to the Pacific Islands during that time. In 1982, he began his work with the Palm Beach Lakes congregation, continuing to the present.

Dan and his wife, Judie, have four children and 13 grandchildren. His daughter, Debbie, is married to a former missionary to Kenya; his son, David, is an elder in the church in Atlanta, Georgia; his son, Gary, is a deacon in the Palm Beach Lakes congregation; and his son, Jonathan, preaches the Gospel in Katy, Texas.

The Resurrection and Evidence

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Dan Jenkins

You do not have a “blind faith” based on a leap into the dark without any reason for it. What kind of God would He be if He gave us no reason for faith and expected us to lay all reason aside and believe something for which there is no evidence?

God has never treated mankind this way. When the first “pages” of the Bible were written on tables of stone and given to men, they were accompanied with overwhelming evidence. It was not blind faith that caused those individuals at the foot of Mt. Sinai to believe the words on those tablets were from God. With the ground shaking beneath their feet, the burning mountain before them and the voice of God echoing in their ears, there was evidence to believe. God could have done it differently. He could have given those same Ten Commandments to Moses at the burning bush and they would have been the words of God, but without the miracles accompanying them, the people would have had little more than blind faith. It violates the very nature of God to ask men have faith without evidence.

Had God so desired, He could have placed a Pharaoh who would have let His people leave Egypt peacefully. This is precisely what He did centuries later when He raised up Cyrus who willing let the Jews return from Babylonian captivity. Yet He raised up Pharaoh knowing he would not listen to Moses (Exod. 3:19). The evil king was told, “But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth” (Exod. 9:16).

Thus when the Israelites left Egypt, the land was devastated. A few days later the vast army of Pharaoh was buried in the Red Sea. Then there was the manna and the water from the rock to provide for millions of Jews. When they arrived at Mt. Sinai even greater evidence awaited them. God was ready to give that nation His written Word and He wanted them to know there was evidence for them to accept it. When the next generation entered

Canaan there was no manna, no flaming mountain, but they had their Bible plus the eyewitness testimony from their fathers that forever settled the question of the source of those laws and its trustworthiness.

There is an amazing parallel to this and where we stand in relation to the New Testament. When Jesus began His work there was the beginning of the greatest miraculous evidence of coming of a New Covenant from God. The sick were healed in the Old Testament, but it was in a limited way. Such was not the case when Jesus arrived for the multitudes brought all their sick and He healed them every one. Thousands were fed with a few loaves and a few fish. Those assembled heard the voice of God announce at the baptism of Jesus, “This is My Son...hear Him!” Egypt had been darkened in the days of Moses, but the entire world was darkened for three hours at the death of Jesus. There were a few isolated incidents of resurrection of the dead in the Old Testament, but with the arrival of Jesus and the work of His apostles there were so many more (Matt. 10:8). Add to this the description of the results of the earthquake when He died. “The graves were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matt. 27:52-53). In the Old Testament there were dreams, visions and prophecies, but the New Testament brought an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, Jew and Gentile, young and old, male and female, bond and free and it attendant revelation (Acts 2:16-18).

The whole point is this. God demands that we have faith. He has not only given us the words of that faith, but has given undeniable evidence that those words are from Him. Now since the heart of the Gospel is not just the life and teachings of Jesus, but His resurrection, we should expect God to provide overwhelming evidence of that event. This evidence is the scope of this lecture.

The Importance of Eyewitness Testimony

For a society to exist there must be the acceptance of testimony of eye witnesses which, when substantiated, have the

same value as that of sight. There is always the possibility that one man might lie to win his position, but when there are others to corroborate his testimony, the balance is weighted toward his position. This is why Moses decreed, “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established” (Deut. 19:15). Notice the use of the word “any” in this verse. It is *any* iniquity or *any* sin. When those witnesses had testified, the matter was established. “Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Heb. 10:28). A man’s life was at stake, but testimony of just witnesses was enough for him losing his life.

The same principle is found in the New Testament. When Jesus was brought from Gethsemane before the Sanhedrin, many came before this tribunal to accuse Him. They had one major problem. “Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward...” (Matt. 26:59-60). Two witnesses, misrepresenting what He said about destroying the temple, led to the verdict.

The importance of the testimony of witnesses is seen in Matthew 18:15-18 regarding solving problems between brethren. Before a private matter could be brought before the church witnesses had to be brought into the matter. Righteous decision could be made, even by those who were not present when the disagreement happened, by men who listened to testimony and acted by the authority of Jesus!

Even men today who want to discredit the Bible live in a land which is governed by the principle of the value of testimony. It is strange that they see its worth in our judicial system but tend to mock it when discussing the Bible.

Old Testament Witness to His Resurrection

While it is true that “life and immortality were brought to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10), the Old Testament does speak of the resurrection of the Lord. When Paul wrote his first epistle to Corinth, he said, “For I delivered to you first of all that

which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). The New Testament had not been written when Paul penned these words, so we know that it is the Old Testament which foretold His death and His resurrection.

The clearest place where this is found is in the words of David in Psalm 16. “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (9-10). David understood that there were at least two parts to a man. There was his flesh and there was his soul. When a man dies his flesh sees corruption in the grave. There is that other part, his soul, which goes to Sheol (the Hebrew word often used for the Greek word Hades). Peter argued on the day of Pentecost that when David wrote these words, there was no way for them to have application to David. The presence of the bones of David in his sepulcher in Jerusalem was proof they did not refer to David. In that sermon on Pentecost the Holy Spirit took over the mouths of the apostles and formed every syllable. Peter proclaimed, “Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:30-31). There is this undeniable witness of the Holy Spirit of God to the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus Himself affirmed that Moses and the prophets foretold His resurrection. Following His resurrection He met His disciples and ate fish with them on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He told them of the words spoken by the entirety of the Old Law concerning Him which had to be fulfilled. When He opened their understanding so they could comprehend the Scriptures, He added, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day” (Luke 24:44-46). All of the writings of Moses and the prophets stand as witnesses to His resurrection.

The Background Facts Concerning His Resurrection

There are some who seek to negate the evidence of His resurrection by saying the women went to the wrong tomb. Such is indeed folly for all that enemies of Christianity would have had to have done was take those interested in this matter to the tomb where He actually was buried. However, we need to see the important role played by the women in His burial and resurrection. He was not buried by the apostles, but by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (John 19:39-40). These women who followed Jesus are the greatest connection to the continuity of the events of that weekend. Look at the detailed description Luke gives of the role. When Joseph placed His body in that new tomb, “The women who had come with Him from Galilee...observed the tomb and how His body was laid” (23:55). They returned home, prepared spices and oils and observed the Sabbath rest (23:56). Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb bringing spices which they had prepared, but they found the stone rolled away (24:1-2). Heavenly beings invited them to see where His body had been placed and they went in and found the empty tomb. The words of the angel proclaimed, “He is not here, He is risen!”

One of those women, Mary Magdalene, was the first person on earth to see the resurrected Lord (Mark 16:9). These women are a vital connecting link to understand the reality of His resurrection. That same day He appeared to the two disciples who, as they walked on the road out of the city, told the other disciples. These apostles refused to accept their testimony. Were they wise in rejecting testimony? Can witnesses prove the fact He arose? Hear the Divine record. “Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen” (Mark 16:14). The Son of God saw the testimony of eyewitnesses as proof! Jesus’ actions show that He believed truth can be established by witnesses.

Before looking at other witnesses to His resurrection, look at the evidence of the large stone being moved so that men might look inside. The women on the way to the tomb, though there were several of them, felt that they might not be able to move that

stone which covered His tomb. They were not saying that when they arrived at the tomb they would roll it away, but were asking, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us” (Mark 16:3)? The fact that the word roll is used indicates the kind of tomb in which the Lord was placed. There was that “room” in which the body was placed which had a place of entrance. At this entrance there was a groove in which a circular stone was placed. When the burial was finished, the stone was rolled down the inclined part of the groove and settled into its place covering the entrance.

How large was the stone? How much did it weigh? The concern of the women gives some indication as does the Biblical text. It was not just a stone, it was a *great* stone. It was not just a great stone, it was a *very* great stone (Mark 16:4). Such a stone had to have some thickness and those who have understanding of the weight of stones and the thickness necessary to cover the entrance have estimated its weight to be at least 2000 pounds. Others seeing the “door” somewhat larger have estimated it would have weighed upwards of 4,000 pounds. This would be equal to the weight of a midsize automobile! It was truly a large stone and the women were justified in their concern.

The location of this stone is further evidence of His resurrection. The Greek uses three words to describe its location when they arrived. Mark said the women wanted the stone to be removed from *door* of the tomb. Luke says that when they arrived the stone had been move away from the *sepulcher*. The Greek in Luke 24:2 uses the words “rolled away from *from* the sepulcher.” It uses the word “from” twice! It was not just rolled back toward its original place, which the women would have been glad to have seen, it was separated away from the tomb. John 20:1 makes it even more emphatic. The stone had not just been separated from the tomb, it had been *lifted* away from the tomb. The word used for “taken away from” is the same word used by Jesus in describing what would happen when one prayed that a mountain might be removed (Matt. 21:21). Visualize what was involved in that mountain’s removal and you will see what happened to the stone at His grave. It was lifted out of its track and lifted away from the tomb. The location of this stone is bears further

testimony to the reality of the resurrection.

Jonah as a “Witness” to His Resurrection

Jesus Himself introduced the story of Jonah as a sign foreshadowing His resurrection. Paul was so right about the Jews requiring a sign (1 Cor. 1:22). When the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus and asked for a sign, Jesus told them the only sign given to them was the parallel of Jonah in the fish and Jesus in the earth for the same period of time (Matt. 12:39-40). He later rebuked them for being able to judge weather signs but not the sign of Jonah. Some have been troubled about the different words used to describe the time Jesus was in the tomb. Matthew’s account states the time as “three days and three nights.” He also said He would be raised “after three days” (Mark 8:31). He used a third expression “on the third day” to describe the time of His resurrection (Matt. 17:23; 20:19). There is no way these three expressions, *taken in English*, can be the same. However, Jesus was not an American, but a Jew using Jewish expression describing time. Several of these same expressions are used in the Book of Esther to describe how long the Jews were to be praying as Esther dealt with the king of Persia. The time period for this was described as “three days, night and day” and also described as “on the third day” (Esth. 4:16; 5:1). Our American minds struggle to see these are the same, but that is simply the *Jewish* way of expressing time. Perhaps Jesus gives the clearest definition of the meaning of these words, in a way Americans can grasp them, when He sent a message to Herod that He would perform cures “today, tomorrow and on the third day I shall be perfected” (Luke 13:32). There is no doubt what the third day was—it was Sunday. Luke 24 tells of the events on the day of His resurrection. Verse 1 gives details of the arrival of the women at the tomb early on the first day of the week. That same day (14) two disciples were on the road to Emmaus where they were joined by Jesus though they did not recognize Him. They said to the “stranger” who talked to them, “Today is the third day” (21). There can be no doubt that the resurrection day was the first day of the week.

Testimony of the Witnesses in 1 Corinthians 15

When Jesus was raised He did not appear to vast multitudes. Peter discussed the resurrection appearances of Jesus to those assembled in Cornelius' house. "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-41). God was selective, yet thorough, in the ones chosen. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul uses the witnesses as proof of the resurrection of Jesus. His intent is not to give a *complete* listing, for the Lord's appearance to the women at the tomb and others mentioned in the Gospel accounts are not mentioned, but his list is certainly convincing.

His first evidence that Jesus died and was raised is the Scriptures, then the second evidence used by Paul is Simon Peter, whom the Lord gave a new name, Cephas. Why Peter? While not the first one to see the Lord, his relationship with Jesus is well known. Remember how he honored the Lord in Capernaum? "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:66-67). Then again at Caesarea Philippi Peter proclaimed his faith, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). It was in the upper room on the night before His death that Peter affirmed that he would die for the Lord, even if all the rest forsook Him. Yet when the Lord was arrested and was on trial, it was Peter who denied Him three times, even cursing and swearing he did not even know Jesus.

On the morning of the resurrection, the Savior told the women to tell the apostles to meet Him in Galilee and specifically mentioned Peter. This transformation in Peter was brought about by something. That something was the fact he had seen Jesus and knew Jesus was the Christ. There is no other explanation for the change in this man's life, who wilted in the face of possible persecution and then, according to profane history, was crucified rather than to deny Him.

In addition, Peter had some influence on the church in Corinth. In the first chapter of Paul's letter he stated that some there were claiming allegiance to Peter. Thus, who better to present as a witness to the church in Corinth than this apostle who

was loved in that city?

His second eyewitness listed is all the apostles. In the garden they all forsook Him and fled (Matt. 26:56). The Bible shows precisely where they were in the days that followed. While there had been reports of His resurrection and some of them had actually been to the empty tomb, they were secretly meeting because they feared for their safety (John 20:19). When He spoke to them and showed them His hands and side they were filled with joy. However, Thomas, one of the apostles, was not there and would not believe them, instead demanding his own experience of seeing and touching the Lord. The next week, his request was honored and the end result was Thomas saying, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Now look at what happened to these men and their fear. That fear was all removed and they openly proclaimed their belief in Him. The change in their lives, coupled with the profane history which tells of the martyrdom of almost every one of them, is overwhelming evidence.

Paul then mentions the occasion when 500 brethren saw Him at one time. Most of them were still alive and remained credible witnesses to the fact that Jesus was raised. Some have sought to dismiss His resurrection by talking of the witnesses having an intense to explain this fantasy and hallucinated into seeing it. There is no way *all* of them could have had such a *dream* at the same time. Now if two witnesses can establish a matter beyond any doubt, what about 250 X 2!! What court of the land would not be forced to acknowledge this common testimony is undeniable evidence of the occurrence of the event!

When Paul then adds James to the list of witnesses, some have wondered if this might be James, the brother John, or James the son of Alphaeus. Both of these were apostles. Now since they would have been included in the times listed by Paul as Jesus appearing to the twelve, it is very likely that this James was the brother of Jesus. The Lord's brother became a powerful figure in the church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:8; Gal. 2:9, 12; Jas 1:1; Jude 1). Prior to His resurrection the Lord's brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5) and then something happened that changed it all. Jesus was not longer seen a James' big brother, he was seen as the resurrected Lord. Now think of this. If anyone should have known

the identity of Jesus it would have been His brother who knew Jesus all of his life. The fact that he was not a believer makes his testimony even more remarkable. James is truly a powerful witness to the resurrection.

Paul then lists the apostles a second time. We should not assume that this list is complete and exhaustive. Jesus was on the earth for forty days after His resurrection and before His ascension. What was He doing during all that time? Luke provides the answer to this important question. He was with the apostles "...to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Think of how many times they were able to see and confirm that the man in their presence was the one they had followed for the previous three years. He gave them infallible proof that He was Jesus. He ate and drank with them. He allowed them to touch and handle Him. He spoke openly to them about the church. Their lives were transformed. No longer were they cowering in fear, but openly proclaimed His resurrection and believed in it so much they died the martyrs' death.

When Paul lists himself as the last witness to His resurrection, he makes it impossible for there to ever be other apostles. Religions in the Americas try to give greater credibility to themselves by claiming apostolic succession or even the presence of living apostles in their denomination. For one to qualify as an apostle he had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord (Acts 1:21-22). This is why the Lord was seen by Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:17; 22:14-15; 26:16; 1 Cor. 9:1). Thus he could then qualify to be an apostle so that he might give witness to the resurrection. However, when Paul said, "Last of all he was seen by me," he makes it impossible for there to be any living apostles. If anyone has seen Him since Paul, then Paul was not the last one to see Him.

Now consider the transformation in the life of Paul. He was a devout Jew and was leading the attempt to eradicate Christianity from the earth. Something changed him. What? The only answer is the realization in his heart that Jesus had actually been raised! Paul, the persecutor, became Paul, the persecuted! Only the

resurrection of Jesus can explain this change!

Foolish Attempts to Explain the Empty Tomb

Unbelievers recognize the unanswerable evidence which proves His resurrection and have attempted to explain how all of this could have happened. There is the “Swoon Theory” that Jesus was not actually dead, but had passed out due to the pain and in the coolness of the tomb He revived and rolled the stone away. Where is the evidence of this? Was the Roman soldier wrong who did not break His leg bones to hasten His death seeing that He was already dead? Would not Joseph and Nicodemus have noticed the warmth of His body as they washed His body, then bound it in strips of linen with 100 pounds of spices? Furthermore, how could a man who had just endured crucifixion move the stone from inside the tomb? It was so large and heavy that four women did not think they could move it. The theory fails—Jesus was raised.

There is the “Wrong Tomb Theory.” This says that the women went to the wrong tomb on that Sunday morning. This is so ludicrous, for all anyone would have had to have done was to simply take anyone interested to the actual tomb. The theory fails—Jesus was raised.

There is the “Apostles Stole the Body Theory.” In order to keep the movement of Jesus alive, some allege that the apostles secretly went to the tomb and removed the body. The folly of this is obvious when we see that the Jews had placed guards around the clock to keep this very thing from happening (Matt. 28:11-15). Consider their testimony. They stated that they were asleep and the apostles came. If they had been asleep how could they have known who it was who came to take the body? Furthermore, what did the apostles have to gain? This “hoax” they perpetrated cost them their lives. Martyrs do not die for a lie. The theory fails—Jesus was raised.

Another explanation given is “The Grave Robbers Theory.” In this theory it was not the apostles who came, but some unknown grave robbers who removed the body. Think about it for a moment. We are not talking about grave robbers, but *body* snatchers! If there were such individuals how did they get past the

guards and the sealed tomb? If you were a grave robber would you not have enough sense to go to another grave and see what was there! Why go to the guarded tomb? Furthermore, all the clothing in the tomb was neatly folded. Certainly not what a grave robber would take time to do. The theory fails—Jesus was raised.

Finally, there is “The Enemies of Jesus Theory.” Some state that in order to keep the apostles from taking the body and thereby fulfilling His promise that He would be raised on the third day, the enemies took the body away. What is wrong with this? Why in the following chapters where the Jews were accused of killing the son of God, did they not simply produce the body or eyewitnesses to this “fact.” Such would have stopped Christianity. The fact that this never happened and that Christianity flourished, shows just how wrong this idea is. The theory fails—Jesus was raised!

The resurrection is the strongest argument for the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, and our Savior. It was at the heart of preaching in the first century and must be at the heart of preaching in the 21st century. Destroy the resurrection and you destroy Christianity and it becomes nothing more than those pagan religions which have shrines and pilgrimages to the tombs of their founders. We live by hope and are saved by it (Rom. 8:24). Remove the resurrection and there is no hope.

There were those eyewitnesses who were blessed to actually see Him in His majesty. Peter was there, but as he approached the end of his life he wrote to his brethren. “I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease” (2 Pet. 1:13-15). He told them that what he taught and what they had received was not a cunningly devised fable, and then added a remarkable phrase, “For we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” Here is God’s plan. Eyewitnesses who would soon die, wrote down the message so those of us who were not there can always be reminded of the certainty of the message.

John does the same in his first epistle. Near the end of his life he recalled the joy had from the fellowship he experienced and

fellowship he had with the Lord. Hear the words of this eyewitness of His resurrection, “We have heard...we have seen... we have looked upon...our hands have handled...we have seen, and bear witness...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you that you also may have fellowship with us...and these things we write to you that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:1-4). How marvelous is God’s plan! Eyewitnesses had their joy and we are equal with them (that is what the word fellowship indicates) in what they experienced.

Fellow Christian, rejoice. Let your joy be full. Share in the joy they had! This is God’s plan. “He is not here He is risen!”

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The Tragedy of a Divided Church

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Jefferson Sole

Paul began the Book of 1 Corinthians with a greeting (1:1-3) and an offering of thanks to God on behalf of the Corinthians (1:4-9). He was thankful to God for the grace (“unmerited favor”) bestowed through the Lord Jesus Christ which included, *enrichment* in word and knowledge (1:5), *establishment* (“confirmation”) present and future (1:6-8), and *fellowship* with Christ (1:9). The following verse begins with the word “now” which signifies a strong contrast between Paul’s thankfulness for the enrichment, establishment, and fellowship of the church through Christ (1 Cor. 1:1-9) and the tragedy of division in the church by men (1 Cor. 1:10-17). In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 Paul reminded the Corinthian brethren that division in the church was a tragedy because it violates the authority (1:10), body (1:11-13a), and baptism of Christ (13b-17).

The Authority of Christ (1 Cor. 1:10)

Division among Christians is a tragedy because it violates the authority of Christ. Paul wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:10). Paul’s continuous appeal for unity (“beseech,” consists of two words “call” and “alongside”) is both tenderly and sternly written. First, he affectionately appeals to them as “brethren,” a term used 39 times in 1 Corinthians to denote those who are members of the same spiritual family (Heb. 3:6) by obedient faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Second, he firmly grounded his appeal “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The agent by which Paul made his apostolic appeal was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, as the head of God’s household (Heb. 3:6), was responsible for commissioning Paul as an apostle (1 Cor. 1:1) and is the basis of authority in every spiritual appeal (2 Thess. 3:6; Col. 3:17).

Unity in Speech

Paul made an authoritative appeal for *unity in speech* with these words, “that ye all speak the same thing,” (1 Cor. 1:10). The appeal for unity in speech is inclusive of “all” brethren. Members are not permitted, no matter how “great” or “small,” to disregard the Word of Truth (1 Cor. 14:7; 2 Tim. 4:2). In Aristotle’s *Politics* III iii. 3 it is said of two feuding parties at war, “The Boeotians said the same thing as those of Megara and became quiet” which means “they came to an agreement and settled the war” (Orr Walther 148). In like manner, Christians must speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent to achieve peace and unity in the family of God. Otherwise, Christians will incessantly be fighting the war against sin in their own camp never advancing the battle to the world.

Unity in Body

Second, Paul made an authoritative appeal for *unity in body* with these words, “and that there be no divisions among you;” (1 Cor. 1:10). The word translated “division” (1 Cor. 11:18; John 9:16; 10:19) is sometimes translated “schism” (12:25) or “rent” (Matt. 9:16; Mark 1:21) and was also used in reference to “plowing a field” (Reese 20; Fee 54). As indicated by the word, the Corinthian brethren were probably not divided into hostile sects but undercurrents of disagreement that prevented them from being unified as one body (1 Cor. 12:12). Just as one would not deem it appropriate to allow a gaping wound on their body to fester without care, neither should one deem it appropriate to leave a tear in the body of Christ unattended. Division among the body of Christ is sinful (Matt. 12:25; Rom. 16:17-18; Jas. 3:16), and where it exists there should always be a plea for unity grounded in the Word of Truth (John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:1-6).

Unity in Mind

Third, Paul made an authoritative appeal for *unity in mind* with these words, “but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). The word translated “perfectly joined together” means “put in order, restore, make...” and was translated “mending” with reference to

restoring nets to their original condition (Matt. 4:21), and “might perfect” with reference to the faltering faith of Christians (1 Thess. 3:10). The Corinthian brethren were to go on being restored in “in the same mind,” (1 Cor. 1:10) which is “...the understanding by which we grasp a subject” (Lenski 40) or “intellect” (BDAG 680). Proper reasoning should also lead them to “go on being” perfectly joined together “in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). Judgment is the “conviction” (Grosheide 34) rendered from the proper use of the mind or “intellect.” Paul wrote, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) which indicated that the intellect of the Lord is found in the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20). Therefore, spiritual conclusions must be made on the basis of spiritual truth, namely, the Word of God (Willis 24). It is altogether impossible to render righteous judgments if the authority of the Scripture is ignored or misapplied. Vincent correctly wrote, “Being in the same realm of thought, they would judge questions from the same Christian stand-point, and formulate their judgment accordingly” (188). The bandage for all division is unity of intellect and judgment derived from the Word of God.

Paul appealed to the brethren in Corinth to be unified *in speech, body, and mind* based on the authority of Christ. The implication is obvious; the failure of the Corinthian brethren to maintain unity was a declaration of their lack of respect for the Lordship of Christ. Christ (John 17:21) and Paul (1 Cor. 1:10) pled for unity in the church. Did Jesus and Paul plead for the impossible? Absolutely not!

The Body of Christ (11-13b)

Proof of Disunity

The reason behind Paul’s appeal for unity is revealed in verse 11, “For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” Paul had heard by way of the household of Chloe (literally, “them of Chloe) that there were contentions among the brethren in Corinth. The information Paul received was not

unreliable hearsay fit for busybodies and gossips. Instead *the information he received was factual, authenticated, disclosed, and purely motivated*. It is evident that the information was *factual* by the word translated “declared,” which could be translated “make clear” (BDAG 222) and was often used outside the New Testament for “official, legal evidence” (Gromacki 10-11). The information was *authenticated* by more than one source demonstrated by the plural article before “Chloe.” Paul willingly *disclosed* the source of the information he had received which insured no one could conclude that the information was fictional. Finally, his readiness to receive the information and to promptly correct the Corinthians was *purely motivated*; Paul loved them and had concern for their souls. He was not trying to embarrass and belittle them for their shortcomings; rather he wanted to ensure contentions did not keep them from maintaining a proper relationship with each other and God. Paul’s actions are a far cry from gossipers who perpetuate information which is commonly untrue, unauthenticated, undisclosed, and motivated out of a desire to disparage the character of another.

Prognosis of Disunity

“Those of Chloe” revealed there were “contentions” among the brethren at Corinth. The word translated “contentions” means “strife, discord” (BDAG 392) or “quarrel” (Louw-Nida 104). Paul established in Galatians 5:20 that quarrelsome behavior is sinful when the same word is translated “strife” and is described among the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19). Those that engage in this type of behavior will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21). Contentions were made obvious by members of the body of Christ who openly claimed allegiance to various men. Paul wrote, “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1 Cor. 1:12). Attempts have been made to reconstruct each of these parties to identify the classes of people who would have claimed these men as their “party leaders,” but such attempts lead to endless speculation and are often fruitless. Paul helped establish the church in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18), Apollos eloquently watered what Paul planted (Acts 19:1; 1 Cor. 3:6), and Cephas (Peter) was a leader and

apostle. Without purposing to do so, Paul, Apollos, and Peter had the ability to attract large followings. Paul, first, condemned those who claimed “I am of Paul,” which proved he was not motivated by jealousy but by distaste for all contentions. The final “party,” those who claimed “I am of Christ,” has caused a considerable amount of disagreement among expositors. The disagreement is rooted in this question; did Paul rebuke those in the “Christ party” as he had obviously rebuked those who claimed to be of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas? Without assigning motivation to Paul’s words which may or may not be warranted there are a few observations that are undoubtedly true. First, Paul often reminded the Corinthian brethren that Christ was there only leader (1 Cor. 3:21-23; 2 Cor. 10:7). Second, if any of the Corinthian brethren were attempting to elevate themselves by claiming Christ at the exclusion of other Christians, Paul would have rebuked them (1 Cor. 12:13).

Reproof for Disunity

Finally, Paul reached the climax of his argument for the necessity of unity and the shamefulness of the present “contentions” among the Corinthians by asking three rhetorical questions, the first being, “Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:13). Every true Christian within Corinth would have collectively answered this question with a resounding, no! Christ is the undisputed head of the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 23) and there is only one body, the church (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16). It was an absurdity to think that the body of Christ could be divided into denominations without adverse effects. Christ was aware of the negative effects of division and earnestly prayed to the Father for unity in the body that “the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). *Division is a tragedy because it violates the body of Christ.*

The Baptism of Christ (13c-17)

Paul continued with two additional rhetorical questions, “was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” which were both constructed to indicate a negative answer was expected (Grosheide 38). While these questions

could be considered mutually exclusive it seems more appropriate to view them collectively with a common conclusion, *division is a tragedy because it violates the baptism of Christ*. Paul often connected the crucifixion of Christ with the baptism into Christ as he did in Romans 6: 3-6 where he penned,

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Obviously Paul had not been crucified for the Corinthian brethren, and even if he had it would have rendered nothing. Christ is the only name by which mankind must be saved (Acts 4:12) and is the only sacrifice sufficient for the removal of sin “once and for all” (Heb. 10:1-10). Could the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15) have been the atonement for sin? Most certainly not, for he himself needed atonement! (Rom. 6:15-23). The debt for the sin of mankind had to be paid by a sinless man. Therefore, God sent His Son, who took on the likeness of a man (Philip. 2:6; John 1:14) and was tempted like man “yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15), to be crucified and serve as the propitiation for sin (1 Pet. 1:19). Since Paul was not crucified for them it was ridiculous for them to be baptized in the name of Paul. As Paul stated in Romans 6:3-6, those who are baptized into Christ “were baptized into His death.” If Paul was not crucified for them, why would they be baptized into his name? Instead, if their baptism was of any legitimacy, they would have been baptized in the name of Christ which was consistent with the instruction of Christ (Matt. 28:19) and the practice of the early church (Acts 2:28; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). Barclay wrote this

concerning the significance of the phrase “in the name of”:

That phrase in Greek implies the closest possible connection. To give money into a man’s name was to pay it into his account, into his personal possession. To sell a slave into a man’s name was to give that slave into his absolute and undisputed possession. A soldier swore loyalty into the name of Caesar; he belonged absolutely to the Emperor. This phrase into the name of implied absolute and utter possession. In Christians it implied even more; it implied that the Christian was not only possessed by Christ but was in some strange way identified with Him, was literally in Him. (18)

Paul, having already referred to the recipients of this letter as “brethren” (1:10-11), by implication indicated they had once grasped the importance of their baptism “in the name of Christ” and by obedience had been added to the Lord’s church. Yet their divisive attitudes and actions were an indication that they had forgotten.

The desire of the Corinthians to divide themselves moved Paul to write, “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name” (1 Cor. 1:14-15). Paul was thankful that he had not given any the opportunity to boast, “I am of Paul” based on his administration of baptism, except Crispus and Gaius. There is no evidence to suggest that Paul’s first convert, Crispus (Acts 18:8) or his host, Gaius (Rom. 16:23) ever attempted to seize the opportunity to boast they were baptized “in the name of Paul,” but they were among the few that could have tried. Paul progressed, “And I baptized also the household of Stephanas...” (1 Cor. 1:16). In a moment of further clarity, Paul remembered he had also baptized those of the “household of Stephanas” who are described in 1 Corinthians 16:15 as the “first fruits of Achaia.” Some have used this verse to give credence to infant baptism because, in their minds, there must have been infants among the household of Stephanas. Such a suggestion is purely speculative on the surface and wholly false when its

plausibility is investigated. First, an individual must make the decision to believe in Christ before being immersed (Mark 16:16; John 4:53; Acts 8:34) and an infant is incapable of such a decision. Second, in 1 Corinthians 16:15 Paul wrote that the house of Stephanas had “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” an action rendered impossible during infancy. Paul continued “...besides, I know not whether I baptized any other” (1 Cor. 1:16). After recalling Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, Paul could not remember administering baptism on behalf of anyone else. If there were some claiming to be “of Paul” because he had baptized them, Paul delivered a decisive blow to their egos admitting that the Spirit had not inspired him to even remember their names. Paul continued, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor. 1:17). There are some who refer to Paul’s statements “I thank God I baptized none of you” and “for Christ sent me not to baptize” as evidence that baptism is unnecessary for salvation, those who do so ignore the context of these words entirely. Paul was thankful that he had not baptized more individuals because it offered fewer people the opportunity to claim allegiance to him, not because he rendered baptism unnecessary. In fact, Paul was baptized (Acts 9:18; 22:16), preached the importance of baptism (Rom. 6:1-14), and, as evidenced by this text, administered baptism on occasion (1 Cor. 1:14-15). Likewise, Paul’s words “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” does not indicate that Paul found baptism unnecessary. Instead, Paul is simply acknowledging that he was sent by Christ, first and foremost, to preach the Gospel (Acts 9:15, 20; 22:15; 26:16) and by preaching the Gospel men would be moved to be baptized (Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Winters expounded, “So to make his case as strong as possible, he reminds them that his mission was to preach, not to administer baptism. He was under necessity to preach (9:16). However, it was not necessary for him to personally do the baptizing” (19). Paul’s *purpose* was to preach, his *subject* was the Gospel, and his *method* was “not with wisdom of words.” Paul did not engage in the wisdom those in Corinth

admired, namely the “wisdom of the world” (1 Cor. 1:20) offered by eloquent men (1 Cor. 1:25). Instead, he preached with simplicity (2 Cor. 1:12; 10:10) the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) which in summary is “Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23). If Paul were to trade the Gospel for “words of wisdom,” he would have made the “cross of Christ” of “none effect.” In other words, he would have rendered the Gospel useless, incapable of converting men to Christ (1 Cor. 1:18; Rom. 1:16).

Conclusion

Division in the Lord’s church is as prevalent today as it was in Corinth nearly 2000 years ago. The warning Paul offered to the brethren in Corinth is a warning that should be heeded by every Christian who desires to be counted among God’s faithful. The argument offered by Paul is simple: *Division in the church is a tragic display of sin because it violates the authority, body, and baptism of Christ.*

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Biographical Sketch

Jefferson A. Sole was born in Glen Dale, WV and was raised in Gaithersburg, MD. He is the son of Howard and Susan Sole and the brother of Curtis and Joshua Sole. He married Julia G. Corey on May 27, 2006. Jefferson graduated with honors from Virginia Tech with a B.S. in finance and a minor in real estate in 2006. In 2008 he graduated from the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV. Two years later he earned a M.A. in New Testament studies from Freed-Hardeman University. While enrolled at Freed-Hardeman University he preached for the Saltillo Church of Christ in Saltillo, TN. He is currently working as minister at the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ.

Power of God vs. Wisdom of Men

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

W. Terry Varner

The title of our lecture, “Cultures Clash: Power of God vs. Wisdom of Men,” is based on the text of 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. The text sets forth the biblical worldview and is divided into two sections: (1) *The Divine Argument* (1 Cor. 1:17) and (2) *The Divine Commentary* (1 Cor. 1:18-31). The exegesis is followed with a brief development of the biblical worldview showing God’s Wisdom is superior to and more than adequate to the Wisdom of Men.

The Divine Argument

The Divine Argument of “The Power of God vs. Wisdom of Men” is based on, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor. 1:17 KJV). If we honor God, the Christian worldview insists we confront secular worldviews. Inspiration’s argument is set forth both *negatively* and *positively*. The argument includes four negatives.

- ◆ “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” references Christ commissioning Paul in Acts 26:15-19. Generally, others would baptize those who responded to the Gospel. The meaning is similar to John 4:1-2, “Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (Though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples [baptized]).” The mission of Jesus was not to baptize, but to preach, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).
- ◆ The controversy at Corinth over the subject of baptism focused around the personal loyalty of *who* performed the baptism (1:11-16); consequently, Paul had no desire to add to the divisiveness. “Christ was the essential referent of baptism, not the person who did the teaching or the

administering of baptism. Baptism in the name of Christ was the expected result of preaching the gospel” (Ferguson 149). In addition, Paul’s words cannot mean that baptism is to be separated from the Gospel as it is forever part of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 2:38).

- ◆ The text does not say nor mean that Paul did not baptize. He baptized “Crispus and Gaius” (1:14), “the household of Stephanas” (1:16), and possibly others whom he does not recall (1:16). Beasley-Murray writes, “Most scholars regard v. 17 as implying a conviction on Paul’s part that his appointed task was to preach and that the administration of baptism belonged to the office or charisma of others” (179). J. W. Wilmarth, a Baptist scholar of great renown and the author of the voluminous *Baptist Encyclopedia* (1881), writes of this passage:

But Paul’s thankfulness that he baptized so few at Corinth is *not* an undervaluing of Baptism, though this is a favorite argument of anti-immersionists. He does not deny he preached Baptism, but only says that he did not there (generally) administer the rite with his own hands. He does not deny that the “Lord sent him to preach” Baptism, but does deny that his great mission was to baptize. It is evident...that he did preach Baptism, at Corinth and elsewhere, as a part of the Gospel, and that those who believed under his preaching were immediately baptized. But he preferred, when practicable, that some one else should officiate...the baptizing, while he himself strenuously insisting Baptism in his preaching.... Baptism was such an important thing in the view of the early Christians, that Paul congratulated himself in having baptized so few at Corinth, lest some should say that he “baptized in his own name”—lest the faith and reverence due to Christ might be “divided”—and a part transferred to the distinguished administrator. How could this have been, if Baptism had been a mere symbol of no vital

consequence? (312-13).

- ◆ 1 Corinthians 1:17 emphasizes the Gospel was not and is not to be preached “with wisdom of words.” (This does not mean that grammar, syntax, and clarity are not important when proclaiming God’s word.) Man’s wisdom lacks both the *event* (cross) and the *substance* (message, Gospel). 1 Corinthians 1:17-31 describes Man’s Wisdom variously as, the “wisdom of words” (1:17), “wisdom of the wise” (1:19), “the wisdom of the world” (1:20), and “the base things of the world” (1:28), and, as inadequate “lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1:17), divisive (1:10-16).

The word “lest” (*hina*) introduces the negative result of Man’s Wisdom by nullifying the cross (God’s Wisdom). “None effect” (*kenathe*) means, “to empty, make empty, vain or no effect” (Abbott-Smith 244). McCord translates the term as “become meaningless” (320). Lightfoot says Man’s Wisdom “dwindles to nothing, vanish[es] under the weight of rhetorical ornament and dialectic subtlety” (*Notes* 157). Man’s Wisdom reduces the *event* (cross) and the *substance* (message, Gospel) as ineffective for redeeming man. If we nullify the *event* (cross), we nullify the *substance* (message, Gospel). If we nullify the *substance* (message, Gospel), we nullify the *event* (cross). *They stand and fall together.*

The argument includes *two positives.*

- ◆ The phrase “preach the gospel” is identified with the phrase “the cross of Christ” (1:17). “Preach the gospel” refers to the *substance* (message, Gospel). “The cross of Christ” refers to the *event* (cross). The *substance* (message, Gospel) and *event* (cross) are inseparable! Both are founded on God’s Wisdom (1:21, 30) and “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:20) for “our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). The *substance* (message, Gospel) and the *event* (cross) are clearly expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. “For I delivered first of all that which I also received (*message*), how that Christ died for our sins (*event*) according to the Scriptures (*authority*);

And that He was buried (*event*), and that He rose again the third day (*event*) according to the Scriptures” (authority).”

- ♦ The emphasis is about the inseparableness of the *event* (cross) and the *substance* (message, Gospel). These are combined in the following terms: “Christ” (1:24), “the foolishness of God” (1:25), “the foolishness of preaching” (1:21), “the power of God” (1:18, 24), “the preaching of the cross” (1:18), “preach Christ crucified” (1:23), and “the wisdom of God” (1:21, 24).

The Divine Commentary

1 Corinthians 1:18-23 serves as the *Divine Commentary* on the Divine Argument of 1 Corinthians 1:17. “For” (1:18) connects what has been said (1:17) with what follows (1:18-31). The terms “preach the gospel” and “the cross of Christ” (1:17) are combined in the phrase “the preaching of the cross” (1:18). This is God’s Wisdom and is the very antithesis of “wisdom of words” or wisdom of men (1:17).

“The preaching of the cross” *always* produces results. Man’s reaction to “the preaching of the cross” is either (1) he “perishes” (rejects) or (2) he is “saved” (accepts). The first is described as “foolishness” on man’s part (1 Cor. 1:23) and the second is described as “the work of the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:24).

The terms “perish” and “foolishness” are descriptive of the non-responsive or the disobedient. “Perish” (*apollumeno*) is qualitative in force (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15; 2 Thess. 2:10) meaning they are “in the process of perishing” because they hear but do not obey the Gospel. Those who “perish” are lost through their unbelief in that “they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10; Rev. 21:8; John 8:24). Their perishing is described as “foolishness” (*moria*) from which comes the English words moron and moronic. Foolishness does not mean laughable, but rather “has no triumph of rhetoric or subtleties of dialectic to offer to those whose hearts are set on such trifles” (Lightfoot, *Notes* 157).

On the other hand, those who believe (obey) “the preaching

[*message*] of the cross” are “saved.” God’s Wisdom (“the power of God”), that is, the *event* (cross) and the *message* (substance, Gospel) together “provide the basis for the Christian’s identity and his transforming power to reshape Christian existence in the present and future” (Thiselton 147). “Saved” (*soteria*) is descriptive of good spiritual health and stands in contrast to Man’s Wisdom (“the wisdom of words”), which does not save. The word is a present passive participle with the force of describing the obedient as they “are being saved” or in the process of salvation. It is important that students of the Bible understand that the word “saved” involves the past, the present, and the future. Consider:

In the language of the New Testament salvation is a thing of the past, a thing of the present, and a thing of the future. S. Paul says sometimes “Ye (or we) were saved” (Rom. viii.24), or “Ye have been saved” (Ephes. ii.5, 8), sometimes “Ye are being saved” (1 Cor. xv.2), and sometimes “Ye shall be saved” (Rom. x.9, 13). It is important to observe this because we are thus taught that *soteria* involves a moral condition which must have begun already, though it will receive its final accomplishment hereafter. Godliness, righteousness, is life, is salvation. And it is hardly necessary to say that the divorce of morality and religion must be fostered and encouraged by failing to note this and so laying the whole stress either on the past or on the future--on the first call or on the final change. (Lightfoot, *Fresh* 94)

The “saved” consider “the preaching of the cross” as “the power of God” (God’s Wisdom). God’s Wisdom is described as “the gospel” (1:17), “the cross of Christ” (1:17), “the preaching [word] of the cross” (1:18), “the wisdom of God” (1:21), “Christ crucified” (1:23), and “Christ the power of God” (1:24). Paul’s description of power of the cross is seen in Galatians 1:4. Our Lord Jesus Christ (1) “*gave* Himself for our sins,” (2) “*delivers* us from this present evil world,” and (3) in *accordance* “with the will of God our Father” (cf. Rom. 5:8-9; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Man’s

Wisdom *does not* and *cannot* have this power!

Paul argues for the inability of Man's Wisdom ("wisdom of words" 1:17) to save man by appealing to Isaiah 29:14. The verse is an allusion to the political cunning of the counselors of King Hezekiah who offered counsel as how to escape the forthcoming Assyrian invasion. The counselors argued that their wisdom and prudence would save Judah. God declared Judah's salvation would be on His terms. God destroyed "the wisdom of the wise... [brought] to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1:19). To make his illustration more forceful, Paul introduces it with the crucial words, "*It is written,*" the normal formula and used 51 times in the New Testament, carrying the meaning of "the authoritative character of the document" (Reinecker 388).

1 Corinthians 1:20 contains four rhetorical questions in regards to God saving man and Man's Wisdom ("wisdom of words" 1:17). The first three questions demand *negative* replies and the last elicits an *affirmative* reply.

- ◆ "*Where is the wise?*" is an allusion to Isaiah 29:12 and is applicable to both Jew and Gentile. The implication is they had been made fools by the working of God's wisdom.
- ◆ "*Where is the scribe?*" is an allusion to Isaiah 33:18 to the Jewish scribes, skilled in the Law of Moses (Matt. 7:29), and the Gentile philosophers, both whom failed to understand God's way (Isa. 55:8-11).
- ◆ "*Where is the disputer of this world?*" is applicable to trivial questions of the Jews and their refusal to accept the truthfulness of their own Scripture (Rom. 3:2). Likewise, it is applicable to the Gentile philosophers or wise men who constantly wanted "to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). Both failed to obey the Gospel; yet, none was wiser, supposedly, than the Jewish scribe or the Greek Philosopher.
- ◆ "*[H]as not God made foolish the wisdom of the world*" (1:19) elicits the *affirmative*, YES! God has rendered

as foolish or as nonsense all the wise, the scribe, and the disputer who offered their wisdom in the “wisdom of words.” Lenski pens, “Man merely thought it wisdom; when God touched it, its true character of folly became evident” (59).

A litany of irrefutable evidence can be presented to prove the affirmation that “God made foolish the wisdom of the world” (1:19). Their failure is stated in the stinging rebuke “the world by wisdom knew not God” (1:21). The thought is similar to Romans 1:18-32 and Acts 17:16-34. Jesus said to His fellow Jews, “You neither know Me, nor My Father: if you had known Me, you should have known My Father also” (John 8:19). The Athenian Gentiles were no different. They were religious to the degree that they set up an idol “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, whom therefore you ignorantly worship” (Acts 17:23)—they did not know God and were foolish in their expression of idol worship directed toward God.

God uses “the preaching of the cross” (1:18) to draw men to Him (John 12:32) in order “to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). The phrase “the preaching of the cross” must be understood as involving the full complex of soteriology—the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of Jesus and attendant doctrines. With the *event* of the cross, salvation is available to the world in the *message* of the Gospel (John 3:16; Rom. 1:16-17). Grosheide writes the “work of Christ demonstrates, that the wisdom of the world is not wisdom at all, because it does not reckon with God (James 3:15), neither does it accomplish anything” (47).

It is the case that Man’s Wisdom (“the wisdom of this world” 1:20) is not only wrong, but is ineffective to save man. The Jews, the chosen of God (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; Exod. 17:3; 18:1; 29:46; Lev. 22:31-33) and who also served as the repository of the Old Testament (Rom. 3:2), were in the habit of asking for a sign from God (1:22; Matt. 12:39; 16:4; John 14:11). Though “Christ crucified” (1:23) was the fulfillment of the prophetic signs of the Redeeming Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15) and the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13-53:12), it was insufficient in their

eyes and became a “stumblingblock” (1:23). The Jews had rejected God’s divine shadow, type, prophecy, and testimony of the Old Testament as insufficient evidence and their fulfillment realized in the birth, ministry, miracles, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of Jesus!

With the rejecting of the cross by the Jews, the Gospel of the dying Savior was a “stumblingblock.” Both Testaments affirm for one to hang on the cross was to be accursed of God (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). “Stumblingblock” or “offense” (*skandalon*) means “the arm or stick on which bait was fixed.... [A] ‘snare,’...a ‘bait,’...an ‘allurement,’” (Barclay, *New* 111-14). Lenski defines it as a “death trap” (66). When man rejects the cross, he falls into a “death trap” from “which there remains no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26).

On the other hand, the Greeks in their wisdom considered “Christ crucified” as mere “foolishness” (1:23). Greek reasoning presupposes that God had the “total inability to feel” (Barclay, *Letters* 20). The Greeks reasoned that *if* God can have the feelings of love, joy, sorrow, etc., as a man, *then* something or someone has influenced God, and, consequently, is greater than God. The concept of God, who loved man (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8-9; 1 John 4:8-10) and sent Jesus among men to joyfully die on our behalf (Heb. 12:2), is, in Greek philosophy, a contradiction of terms (1:21, 23-24). The “wisdom” (1:22) of the Greeks left no place for God’s wisdom. Lightfoot sums up the “wisdom” of the Jews and Greeks as, “He is the reality of that power of which the Jews were pursuing the shadow, of that wisdom for which the Greeks were substituting the counterfeit” (*Notes* 164).

Inspiration argues the “foolishness of God” is wiser than man and the very “weakness of God” is stronger than man (1:25). To prove his point, Paul appeals to the social structure of the Corinthian church. “Not many wise...mighty...noble are called” (1:26), but there were some exceptions—**Crispus** (Acts 18:8), **Sosthenes** (Acts 18:17), **Erastus** (Rom. 16:23). They were “called” by the Gospel (Acts 18; 2 Thess. 2:13-15) of “Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; 15:1-4).

The remainder of the chapter (1:27-31) sets forth two concluding thoughts.

- ◆ There is a contrast between the biblical worldview and secular worldviews by which God chose the foolish, weak, and despised things in man's eyes to confound the wisdom of men (1:27). Man's wisdom is not viable. "Intellect, education, rank, and wealth so precious when laid on the altar of God, yet, by promising to supply themselves our need, tend to keep men from accepting the gospel" (Beet 42).

The biblical worldview culminating and expressed in the *event* (the crucified Savior) and the *substance* (the message, Gospel) is considered as nothing by secular worldviews (1:28). Elsewhere, Paul writes that God "calls those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). In other words, God is Sovereign. Beet expresses it as, "By choosing as His instruments things reckoned to be nothing, and passing by things reckoned to be much, God made the latter to be practically nothing" (42). A higher divine wisdom exists to make man wise, strong, and noble in his salvation and life—Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-2). The concept of God showing the weakness of the strong and the boastful is evident in Scripture (1 Cor. 1:23). "The Lord of hosts has purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory and bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth [secular worldviews]" (Isa. 23:9).

- ◆ Paul explains in 1:29-31 *why* God in His wisdom acted. God acted so "that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1:29). Man's wisdom is futile compared to the wisdom of God. "We may glory not *before* him, but *in* him" (Bengel 173). If Christ enables us to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4) and to draw and sustain life (John 1:4; 14:6), then we walk worthy of the Lord (Col. 1:9-10). "And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are You...for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God" (Rev. 5:9). In Christ, we have the "key which unlocks the mysteries of God's eternal purpose of mercy, and of the present life; and, knowing this eternal purpose and eternal realities, they are able to choose aright their steps in life" (Beet 143).

In 1 Corinthians 1:30, Kistemaker states, “The text seems to suggest that the word wisdom should be explained by the other three nouns” (64); i.e. righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

- ◆ *Righteousness* means we are made right before God by our acceptance and obedience to the Gospel (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 10:4; Philip. 3:9). However, righteousness also means we continue to live in a right relationship with God by living according to the biblical worldview.
- ◆ *Sanctification* is descriptive of our holy life before God (1 Peter 1:16). We do not conform to the world (Rom. 12:2) because we have “the mind of Christ” (Philip. 2:5) and allow “Christ be formed” in us (Gal. 4:19), which is “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).
- ◆ *Redemption* begins in obedience to the Gospel and concludes at the judgment as we enter into the eternal state of heaven (Rom. 3:23-25; 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30). It is within God’s wisdom to bring man redemption for it is impossible to save ourselves. It is in Christ that “we have redemption through His blood” (Eph. 1:7). This allows us to “draw near” to God (Heb. 10:19-22).

The concluding verse (1:31) argues that if any are going to boast, the Lord is to get the glory. After all, the source of all that we have that is good comes from above (Jas 1:17). Paul elsewhere wrote, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

The Biblical Worldview

1 Corinthians 1:17-31 implies God’s biblical worldview as the answer to the clash of cultures—God’s Wisdom vs. Man’s Wisdom—and the problem of man, sin. The Bible presents itself as *the* understandable biblical worldview. The biblical worldview is “*the mind, will, character, glory, and being of*

God” (MacArthur 2). The biblical worldview is not a recent innovation, but dates from God speaking Creation into existence (Gen. 1; Psa. 33:9). God created man “in His image” (Gen. 1:26-27) involving the totality of man—the moral, mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and relational aspects of life (cf. Matt. 22:37-40).

God gave man various responsibilities in life (1) the responsibility of dominion over the physical world (Gen. 1:26; 2:15), (2) the responsibility of honoring, obeying, and serving God (Gen. 2:16-17), and (3) the responsibility of properly relating to others in society (Gen. 2:18-25). These mandates embrace the duties and relationships formed within the biblical worldview. Responsibility implies free will; i.e. man can choose to obey God or choose to rebel. Frame states that “Creation is what God makes; culture is what man does with creation” (qtd. in Helseth and Huffman 75).

With man exercising his free will, Genesis 3 relates the sad story of sin’s entrance into the world. The result of man’s disobedience to God resulted man’s first secular worldview. As time progressed, man’s disobedience resulted in various competing secular worldviews that conflict with one another and with God’s biblical worldview.

Some of the secular worldviews contradicting and opposing the biblical worldview are: *Agnosticism* is the theory that it is not possible to know if God exists. *Atheism* is the denial of the existence of a divine being. *Darwinism* is the theory of naturalistic evolutionary development of biological life. *Determinism* is the theory that all events, including human choices, are determined by previous causes. *Empiricism* is the theory that all knowledge comes by our senses. *Ethical Relativism* is the theory that moral values are a matter of personal preference and are not absolute, objective, or universally true. *Evolution* is the theory that all life developed by natural processes gradually from simpler life forms. *Existentialism* is the philosophy that truth is subjective, personal, and individualistic, and not universal and absolute. *Materialism* is the philosophy that the physical world is all that exists. *Naturalism* is the philosophy that nature is all that exists and

denies any supernatural Being. *Scientific Naturalism* is the theory that the physical world is the only reality and scientific knowledge is the only valid knowledge (Gardner 459-80).

The Biblical Worldview is Divine Revelation

There are two divine books of *Divine Revelation*: (1) *General* (Nature) and (2) *Special* (Bible). The first sets forth that God exists, but cannot save sinful man. General Revelation is given to all humanity and is called General because it is seen in Nature. “The whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa. 6:3; Acts 14:17; 17:24; Rom. 1:18-32) and so are the heavens (Psalm 19:1-6).

At least four aspects characterize General Revelation. (1) It is *Universal*. God has never been without witness among humanity (Acts 14:17; Matt. 5:45). (2) It is *Objective*. Whether man admits it or not, Nature continues to testify of God. “He waters the hills from His chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works.... O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom have You made them all: the earth is full of Your riches” (Psalm 104:13, 24). (3) It is *Judicial*. Three times it is stated “God gave them up” (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28) because men “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). Consequently, man is “without excuse” (Rom. 1:20) and his conscience testifies against him (Rom. 2:12-15). 1 Corinthians 1:21 implies evidence that God existed in the world but was rejected by “Man’s Wisdom.” (4) It is *Insufficient*. General Revelation fails to reveal how man is to deal with his sin, turn and serve God, and enjoy the hope of eternal life (Broomall 91-92).

The Biblical Worldview is Special Revelation

Special Revelation is the truth of God revealed to man. MacArthur writes that the biblical worldview is “*the mind, will, character, glory, and being of God*. Even more to the point: *truth is the self-expression of God*” (2). *Why* does God desire to reveal the truth to man? *Why* is it needed? Horne (1:2-21) explains *why* the biblical worldview is needed and that it precedes all other worldviews. (1) The *Possibility* of Divine Revelation assumes God is able to communicate with man whom He created (Gen.

1:26-27). (2) The *Probability* of Divine Revelation is founded on God's character by showing His interest in the state and welfare of man (Eph. 3:3; Rom. 16:25). (3) The *Necessity* of Divine Revelation shows man cannot know the true nature of God, how to worship and serve Him, or know the truth (John 4:24; 8:32; 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Special Revelation reveals facts and truths that man cannot discover by himself. These divine facts and truths are from the all-knowing God. "His understanding is infinite" (Psalm 17:5). Special Revelation is necessary to guide man's life and prepare him for eternity, making it different from General Revelation, in that it is written. Pinnock writes, "...Scripture alone maintains the true record...sufficient to bring men to saving faith" (147).

God's biblical worldview has been revealed, "Here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:13) through progressive dispensations—Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian. The biblical worldview culminates in Christ and Christianity as God's ultimatum to man (cf. Heb. 1:1-2a; Acts 4:12). It is a metanarrative, that is, the biblical worldview explains all that exists. It involves God's *grace* inviting man's obedience (Gen. 12:1-3; Titus 2:11-13). It involves God's *mighty acts* in the history of man and described by inspiration as "the mighty works of God" (Acts 1:11; 2:22). The biblical worldview is the sixty-six books composing the *Bible* and brings progressive revelation to its culmination in Christ and Christianity. We illustrate this point as follows: "Christ died (*divine action*) for our sins (*divine grace*) according to the Scriptures (*divine revelation*)" (1 Cor. 15:3).

The Biblical Worldview Has Essentials

Some of the essential attendant doctrines of Special Revelation are *Inspiration*, *Authority*, and *Inerrancy* all of which clash with the cultural thinking of today's masses.

Inspiration. Special Revelation emphasizes God's *message* (Gospel); whereas, Inspiration emphasizes the *method* of guiding, controlling, communicating and recording of the biblical worldview. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). Inspiration (*theopneustos*) does not mean "breathed into" but rather "breathed out by God.... God's breath

is the irresistible outflow of His power” (Warfield 133). The result is that the Special Revelation is both *plenary* (all) and *verbally* (word) inspired.

The Old Testament writers were guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21) who are described as speaking from God (Heb. 1:1). Over 3,808 times the Old Testament declares that it is the express Word of God. Likewise, the New Testament writers spoke “not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:13).

While God used “holy men” (2 Pet. 1:21) to make known and to record His Word, He did so “within the personality and the cultural complex of the writers so that, in an infallible manner, the Bible is the word of God while being the words of men” (Merideth 379).

Authority. Our culture, in general, detests authority and especially the concept of absolute authority. If Special Revelation (Bible) is God’s *message* and Inspiration is God’s *method* of making known His will to man, then Special Revelation (Bible) is *authoritative in the absolute sense*.

Revelation, inspiration, and authority, as well as, inerrancy, are implied in the words of Jesus to His apostles who revealed His teaching by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26-27; 15:26-27; 16:13). “Whatsoever you shall bind [command] on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose [permit] on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18). If the Bible is the very word of God and not the word of men (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13), then the Bible is authoritative and absolute. Jesus made Scripture the final court of appeal (Matt. 22:29; John 10:35). John Stott writes the following concerning Jesus’ endorsing the authority of the Scripture:

So then our Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly endorsed the authority of the Old Testament by appealing to it and submitting to it. He also deliberately provided for the writing of the New Testament by appointing and equipping the apostles. In this way both the Old Testament and the New Testament, although in different ways, bear the stamp of his authority. Therefore if we

wish to submit to the authority of Christ, we must submit to the authority of Scripture, since the authority of Scripture carries with it the authority of Christ. (59)

When we read Scripture, God's voice speaks to us (Matt. 22:31-32), the prophets speak to us (Acts 13:27), and the Holy Spirit speaks to us (Rev. 2:1, 7). Haldane in commenting on the phrase, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh" (Rom. 9:17) held that God and Scripture are closely intertwined. "Here the word of God is so much identified with Himself, that the Scripture is represented as possessing and exercising the peculiar prerogatives of God" (470).

Empowered with the authority of God, the Bible serves as a staff of life (Matt. 4:4), a lamp and light (Ps. 119:105), saves man (1 Pet. 1:22; Rom. 1:16), edifies man (Acts 20:32), judges man (John 12:48; Rev. 20:11-15), and is indestructible (John 10:35; Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25).

Inerrancy. The Bible is Special Revelation, Inspired, and Authoritative; therefore, *Inerrant*. By inerrancy, we mean trustworthy. If the Bible is the very Word of God (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13) and not the words of men (Men's Wisdom), then it is the case that the Bible is fully inerrant and trustworthy.

Being *plenary* (all) and *verbally* (word) inspired, the Bible assumes the very nature of its source, God. God's nature is described as trustworthy. "God is not man, that He should lie" (Num. 23:19). "The Strength of Israel will not lie" (1 Sam. 15:29). "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2). Since God's very nature is described as *trustworthy*, He "cannot lie," "will not lie," and it is "impossible for God to lie," then it is the case that the very Words of God (Bible) are true, non-contradictory, and inerrant; that is, the Bible is free from all error in all that it says.

The Biblical Worldview Culminates in "The Cross of Christ"

The Cross of Christ and all of its glorious benefits is the culmination of the biblical worldview. The Cross of Christ, and the attendant doctrine of the resurrection, was "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20) and prophesied

after the fall of man (Gen. 3). Genesis 3:15 is God's divine argument as *how* Satan would be defeated and *how* man is to be liberated from his sins. The serpent bruising "the heel" of the seed (Christ, Gal. 3:16) of the woman references the crucifixion of Christ. The bruising of "the head" of the serpent by Christ references the resurrection and its power (cf. Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 1:4).

The Cross of Christ, "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2), is the *center* of the biblical worldview. All of the animal sacrifices of the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations were types and shadows of Calvary. The cross is the symbol of Christianity from the beginning. We see the cross on the communion ware, steeples of buildings of worship, the necklaces of women, and the lapel pins of men. Robert Sinker, the late Librarian of Trinity College at Cambridge, writes that the cross always symbolized Christianity, "In the catacombs, and all the earliest records, it is constantly used in connexion with the monogram of Christ" (1:494).

Christianity is the faith of Christ crucified and raised from the dead. It is into these divine acts that we are baptized (Rom. 6:3-4). His crucifixion and resurrection are efficacious to the obedient. "For there is one God, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). Inspiration's brevity calls Jesus the "mediator," "the man," and "a ransom." He became man in His incarnation (Matt. 1:23; Philip. 2:8), He was crucified (died) as our ransom (Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:8-9), and He is exalted and serves as the Christian's mediator (Philip. 2:9-11; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). The birth of Jesus looks forward to the cross and His resurrection looks backward to the cross and validates His crucifixion for the sins of man. Jesus established a memorial service in His memory showing the importance of His death for man (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). Leon Morris states that the cross of Jesus "dominates the New Testament" and stands "as the divine answer to the fundamental problem, the problem of man's sins" (365).

The Christian faith being the faith of Christ crucified calls for us "to walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 3:1-3) and to

serve God “as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). “Which is your reasonable service” can be understood as “what is expected of you.”

It is no wonder that inspiration records Paul’s attitude as a Christian, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14). Paul’s glorying in the cross means “to boast in,” “to take pride in,” and “to live for.” In other words, we should emulate Paul’s attitude and allow the Cross of Christ to engross “our attention... [to fill] our horizons... [to dominate] our mind” (Stott 67). Ryle wrote of the role and impact of “Christ Crucified” in the Bible and in our life as a child of God:

If you have not yet found out that Christ crucified is the foundation of the whole volume, you have read your Bible hereto to very little profit. Your religion is a heaven without a sun, an arch without a keystone, a compass without a needle, a clock without spring or weights, a lamp without oil.... Beware, I say again, of a religion without the cross. (19-20)

As God’s children, we live under God’s judgment and realize that self-salvation is impossible, and that our only hope is in the crucified Christ. Let us rejoice that our “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). Let us rejoice in John’s writing, “You are worthy...for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood” (Rev. 5:9).

Conclusion

Our exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1:17-31 setting forth the biblical worldview shows its divine nature. God in His power and wisdom renders man’s wisdom as foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23), whether men seek for a “sign” from God or is satisfied with our own “wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:22). God progressively revealed the biblical worldview in the message of the Gospel or Cross (1 Cor. 1:17, 23) which results in God’s wisdom showing

“righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30) to the obedient. The biblical worldview recorded in the Bible demonstrates how God’s wisdom conquers the wisdom of man and renders it inept. God’s wisdom culminates and centers Christ crucified which defeats the wisdom of men.

In dealing with our culture, the biblical worldview shows the Christian’s responsibility involves: (1) We live as the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-16) and thereby “glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:31). (2) To reach the lost and make an impact on our culture, we must prove that *God is*, that the *Bible is* God’s biblical worldview, and that *Christ is* the center of the biblical worldview.

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Biographical Sketch

W. Terry Varner married Lillie L. Garrison from Littleton, over 50 years ago. They have 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren. Terry received formal education from Abilene Christian University, Waynesburg University, West Virginia State University, Moody Bible Institute, National Christian University, Malone College and Alabama Christian School of Religion.

Varner has extensive teaching experience from conducting Bible classes at various congregations for more than 50 years. He has also taught 3 to 5 classes, at a time, at the West Virginia School of Preaching since its beginning. Varner was involved in located work at numerous congregations in the Ohio Valley for over 40 years. He retired from fulltime located work in 1997. Presently he serves as elder and evangelist at West Union, WV and as Research Coordinator for Warren Christian Apologetics Center, Vienna, WV.

Varner has also dedicated himself to proclaiming the Gospel in written form as well. He owned and published *Therefore Stand*, a monthly eight-page paper for 24 years. In addition to *Therefore Stand* he has also written and/or published several

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Discipline in a Permissive Culture

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Emanuel Daugherty

It is a great privilege to be able to speak on this, the Eighteenth Annual West Virginia School of Preaching Victory Lectures. The theme this year is a study of the powerful book of First Corinthians. My thanks and gratitude is extended to the Lectureship Committee for asking me to speak on the subject of “*The Ethics of Redemption.*”

As has already been pointed out, 1st Corinthians is a book of problems, but it is also a book of solutions. My subject in this hour is concerned with a grave problem that had come about in the church at Corinth that needed immediate attention and action.

This chapter may be outlined as follows:

- I. The Sinner’s Problem Stated (1)**
- II. The Church’s Prideful Stance (2)**
- III. The Apostle’s Prescribed Solution (3-13)**

The Sinner’s Problem Stated (1 Cor. 5:1)

Paul begins by saying, “*It is commonly reported...*” This does not hint that this is just an ugly rumor, the word means that it has been established and that without question (*holos*, actually, most assuredly, incontrovertibly, Butler 81).

The report was, “*There is fornication among you....*” Sexual immorality was being practiced by a Christian brother in the church at Corinth. But it was fornication, sexual immorality that had reached a depth of depravity not even characterized by the heathen. A man had taken his father’s wife (his step-mother) and was either living with her or married to her, while the father was still living (2 Cor. 7:12)! The father and the son were Christians (2 Cor. 7:12; 1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:6-7). The text does not state whether the woman was a Christian; if she was or wasn’t does not affect the case. After citing several scenarios regards to how such a situation could have come about and the arrogance of the

church even boasting about it, Howard Winters observes:

They were committing such an abominable evil that it was unacceptable even to the immoral pagan Corinthians...Not only did heathen law and sentiment prohibit such, the OT forbade a son taking his father's wife, even a concubine upon the penalty of death (Lev. 18:8; 20:11; Deut. 22:30; 27:20; 2 Sm. 16:21-22; Gen. 35:22; 49:4), and to do so would still be considered, by Greek, Roman, and Hebrew, incest under all circumstances, whether the father was living, divorced, or dead. She would remain his stepmother, his father's wife, and neither divorce nor death would change this relationship. Thus it was an unthinkable sin, but here it was openly tolerated by the church of God, which was supposed to be heaven's citadel of truth and purity. (61)

The fornication described here is that “*a man has his father's wife.*” The present tense verb (*echein*, present infinitive, Robertson 111), to go on having her [sexually] describes a continuing relationship with the woman—he has taken his father's wife and still has her; thus, a more or less permanent relationship has been established with her. The expression “to HAVE a woman” means to have sexual relations with her (Matt. 14:4; 22:28).

Fornication is a general term in the New Testament that covers the many and various sins of sexual misconduct. (1) **Fornication** (*porneia*), when used specifically, refers to sexual immorality between those not married. (2) **Adultery** (*moicheia*) refers to sexual intercourse between parties where marriage is involved on the part of one or both. (3) **Incest** (Latin *incestus*) is sexual impropriety between family members or close relatives, is the sin described here though the term itself is not used. Incest simply means “not chaste.” Strictly forbidden among the Jews (Lev. 18:8; 20:10-21; Deut 27:20) as well as here in the N.T. (4) **Pedophilia** means an adult having sexual desire for children.(5) **Homosexuality** (*arsenokoites*, from *arsen* male, and *koites* sexual intercourse); also, the word *malakoi* meaning soft to the

touch. (All these definitions are from Butler 102). Often used in the N.T. to describe male effeminacy, those who would allow themselves to be used as willing homosexual partners. Fornication as used in this text refers to sexual relations between men and men or women and women (*lesbianism*). See Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9.

Paul describes this sin of incest with shock; this sin is not even practiced among the Gentiles, let alone in the Lord's church! This is not to say that it was never ever practiced among the Gentiles for we have several notorious cases of incest in ancient history; the Egyptian queen Cleopatra II, with her brother, Cleopatra VII with Ptolomy XIII, and Herod Antipas with Herodias, his niece-sister-in-law. But generally speaking, this was not a practice common to the rank and file of the pagan world.

The Church's Prideful Stance (1 Cor. 5:2)

Paul continued by proclaiming, "*And you are puffed up...*" (2a). The reaction of the Corinthian brethren was not one of guilt, sadness, remorse, and hating the outrageous sin, but of boasting, pride and arrogance! He actually had some in the congregation defending him! He said "you are puffed up, inflated with pride" (*pephusiomenoi, physioo*, see 4:6; 18; Vines 230), having been puffed in the past and were still puffed up! (Butler 82) Paul was shocked upon hearing the report of this gross sin and must be doubly shocked at the attitude the church had toward it! Many in the 21st century must have taken lessons from the Corinthian church. "Since Paul had already written the Corinthians to disassociate themselves from immoral church members (1 Cor. 5:9f), Paul sees this toleration of incest as a defiance to the previous letters he had written them" (Oester 127). In Paul's writings church discipline may be taken for doctrinal deviation (Gal. 4:28-31), behavioral deviation (Rom. 16:17-20), and in this place, moral deviation (1 Cor. 5:13).

We wonder how a situation like this could develop in a church. In our own age of "tolerance" one can almost hear them excusing their sinful brother, "It is none of our business what a man does in the privacy of his own home." "Let's not forget the

canopy of grace!” “These people need confirmation that God still loves them, not condemnation. We welcome them!” (Homosexuals, pedophiles, those committing incest, fornication, adultery, divorced for any reason, etcetera, ad nauseam). This is “open-mindedness” gone to seed! “Woe to them which call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isa. 5:20).

They had become insensitive to sin, when they should have been shocked, repulsed and embarrassed. They were intolerant of petty wrongs (cf. 6:2), while being tolerant of the most repulsive of sins. They strained at gnats and swallowed camels (cf. Matt 23:24) Note: easy-going-tolerance is lethal! (Winkler 22)

Rather than being proud and arrogant they should have been mourning (as if mourning for the dead). Outrage and righteous indignation should have brought tears and sorrow. This is a callous, hard-hearted group of saints! “Acts of discipline in the church should always commence with MOURNING that there is occasion for it. (It should not be anger, or pride, or revenge, or party feeling, which prompt to discipline” (Reese 153). If they had reacted correctly to the knowledge of the grievous sin they would have administered discipline of the sort that the sinful man would be removed from among them. Today, some would react to an attempt at church discipline by saying you are being “prudish” and “judgmental.” Jack Lewis in a lecture at Freed-Hardeman University observed: “People of the noblest spiritual ideals and actions will take the side of their favorite relative in any discipline situation” (262). Perhaps the elders at Corinth had “closed their eyes and hoped it would go away,” or said “Let’s not be hasty, in time this will be forgotten,” as many have done in our time.

It is for these reasons that members guilty of flagrant, aberrant and continuous sinfulness are not rebuked. But silence gives consent. Consent leads to toleration. Then the church ends up like the one in Corinth, defending and winking an eye at even

the worst of sins. Also, when a congregation does have the fortitude and courage to take appropriate action against the guilty, the dis-fellowshipped Christian will seek out a church in the area that will offer a sympathetic ear, give their blessing and receive him into their fellowship, sins and all.

The Apostle's Prescribed Solution (1 Cor. 5: 3-13)

Paul continued, "*For I verily...have judged already...*" (3a). Paul's inspired judgment and instructions in the matter were made immediately. His physical presence was not necessary to give his judgment in this matter. But his judgment is not from his own heart nor from anger and outrage, but from full apostolic authority (1:1). "The apostle also wants to make it clear that the decision about how to respond to this sin is not open to plea bargaining or the consensus of the majority (cf. 2 Cor. 2:6). For Paul, it is a settled matter" (Oester 128). It may be implied by the context that Paul is telling them to call a special assembly of the church to address this matter. Worship is not the *only* purpose for the church assembly! (Note the context of Matt. 18:15-20). There is no guesswork here; this is instruction of the Holy Spirit regarding the Bride of Christ. The Bride is to keep herself sanctified, cleansed, "*without spot or wrinkle, that she may be holy and without blemish*" (Eph. 5:21-27; cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). All immorality and impurity is to be put away and not even named among the saints (Eph. 5:3). The church is to take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but expose them, "*for it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret*" (Eph. 5:11-12).

Note the statements regarding the action to be taken: (1) It is done in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus. (2) It is to be done by Paul's spirit, ordered by apostolic epistle—Paul being absent in body, but expressing his will by letter which conveys as much authority at the oral statement. (3) It is to be put into effect by the assembled church. It is not a private matter to be done behind closed doors between the elders and the guilty party, but before the whole church. (4) It is for the purpose of putting to death the world-mindedness of the guilty man in order to save his spirit for God.

Paul's pen is sharp, his language is crystal clear: "Deliver this

man to Satan...” (*Paradounai*) means to “give over, abandon, and deliver up” suggesting transfer from one authority to another, “hand him over...” (Butler 86). What does it mean to abandon one or deliver one to Satan? This simply means that this Christian “was to be thrust back into the world [sphere] in which Satan still exercised authority” (Barrett 126). It is the same as “Let him become to you as a Gentile and a publican” (Matt. 18:17). It is the same as “having nothing to do with him...” (2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15). It is a withdrawal of fellowship. “Delivering an immoral impenitent to Satan is really only an acknowledgment by the church of that which the sinner has already done to himself!” (Butler 86).

Delivering this man to Satan is for (1) “the destruction of the flesh” [to destroy his sinful ways, Beck’s translation] in order that (2) “his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” This disciplinary action by the church is not being done to destroy the man, but to reclaim him for Christ. Anything short of this (e.g., forgiving the sinner without their repentance) or beyond this (e.g., withdrawing fellowship to get even), is unscriptural. By this formal action on the part of the whole church ‘when you are gathered together,’ the church is declaring “this man has given himself to the service of Satan.” “His fleshly lusts took him there, and the sinfulness will now run its course to ‘the destruction of the flesh,’ and such deterioration... will continue until the man himself wishes to bring it to a halt.” (Bill Jackson 42). Delivering the wicked man to Satan is the same as saying, “*he that has done this deed might be taken from among you*” (2). This man’s sin, serious as it was, did not permanently remove him from the reach of God’s grace and forgiveness. The very purpose of all church discipline is the salvation of the soul. When this man stops his willful, sinful behavior, repents, and is restored to the church, then will his spirit be saved in the “day of the Lord” [judgment day] (2 Cor. 5:10).

Paul’s rebuke is stern, “*your glorying* (boasting, bragging) *is not good.*” “Their pride in being able to tolerate such a condition in the church (see note on verse 2) was far from admirable. Such is not becoming to Christians...either then or now” (Winters 63). Moses told the children of Israel to get rid of all the leaven in

their houses on the eve of the Passover (Exod. 12:15, 20; 13:6-7). Paul uses this figure of leaven to describe what must be done to cleanse their “house,” i.e., the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:14-15). J.W. McGarvey notes that “the reference to the Passover was probably suggested by the time of year (16:8), and is, therefore, very apropos (73). Leaven is used as a metaphor to show the contaminating influence the incestuous man would have on the church if it is left alone. It is used here illustrating that though hidden, this sin unchecked by repentance or discipline, is constantly spreading its evil. He would end up corrupting the whole congregation unless checked immediately.

Paul continued, “*For our Passover has also been sacrificed, even Christ...*” (7c). Sin tolerated in the church is an insult to the cross of Christ. He died to save us from our sin, but we act as if He did nothing! Christ is our Passover (*pascha*), the perfect sacrifice. Christ’s sacrifice is a perpetual sacrifice, and ever-present paschal Lamb, demanding and enforcing constant vigilance and unceasing cleanliness (McGarvey 73). That Christ is our Passover reminds us that we did not become sin free by human effort and perfectionism.

The apostle admonishes, “*Let us keep the feast...*” (8a). The festival is not describing the Lord’s Supper or the Passover as such, but is a typology of the Christian life. The celebration of redemption and forgiveness, righteousness and godliness, grace and mercy provided by Christ’s death on the cross cannot be kept with sin in the camp! The idea is that a life lived in sincerity is a life that is not lived in darkness or shadows, but one that is lived in the undimmed, brilliance of pure truth (Butler 91).

Next the beloved apostle to the Gentiles tells the Corinthians, “*I wrote unto you in an epistle...*” (9a). Obviously in one previous that the Holy Spirit chose not to preserve, Paul had told them they were not to keep company with fornicators. The word here is a compound of three words meaning not to mix up with, associate with, or keep company with. Winters says, “they were to withdraw all close and habitual relationship with the morally impure (11-13; 2 Thess. 3:14). Now he places some limitations on his previous instruction (10-13). These modifications make it all but certain that Paul had in mind another letter, not this one,

as many commentators think” (65).

Paul offers an explanation specifically telling them what he means: “*Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world*” (10a, ESV). Paul categorized the heathen as those who were (1) sexually immoral, i.e., fornicators, adulterers, incestuous, homosexual, and so forth, (2) sinners against society; greedy, robbers, swindlers, covetous and extortioners, (3) sinners against God; idolaters, image worshipers (The only way one can keep himself literally from sinful people is to leave this earth , John 17:14-17). This verse shows that God does not think it necessary for Christians to shut themselves off in some conclave, abbey or monastery, separate community to escape the sin [sinners] of this world. We are in the world but not of it; we are to live above the world (1 John 2:15-17).

Paul explains further that he is instructing them in this letter not to keep company with any man who is called **a brother**.

When the church withdraws fellowship from a sinful brother, whether he be a fornicator, covetous man, idolater, railer, drunkard, extortioner, or any other sin in this category, spiritual association, commerce, social intercourse, and interchange with other Christians must cease until he has repented. (Winters 66)

The apostle goes on to say, “*not even to eat with such a one...*” (11c). In times past eating a meal with another person meant acceptance of them, acknowledging them as equals. To eat with a brother who was guilty of unrepented sin and withdrawn from by the church was to accept him as faithful, in one accord, and in good standing while ignoring his sin and the painful steps the church had taken to correct him.

He continues, “*We have no authority to judge those without*” (12a) i.e., those outside the body of Christ. The church has no business (or means) of policing the sinners of this world. God will take care of that in the Judgment (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12-13). The church’s duty to those in the world is to faithfully preach the Gospel to them (Matt. 28:18-19). But the church has a serious duty to police ourselves as the

Body of Christ. Six statements are made in this chapter to resolve the incestuous problem in the Corinthian church. The wicked man is: (1) to “be taken away from among you” (5:2). (2) “Deliver such a one to Satan” (5:5). (3) “Purge out the old leaven” (5:7). (4) They were “not to keep company with” a brother who willfully practiced sin and would not repent (5:9-11). (5) “Do you not judge those who are inside?” (5:12). (6) “Put away from yourselves that wicked person” (5:13).

Another statement is added in the Second Corinthian Letter, “This punishment which was inflicted by the majority” (2:6). Responsibility for church discipline is not just a church ordinance, nor an eldership policy; or a tool to get rid of a shameful person, indeed it is the command of God.

Conclusion: Purposes of Church Discipline

Though this lesson is not designed to cover all the New Testament teaching on church discipline it seems necessary that some additional points on the subject be added to this chapter. We make these points by asking the following question: **What is the purpose of church discipline?** There are several.

First, it is a Divine command. Discipline for immorality is required for wicked men and women. Paul said, “Deliver him to Satan,” put him back into the world, Satan’s realm. Withdrawal of fellowship from those who walk disorderly and refuse to obey apostolic teaching are to be corrected (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). Those who teach false doctrine are to be “marked and avoided” (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10).

Second, church discipline is for the purpose of saving the one who has sinned and will not repent. It makes him aware of seriousness of his sin, prompting him to return to Christ and the church. God had the salvation of the disorderly in mind when he commanded the church to withdraw from him.

Third, church discipline helps preserves the purity of the church. “Purge out the old leaven!” One bad apple will eventually destroy the whole barrel!

Fourth, church discipline serves as a warning to others in the church. In his letter to Timothy Paul says he had delivered some to Satan, in order that Hymenaeus and Alexander may learn not

to blaspheme (1:20). When severe discipline was practiced on Ananias and Sapphira the conclusion was written: “and great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (Acts 5:1-11).

Fifth, when the church disciplines itself, people of the world take notice. It shows the world that the church does not tolerate sin among its members and the self-righteous of the world cannot say “See, we in the world are as good as you!” “We are to so live that they who are our adversaries cannot speak reproachfully of us (Titus 2:8; 1 Tim. 5:14; 1 Pet. 2:12)” (Winkler 24).

All saints, elders, deacons, preachers and members should be concerned with the sin of the world that is rubbing off on the church. It is imperative that the Lord’s church takes appropriate action to restore the purity of the body of Christ. We must, my brethren, live above the standards of the world! We cannot become apathetic about sin.

Sin has a way of eating away at our sensitivities. To illustrate, compare the present conceptions, in and out of the church, with a few years ago as regards divorce, abortion, homosexuality, drinking, immodesty and church absenteeism. However, sin is still sin; and, you still spell it s-i-n. When you pronounce it, you can still hear the hiss of Eden’s serpent and feel the sting of his fangs! (Winkler 25)

The sinful situation in Corinth was handled God’s way, that is, by the inspired apostle Paul’s solution to correct sin in their midst. The second epistle shows this matter was dealt with properly. Paul’s instruction in the Second Corinthian letter included commandments as to the treatment to be given toward sinful brethren who repent. (1) Receive them back (2:6). (2) Forgive them (2:7, 10). (3) Comfort them (2:7). (4) Confirm our love toward them (2:8). (5) Their discipline of the incestuous man served as proof to Paul that they were obedient in all things (2:9).

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Biographical Sketch

Emanuel Daugherty is a native of Barbour County, WV and is married to the former Judith Null. They have 4 children and 8 grandchildren and a great grandchild. He graduated from Getwell Road School of Preaching (Memphis School of Preaching) and Alabama Christian School of Religion (Amridge University). He has preached at Alkire Road Grove City, OH, Dewey Avenue St Marys, WV and served as Director of West Virginia School of Preaching. Presently brother Daugherty is preaching for the Salem church in Glen Easton, WV and continues at WVSOP,

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The Value of Marriage

1 Corinthians 7:1-9

Dan Jenkins

We have seen in our lifetime the demise of the sacredness of marriage. The rate of divorce has skyrocketed from a time when divorce was almost unknown, to our situation where there is one divorce for every two marriages. Premarital sex has become the norm. In America there are more couples living together without marriage than there are couples living together who are married.

Add to this the fact that in many states, in the White House and in the houses of Congress, homosexuality has become an approved arrangement. When Lot moved into Sodom the Bible says that his righteous soul was tormented from day to day by seeing and hearing of the lawless deeds of the people in that city. The souls of Christians in America understand his torment for in movies, television, tabloids and political speeches we are having such ungodliness thrust upon us.

The same attitude toward sexual purity was faced by the Corinthian Christians. Sexual immorality was at the center of pagan worship. The rulers of the world, the Caesars, were notorious for the immorality. Fidelity in marriage was practically unknown in the pagan world. When Paul lists some of the sins that were part of the lives of the Christians in that church so many of them were sexually related. “Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, not adulterers, nor homosexuals nor sodomites...will enter the kingdom of God. And such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Then they learned the truth. Paul goes on to say, “But you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 6:11). They no longer could live in a world dominated by fleshly desires. The Holy Spirit had taught them and they were now being led by the Spirit. Taught and led by the Spirit, what does that mean? This concept of being led by the Spirit can so easily be understood by thinking of the description of the events on the day the church began. Acts 2 states that the

Holy Spirit came on the apostles and gave them every word they spoke that day. It is obvious that those who gladly received the Word were being led by the Spirit to obey God. The church began with men being led by the teachings of the apostles. In the days that followed they continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching (Acts 2:42). They were led by the Spirit to become Christians and continued being led by Him to spirituality maturity. The same thing had happened in Corinth. Paul taught them about sanctification and forgiveness and they left immorality behind; when they assembled as Christians the messages were given by the Spirit.

The Corinthian Christians were so concerned about how to deal with sexual purity that they composed a letter and sent it to Paul. The text associated with this lesson begins, “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me...” (1 Cor. 7:1). There were several questions asked in this letter. To see other parts of this letter, look at how often different sections, including this one, begins with the words, “Now concerning,” and you will see all the matters they asked about in their letter to Paul (7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).

Though centuries have passed, we are truly blessed because of this letter they wrote and Paul’s response to their questions. These matters become the basis for several lessons in this lectureship. Our task in this lesson is to remind each of us of the value that is inherently found in marriage. Marriage was held in low esteem among the citizens in Corinth and it is held in low esteem in America, but it has the highest value when heaven speaks of it.

Marriage Has Value Because of Its Origin

There are things which have intrinsic value because of the origin. There are three institutions which have value because the root of their origin is God. God ordained marriage, government and the church. The oldest of these is marriage.

As one reads of the creation there is a phrase that occurs repeatedly. Seven times God looked at His creation and affirmed that was good (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 22, 25, 31). Then amazingly in the next chapter He described something which was *not* good.

“It is not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Now since Eve was created on the sixth day (Gen. 1:27, 31), Adam had only a few hours before loneliness became a problem. God’s solution? I will complete Adam by creating Eve. When God brought Eve to Adam marriage became a reality.

When sin entered the world much of God’s creation was cursed. The day they ate of the forbidden fruit they died, they were separated from God. The serpent was removed from being the most cunning of God’s creation, to a slithering creature crawling upon its belly and eating dust. He was condemned to an existence where there would be perpetual enmity between his offspring and that of the woman. Satan himself was condemned and his announced destiny was that one day the Seed of woman would bruise his head. The pain of childbirth and its attendant sorrow was to be a reminder to all women of the painful result of sin. Adam was condemned to toil in the fields with sweat dripping from his face because of the thorns and thistles which resulted from God’s curse of the earth.

They were driven from the presence of God. No longer would there be conversations with Him in the cool of the evening. No longer would they have access to the tree of life for a cherubim with a flaming sword stood guard at the east end of the garden to insure the Adam and Eve would never reenter the garden. Paradise was lost! Yet the one thing they were allowed to take with them from that Paradise was marriage! God is good and in godly marriages there is again the sharing of blessing from the Paradise they brought out of that garden.

Several lessons should be learned from these early chapters of Genesis as we seek to magnify the value of marriage. God’s view of marriage involves a man leaving home to be joined to a woman. The message from Eden is, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). When Jesus discussed marriage He revealed that the One who joins a man to a woman is God! “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:6). God Himself joins a man and a woman into a holy arrangement decreed by Him. This concept of a man and a woman being the ones joined together should forever

answer the query as to whether homosexuals should be married. They may be viewed by some state governments and some presidents as being married, but God only joins a *man* to a *woman*.

A second lesson should be noted and that is how these verses condemn polygamy. God used the word cleave or joined to describe the lasting nature of this union. Time does not permit us to look at the 54 times this Hebrew word is used in the Bible, but a very fruitful study of every usage reveals how permanent the union was to be. A man was not to leave father and mother and cleave unto his *wives*! The word is singular—his wife! Now because he was to cleave to her, there is no allowance made for him to release her in whole or in part and bring another woman into his married life. Jesus said it was the *two* who were to become one, not multiple numbers being joined to become one.

Bear in mind that there is little, if any, difference in polygamy with several wives at the *same* time as in some foreign land, and having several wives one after another separated by a series of divorces as we do it in America. *Simultaneous* polygamy and *serial* polygamy only differ because of the time factor. When they asked Jesus about serial polygamy (putting away one's wife for any reason and taking a new one) He responded by reminding them that such arrangements were not so from the beginning (Matt. 19:8).

Marriage Has Value Because of the Protection God Gives to Marriage

The value of marriage can be seen in the protection God gives to its existence. The first century world and ours held the belief that one could put away their mate for every reason. In fact some have seen the contrast Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount as a contrast between what Moses taught in the Old Testament and the teachings of the New Testament. When Jesus said, "It has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce'" He was not quoting Moses! The Old Testament *never* allowed divorce for *every* cause! This is what the religious leaders of the first century had said, not what Moses said. Deuteronomy 24 allowed divorce, but it was only

for “uncleanness” and the marginal reading “a matter of nakedness” shows the uncleanness in view was sexual impurity. God who ordained marriage did not suddenly decide that lifetime marriages were not that important, and thus gave any man for any reason the right to end the marriage. God did allow divorce in the Old Testament, but the one reason which permitted it to happen was sexual uncleanness.

The same is true of the value placed on marriage in the New Testament. Jesus’ “except for fornication” (Matt. 19:9) shows how God treasures marriage. Our society believes marriages can end for every cause, but God does not! God has not given any legislative assembly, judge or lawyer the right to end a marriage. Think about the impact of His words about the One who joins them together is the only One who can put that union asunder. “What God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:6).

The Bible is filled with Divine encouragements to keep marriages together. Throughout the Old Testament God condemned unfaithfulness to the commitment made in marriage. One of the Ten Commandments prohibited adultery (Exod. 20:14) and the penalty for violating this commandment was death (Lev. 20:10). One of the major reasons given for the judgment against the wicked northern kingdom was the prevalence of adultery (Hos. 4:2, 9-13). It was also part of the reason God allowed Babylon to take the southern kingdom captive (Jer. 7:9). God loves marriages and hates divorce (Mal. 2:15).

Then there are those words of wisdom from Solomon about the blessings found within a godly marriage. Solomon said, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord” (Prov. 18:22). He urged his son, “Rejoice with the wife of your youth...let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman” (Prov. 5:18-20)? God has always placed great value on the marriage He joins together.

Marriage Has Value Because Godly Marriages Produce Godly Offspring

When God chose Abraham, He knew the character of the one

who would become the father of many nations. “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19). God saw the marriage of Abraham as a place where godly children would be reared. Look at the world and all that was happening just ten generations before the call of Abraham. The sin of Noah’s day came about because of the marriage between the godly and the ungodly. It was because of the tendency for sin to multiply and evil abound when the sons of God form marriage with the ungodly, that God selected the Jewish nation and gave them the land He had promised to Abraham (Gal. 3:19). There were two important instructions He gave to that nation as they entered Canaan which would create marriages which would produce godly offspring.

First, there was the prohibition forbidding His children intermarrying with the nations in that land which flowed with milk and honey. “When the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son” (Deut. 7:2-3). God did not want the sons of God to make marriages with the daughters of men as they had done before the flood. This was not the kind of marriage God valued. It is tragic that so many have not seen the vital reason God gave for this prohibition. “For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods” (Deut. 7:4). God values marriage, but He truly values the marriages which bring men closer to Him.

The second instruction shows further the value God places on marriage. Before the Jews entered Canaan He described the actions in godly homes which would produce godliness. First, He told the Jews to take the message from heaven and personalize it, and then gave the method as to how it was to be transmitted to the next generation. “These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:6-7). This is God’s view of the home

and marriage God values.

Now envision what could have happened if the Jews who entered the Promised Land had followed these instructions. The fathers of those who conquered the Promised Land had perished in the wilderness. That second generation who entered the holy land had the unique opportunity to change the entire course of the nation of Israel. They, seemingly, had learned the lessons from the mistakes of their fathers, and entered the land as that entire generation served the Lord. “So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua” (Judg. 2:7). You would have thought that such devotion would have been passed to another generation, but it was not. While they might have known the words of the law, they failed to teach them to their children. The tremendous value that those homes could have had was lost and it impacted every generation which followed.

Many years later, the faith of godly Solomon was destroyed because of ungodly marriages. “For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4). The great king had inherited the greatest throne on the earth, but his lack of appreciation about the value God placed on marriage led to the destruction of that empire. His son, Rehoboam, was reared in an atmosphere of ungodliness and we should not be surprised at anything he did in his life. We should be as wise as those Jews who returned from Babylon and had pagan wives and put them away. Nehemiah said to them, “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things...God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused him to sin (Neh. 13:26). God has a design for marriage. His history of attempts to create marriages which honor Him, shows the immeasurable value He places on it.

Marriage Has Value Because It Brings Unity

We learned early in life that $1 + 1 = 2$, but such was not the case in the second chapter of Genesis. The truth revealed there is that $1 + 1 = 1$. Adam plus Eve equals one marriage! It is remarkable that Adam and Eve who had no father or mother were taught that a man is to leave his parents to cling to his wife. “The

two shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

It is true that this expression of two becoming one flesh includes the physical side of marriage for Paul argues that “he who is joined to a harlot is one body” (1 Cor. 6:16), but the deeper understanding of this is found in Genesis. Without Eve, Adam was incomplete, and God’s design in bringing her to him was to bring about completeness. There is a unity in marriage which far surpasses the joining of two bodies. It is the joining of two souls!

There is the unity of love and commitment in marriage. Wives are told to love their own husbands (Titus 2:4) and husbands are to love their own wives (Eph. 5:25). This love is further described in the words in the last verse of Ephesians chapter five. “Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” The depth of this union of love is seen when in this same chapter the husband is instructed to love his wife like Christ loved the church and to give himself up for her. The King James Version uses the expression let the wife reverence her husband. This kind of love could never be found in a relationship Paul described as being joined to a harlot. Marriage has value because of the uniting of love between a godly man and a godly woman.

The marriage of two godly individuals has value because it helps keep sin away from the home. The physical side of marriage is designed to avoid fornication. Paul said, “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise the wife to her husband . . . Do not deprive one another” (1 Cor. 6:2-5). Sexual desire is not sinful of itself and the marriage bed is God’s place for it to be expressed. Even in the midst of a distressful time Paul mentioned later in this chapter, that marriage was still honorable. Look further at this first section of 1 Corinthians 7. By mutual consent husbands and wife could refrain from this physical aspect of marriage that they might give themselves totally to fasting and prayer. The willingness of an individual to forego this intimacy indicated the desire for the spiritual enhancement of each other. After such a period Paul tells them to come together again. Peter shows the importance of

such a marriage when he described them as being heirs together of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Marriage has value because it creates a spiritual unity in keeping sin far from the home.

Think also of how marriage brings unity to social life of a community and of a nation. The home is a fundamental building block of a godly nation. There was only one godly marriage in Sodom! Imagine that same city where marriage was seen as ordained of God, bringing one man and one woman together for one lifetime. The burning ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah proclaim that a society without marriage having value is a society doomed to ruin. The Bible affirms, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 13:34), but there can be no righteousness without righteous homes! This shows the value of marriage.

Finally there is the unity which godly marriage brings to the church. The faith of Timothy and his contribution to the church can be traced to the faith which had preceded him for two generations. Paul showed the lineage of this young man’s faith. “I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (1 Tim. 1:5). Timothy was a tremendous young man in spite of the fact he had a pagan father. Can you imagine how much greater influence he could have had if his father had been a believer?

Now on a very practical level, think of how godly marriages have strengthened the local congregation where you attend. How many of the members in your home congregation have the same last name or at least are related? This is evidence that some godly person in the past influenced generations which followed. Their descendants are now elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, song leaders, active participants in the worship. Now their children are following in the paths of their righteous parents and grandparents. Marriages have value because they bring unity and growth to the church.

Marriages Have Value When We Look at the Abuse of Marriage

Think for a moment of the horrifying situations brought about

when we look at those who failed to see the worth of marriage. The sin of David with Bathsheba immediately comes to mind. From the time we first read of the young shepherd's defeat of Goliath there is nothing by honor and praise given to him. Were it not for that day when he violated the sanctity of the marriage of Uriah and Bathsheba, we would almost view him as living the purest life of almost anyone who has lived on this earth. Yet the consequence of his sinful actions shows the value of marriage which God longs for men to have.

Think of the problems caused by failure to honor the description that in marriage the two shall become one flesh. There is no room in the marriage of Abraham and Sarah and Hagar. There is no room in the marriage of Jacob and Rachel for Leah, Bilhah or Zilpah. There is no room in Solomon's wives for the many women he married. Yet look at all the attendant problems which were part of all these arrangements.

Then look at how ungodly marriages produce ungodly offspring. Was there ever a more evil marriage than that of Ahab and Jezebel? She was in the forefront of the adversity in Elijah's life. When there was the famine in Israel for 42 months, there were 850 false prophets who feasted at the king Ahab's table while multitudes famished outside the palace (1 Kings 18:19). When Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard it was Jezebel's counsel which brought about Naboth's death. It would seem logical that when Ahab died the evil influence of this home would end. Such was not the case for their daughter, Athaliah became a powerful individual in the history of God's people.

While Ahab and Jezebel's influence was on the northern kingdom of Israel, their influence spread to the southern kingdom when Athaliah married Jehoram, king of Judah. It is remarkable that every time his reign is mentioned, she is also mentioned. She had worshiped Baal, so it should not surprise us that the Jews in the southern kingdom would seek the gods that Ahab had worshiped. Neither should it surprise us that righteous men were slain (2 Chron. 21:13). Jehoram was so evil that Jerusalem did not weep when he died, nor was he allowed a royal burial (2 Chron. 21:19-20).

Jehoram's only surviving son, Ahaziah became king, but an

extremely weak one for the one year of his reign. Though he was a descendant of David, “He also walked in the way of the house of Ahab; for his mother advised him to do wickedly. Therefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord, like the house of Ahab” (2 Chron. 22:3-4). Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel counseled her evil son. Athaliah’s first action upon the death of Ahaziah was an attempt to destroy all the royal seed and bring about an end to the royal lineage of David. She killed all of them except Joash.

Marriage has value when we look at the abuse of it and the affect which this abuse has on future generations.

The Value Given to Your Marriage

In closing may I ask what value you give to your marriage? I am not asking about an intellectual assessment you might place, but on a very practical level do you see your marriage as a gift from heaven, as an oasis in the desert of despair around us.

Do you treat it as that which has been ordained of God? Do you see that while everything associated with the sin in the Garden of Eden was cursed by God, marriage did not change at all? Just as certainly as God brought Eve to Adam and joined them together in a holy relationship, so the bride is brought to the marriage altar and given (usually by the father) to become one with the groom. Have you treated the marriage relationship like some secular arrangement of people in a purely social setting? Do you really believe that on the day you were married that God joined you into a holy relationship? Do you see you marriage as being far more than that which was registered in a court house? Do you see it as being recorded in the “highest court” who gives no man a right to sever it?

Do you value your marriage because of the protection God gives to it and do all you can to protect it. In a world filled with disregard for the commitment God expects to be given to marriage, are you doing all you can to insure that your marriage lasts as long as you live? Tragically the tenderness which characterized the courtship phase of marriage often ends within months of the honeymoon. Solomon described the ongoing joy in the marriages in the later years. “Rejoice with the wife of your

youth... always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son be enraptured by an immoral woman” (Prov. 5:18-20). When situations arise which threaten your marriage, are you as wise as Joseph who ran out of Potiphar’s house? Have you done what Job did to avoid sin? “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman” (Job 31:1).

Do you value your home and treat it as a place designed to help all who live with you get to heaven? Do you take the time needed to help everyone develop spiritually in the home? Is your home filled with times when you speak of spiritual matters, to use the language of Moses, when you lie down, when you get up, when you sit inside your dwelling and when you are at other places? If you never talk of spiritual matters, how can you expect your home to be spiritual? Yet God designed the home where godliness would increase because it was not ignored by those who were part of the home.

Do you look at your home and treasure it for the unity it brings? Are you seriously working to become one with your mate, having the same goals and values? Are your prayers being hindered because of your actions in the home (1 Pet. 3:7)? If every home in your community were like yours, what kind of community would it be? If every home in the local congregation were like yours, what kind of church would there be? If every home planted “seeds of spiritual service” in the (i.e. to someday be elders, preachers, deacons or their wives) how many leaders would the church of the future have?

Do you value your home because of the lessons to be learned from failed marriages? The Bible describes many of them, but you know of so many others in your life today. Laban said to Jacob, “I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake” (Gen. 30:27). If a pagan could learn great lessons simply by his personal experiences, how much more than those who are far wiser because we are believers! What lessons have you learned from shattered marriages? Have you learned anything? Have you put into practice those matters brought to your attention by mistakes others make?

God help us to have the mind of God in all matters, but especially in regard to marriage. God help us to learn His values and to treasure our marriages as much as God does!

Works Cited:

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Gender Relations

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Dr. Charles J. Aebi

I thank the elders at Hillview Terrace, the director of the West Virginia School of Preaching, and the lectureship committee for asking me to participate in this lectureship by discussing a topic that has become more controversial in recent years due to the feminists' Women's Liberation Movement and liberal thinking in general. My subject is "Gender Relations (1 Cor. 11:2-16). I appeal to you for sympathy as I address this topic, for Carl Holladay says of verses 2-16, "The meaning of these verses appears to be hopelessly unclear, in spite of many ingenious, but ill-fated attempts to explain them" (139). Albert Barnes says of verse 10, "I do not know what it means" (205), and Howard Winters, after offering a possibility, says, "If that is not the meaning, then I must confess, along with Barnes, 'I do not know what it means'" (149).

Paul starts out in verse 2 by praising them for remembering him and the traditions he had delivered to them; "traditions" here mean the oral teaching Paul had given them while at Corinth. The Gospel was at first taught orally by inspired men before it was written into the books that together make up the New Testament. Paul had taught them orally, and now he is writing to teach them further and to correct erroneous ideas and practices which seem to have been numerous in the Corinthian church. In chapters 11-14 he deals with problems connected with their worship services, including gender relations, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and the use of miraculous spiritual gifts. This section pertains to the significance of different clothing and hair styles of men and women in the public worship assembly. Much controversy has arisen over the years about what these verses meant when written and how we should apply them today. The role of women in public worship is in flux today in many places, and it is important for us to understand how we are to view it if we are to remain New Testament Christians.

Authority

Two major issues in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 are (1) authority and (2) appearance. These two issues are connected by the fact that in the first century, appearance indicated one's submission to authority (or rejection of authority, depending on the appearance). There may be other issues, also, but these two are of major importance. The issue of authority is stated in 11:3, "...the head of every man is Christ; and the head of woman is man; and the head of Christ is God." God > Christ > man > woman: this is God's hierarchy list, and the passage is concerned mainly with the bottom of the list, the woman. Woman is to respect the authority of man. And she is to show her respect for the authority of man by her appearance—at that time by what she wore on her head. Two things are worn on her head: her hair and her veil. Hair is obvious; what is the veil? It is not the "veil" that women today often wear in formal attire to weddings. There is much argument about the exact nature of this veil or covering, which we will notice later, but it may have been a garment similar to what may be seen in Middle Eastern countries yet today that sometimes covers all but the eyes and nose. A similar garment is seen by Muslim women in other parts of the world that covers the head and body but leaves the face visible. Some Iraqis call it the "abayah." Elizabeth Weldon Fernea in *Guests of the Sheik* tells how the abayah must be worn by any woman who appears in public unless she wants to be perceived as an available prostitute! Putting aside her abayah advertises her availability and consequently her rejection of her husband's authority over her. Elizabeth Fernea spent two years in El Nahra, a village in Iraq, with her husband Bob, an anthropologist doing research for his doctorate at the University of Chicago. The abayah was a black garment that covered a woman's head and most of her face and draped down below her other clothing. She describes her early experience there:

I was the only woman without an abayah. I began to be self-conscious. This is ridiculous, I told myself. Why should I have to wear that ugly thing—it's not *my* custom;

the arguments with Bob about the abayah returned in a rush. Bob said I ought to wear it, since everyone else did. Since we were guests of the sheik, he added, it would make everything easier if I wore the abayah; the sheik wouldn't have to punish people for insulting me. Insulting me! I had been indignant. "They say an uncovered woman is an immoral woman," Bob had explained, "and the tribesmen ask why a woman should want to show herself to anyone but her husband. (5-6)

Whether the covering described in 1 Corinthians 11 is like the abayah or is something different, in Corinth a woman covered by it in public thereby acknowledged the authority of, and her subjection to, man, and her husband in particular (11:5, 10).

Appearance

The issue of appearance is thus tied in with the issue of authority. If the woman is going out uncovered or unveiled she might as well be shorn/shaven (11:5, 6) as were prostitutes and adulteresses in ancient times. Temple prostitutes in the Temple of Aphrodite in Corinth are said to either have been shaved or to have worn their hair cropped or cut short. Paul similarly argues for long hair for the woman and short hair for the man as customs that delineate between the two genders (11:14-15). An application of this principle today is that we should wear clothing and hair styles that will say to those who see us that we respect the standards of Christ. When in a given culture a woman is thought immoral or disrespectful if she doesn't wear in worship or in other public places a hat or shawl or some other garment that covers her head, then she should wear one. And if a man wearing a hat in worship or some other public area is thought immoral or disrespectful, then he should go bareheaded. One can see in some worship assemblies today young men (and some not so young) wearing caps (not many wear hats); what does our culture say or feel about that? In fact, both men and women should wear what suggests the highest standards of morality and ethics.

It is obvious that appearance is important in Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, and the woman's head covering is central as communicating to those who saw her the kind of person she was, particularly as regarded her attitude toward men and the relationship of women to men. Paul repeatedly refers to a woman having her head covered as she prays or prophesies, and he contrasts this with a man needing to have his head uncovered, even short-haired, when he prays or prophesies. A woman could pray in the assembly without leading the prayer; her prophesying or leading in prayer would have to be regulated by Paul's later instruction in 1 Corinthians 14:34, "Let your women keep silent in the churches [assemblies, CJA], for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says." Paul also speaks to this issue in 1 Timothy 2:12, where he gives two reasons for women to not be teaching men in public assemblies, both dealing with Adam and Eve. A woman might prophesy privately or by leading in a women's group or children's class, but not in a mixed assembly where men were present. Titus 2:3-5 pictures older women thus teaching younger women, which could be in class settings as well as privately. Dave Miller insisted that removing veils was connected with women speaking in assemblies in a leading way. He wrote,

The women were removing their veils because they understood that to stand and exercise a spiritual gift in the assembly was an authoritative act of leadership. To wear a symbol of submission (the veil) while simultaneously conducting oneself in an authoritative fashion (to lead in worship) was self-contradictory. Paul's insistence that women keep their veils on during the worship assembly amounted to an implicit directive to refrain from leading in the assembly. The allusions to Creation law (11:7-9; cf., 14:34) underscore the restrictions on women as rooted in the created order. Also, Paul makes clear that such restrictions apply equally to all churches of Christ (11:16). (247)

Head and Authority

“Head” in 1 Corinthians 11 is used both literally and metaphorically. In verse 3 it is figurative, signifying authority over, as in “department head,” meaning the one who runs or is over that department. Man is the head of woman; Christ is the head of man; God is the head of Christ. Albert Barnes says,

The word *head*, in the Scriptures, is designed often to denote *master, ruler, chief*. . . . In the New Testament the word is used in the sense of Lord, ruler, chief in Eph. i.22; iv.15; v.23; Col. ii.10. *And the head of the woman is the man*. The sense is, she is subordinate to him; and in all circumstances—in her demeanor, her dress, her conversation, in public and in the family circle—should recognize her subordination to him. (201-2)

The English Standard Version has “wife” in place of “woman” in verses 5, 6, 10, and 13, which reminds us of the headship of the husband stated by Paul in Ephesians 5:22-24, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” While Barnes’ statement above is broader than most modern writers would allow, there is no doubt that many modern scholars understand the headship of man in husband-wife situations. However, that man ranks higher than woman does not make him superior in quality, but in role; women are not inferior, but have a subjection role. Rank is not synonymous with quality or value, and lest men be overbearing as a result of women having to show submission by wearing a covering in public, Paul points out the inter-dependence of the genders in verses 11-12. Men and women are dependent on each other for their existence and for what each gender contributes to the other in the home, in society, and, Paul says, “in the Lord.”

Some argue that “head” in verse 3 means “source” (as in the head-waters of a stream or river) and not to authority. For example, Gordon Fee says, “Thus Paul’s concern is not hierarchical (who has authority over whom), but relational (the

unique relationships that are predicated on one's being the source of the other's existence)" (503). Fee is so concerned with male-female equality that he rejects 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as not authentic, saying, "Although these two verses are found in all known manuscripts, either here or at the end of the chapter, the two text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic probability combine to cast considerable doubt on their authenticity" (699). In other words, if you don't like a Scripture, throw it out! Fee wants women preachers, so he rejects as not authentic whatever disagrees with his views. Applebury wrote, "While I do not find any other clear cut example except this one in the New Testament, it is possible that in this context it refers to source or origin" (203). He thinks the reference to creation may support this view (203), but Paul, speaking of creation and mutual dependence in verses 11 and 12, begins with "Nevertheless," showing that he has changed the subject somewhat from the previous references to "head," both literal and figurative.

The preponderance of evidence favors authority as the figurative usage of "head" in 1 Corinthians 11. In the *ESV Study Bible*, Thielman says on *head*, "It is sometimes said that this term (Gk. *kephalē*) means 'source,' but in over 50 examples of the expression 'person A is the head of person(s) B' found in ancient Greek literature, person A has authority over person(s) B in every case. Therefore it is best to understand "head" (*kephalē*) here as referring metaphorically to 'authority' (see also Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 2:10)" (2206). On verse 3, Leon Morris stated that "*The head* indicates a relationship of superior authority" (151). Dave Miller wrote on 1 Corinthians 11 and 14,

Paul articulates the transcultural principle for all people throughout history in 11:3. 'Head' clearly refers not to 'source' but to 'authority.' Therefore, God intends for women to be subordinate to men in worship. Corinthian women were obviously removing their veils and stepping forward in the assembly to lead with their Spirit-impacted, miraculous capabilities, i.e., prophecy (12:10; 14:31) and prayer (14:14-15). Such activity was a direct violation of

the subordination principle, although Paul does not so state until chapter fourteen. He instead confines his directives concerning female leadership in worship in chapter eleven to the propriety of the female removing the cultural symbol of submission. (247)

The metaphorical use of “head” in verse 3 should give us a clue to understanding its use in the following verses in which the term is used both literally and figuratively. We should then see Paul to be saying in 11:4-5, “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head [skull] covered, dishonors his head [Christ]. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head [skull] uncovered dishonors her head [man or husband], for that is one and the same as if her head [skull] were shaved.” Macknight wrote that the foundation of Paul’s instruction here is the subordination of women to men, so he sees Paul saying in verses 4-5 that a man praying in public worship “with his head veiled, dishonoreth Christ his head” while a woman “in public with an unveiled head dishonoreth the man her head” (II, 168). Harrisville wrote that “the woman’s head must be covered to symbolize her subordinate position in the chain of command.” By not wearing the covering on her head the woman dishonors man, her metaphorical head, he says (182). Some writers like Jimmy Allen are not certain whether “head” is used literally or figuratively in verses 4-5. He says, “This may refer to her own head or to man (husband, father or man in general) as her head” (131), and the same with man’s head in verse 5, “This may refer to his own head or to Christ as his head (11:3)” (132). As stated above, it appears clear to this writer that the meaning attached by Paul to “head” in verse 3 is intended as the key to understanding it in the verses following 3.

One has no trouble understanding rank being used as Christ being head over man and man being over woman, but what about God being head over Christ? Christ is usually thought to be equal with God, though He is said to have obeyed God while on earth (Philip. 2:8; Heb. 5:8). John 1:1-3, 14 says that Jesus the Word was with God from the beginning; says that Jesus created everything; and even says that Jesus was God. Thielman

explains, “**The head of Christ is God** indicates that within the Trinity the Father has a role of authority or leadership with respect to the Son, though they are equal in Deity and attributes.... Paul applies this truth about the Trinity to the relationship of husband and wife. In marriage, as in the Trinity, there is equality in being and value but difference in roles (see Eph. 5:22-33)” (2206). The Son is equal to the Father in deity and in essence, but the Son has an authority role delegated to Him by the Father (Matthew 28:18), and the one who can grant authority is by definition head over the one to whom he gives it. Finite man may never understand fully how the Father is over the Son, but we can see how this has worked in the roles they have played in our redemption. Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane exemplifies that.

One brother explained to me his unique understanding of this passage. He listed God, Christ, man, and woman in their hierarchical order on a sheet of paper, thus:

GOD
CHRIST
MAN
WOMAN

Then he said, when the woman prays to God, she has to cover her head (at this point he put a piece of paper over “MAN”) in order to pray to God through Christ. And, he said, for a man to pray to God, he must do so without covering his head, CHRIST, so he left the word “CHRIST” uncovered to indicate that man prayed to God through Christ. That is cute, but it ignores the real thrust of the passage, which is how the man and woman should appear in public so as to be good representatives of Christ as custom at that time suggested, and it doesn’t speak to issues of prophesying, authority, custom, nature, and hair length.

Hair and Covering

What was the covering Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 11? Some are convinced that hair is the only covering discussed, but most writers think there were two coverings, hair and a veil. Winters says, “I believe the basic lesson to be learned is that of women’s subjection (recognizing her role under man) to the man

(3). In Corinth that subjection was symbolized by long hair and a veil” (145). Shepherd agrees that there were two coverings, writing on verse 6, “The word ‘also’ in this verse plainly shows that the two veils—the natural hair and the veil with which the head was covered—are in consideration” (164).

While most agree that two coverings are discussed, Coffman argues that it is hair and not any garment or cloth-type head covering that is meant in 1 Corinthians 11. He says on verse 6, “No artificial covering of any kind has thus far been mentioned by Paul in this chapter, nor will there be any reference to any kind of garment or artificial covering until verse 15, below, where it is categorically stated that her hair is given her ‘instead of’ any other covering” (170). Zerr agrees with Coffman and argues that the woman’s hair was/is to be the covering for her face, and that the woman’s hair to be long should not be cut but be left as nature allows, much as did the Nazirites did (Num. 6). He says, “It was customary for women to veil or cover their face with their hair when praying in the presence of men. To neglect this was a dishonor to her head, because it exposed it and put her in the class of men who are the rulers in the social rank. If she thus keeps her hair away from her face, she is as much exposed to shame as if her hair had been cut” (VI, 24). Coffman thinks women should not crop or cut their hair so as to obscure the sexes or imitate pagan prostitutes. (172) He makes much of the words usually translated covering, *kataluptō* and *peribolaion*; on the latter he says,

But of paramount importance in this verse [15] is the noun *paribolaion*, here rendered “veil” [in the ASV--CJA]. This is the one noun in the whole passage that unmistakably refers to a head covering. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the NT translates it, “a covering thrown around, a wrapper.” This is the “veil” which has already been imported into the passage five times; but this is Paul’s first reference to anything of the kind; and, significantly, it is mentioned in the same breath with woman’s hair covering which is given to her “instead of” any such covering. (174)

One word translated “covering” or “veil” in 1 Corinthians 11, *katakalyptō*, is defined by Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich as “to cover or veil...mid. cover one’s self with a veil...1 Cor. 11:6” (412). The other, used only in verse 15, *peribolaion*, is defined by Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich as a “*covering, wrap, cloak, of an article of clothing. . .something like a a cloak or mantle: roll up as a cloak Hb. i.12... her hair is given to her as a covering 1 Cor. 11:15.*” (652) Thayer’s definition of these two words is the same; he says *katakalyptō* means “to cover up or to veil or cover one’s self” and “in: 1 Co. xi.6; combined with *ten kephaalen* ‘to cover one’s head’” (331). He defines *peribolaion* as “*a covering thrown around, a wrapper...a mantle...a veil...a covering*” (502).

The real truth is that we do not know enough about the culture of Corinth in Paul’s day to be certain about exactly the kind of veil or covering women wore. Jimmy Allen quoted Hodge as saying, “The veils worn by Grecian women were of different kinds. One, and perhaps the most common, was the ‘peplum,’ or mantle, which in public was thrown over the head, and enveloped the whole person. The other was more in fashion of the common eastern veil which covered the face, with the exception of the eyes’ (Hodge, p. 209)” (Allen 130). Harrisville calls the veil the “cap” or “kerchief” or “headpiece” (181,183). Others describe it as like a shawl. Vincent says, “The head-dress of Greek women consisted of nets, hair-bags, or kerchiefs, sometimes covering the whole head. A shawl which enveloped the body was also often thrown over the head, especially in marriages or funerals” (786). And we don’t know what its significance was in every situation. Ruth’s covering was a “veil” (KJV) or “cloak” (NASB) or “shawl” (NKJV) so large that it could be used to carry six measures of barley (Ruth 3:15). In Genesis 38:14-16 we read of Tamar wearing a veil that covered her face, which seemingly led Judah to the conclusion that she was a prostitute; does this mean a veil signified immodesty at that time and place? Of course, it is not necessary for us to know the precise kind of covering that signified modesty and subjection at first century Corinth; we only need to understand

that when it did signify that, it was essential for women then to wear it. What is necessary for us is to have the appearance that will symbolize the right attitudes to those who see us today.

Angels

Speaking of man's primacy in creation, verse 10 says, "For this reason the woman ought to have a *symbol* of authority on *her* head, because of the angels." The symbol of authority must be the covering already discussed, but what do angels have to do with it, and which angels are meant? Some have thought that human messengers are meant, since the word *aggeloous* sometimes means messengers, as in Revelation 2-3, but it is hard to see who they might be. Several commentators mention it as a possibility, but most dismiss it as unlikely. Robertson and Plummer say, "...we may safely reject the explanation that 'angels' here mean the bishops (Ambrose) or presbyters (Ephraem) or all the clergy (Primasius). Nor can evil angels be meant (Tertullian); the article is against it: *hoi aggeloi* [the angels] always means good angels (xiii.1; Matt. xiii.49, xxv.31; Luke xvi.22; Heb. i.4, etc.)" (233).

It is usually assumed that good angels are meant—those ministering spirits sent to help those who will inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14). A few quotations from scholars will suffice to show this:

While there is some reason to conclude that they are messengers of the church and thus earthly beings, in all likelihood heavenly beings are meant. And a probable meaning is that woman should cover her head (show subjection) out of respect for the good angels who continue to serve their creative role (in contrast to the wicked ones who fell by abandoning theirs, 2 Pt. 2:4; Jude 6). That is, the good angels fill their role by continuing in subjection to God (they did not rebel and thus set the right example). Thus woman, out of regard for them, should display their subjection by having on their head the sign which showed the authority of man over her. If that is not the meaning, then I must confess,

along with Barnes, 'I do not know what it means.' (Winters 149)

"The meaning is plain. If a woman thinks lightly of shocking men, she must remember that she will also be shocking the angels, who of course are present at public worship" (Robertson 233). "The probability is that Paul means that good angels are always with us, and especially at worship. It is not only a matter of what the men and women in the congregation see and think. The angels will observe what the woman does. She must not be unseemly before them...*The angels* without qualification would not be understood of evil spirits" (Morris, 154). J. W. McGarvey says, "To abandon this justifiable and well-established symbol of subordination [the veil] would be a shock to the submissive and obedient spirit of the ministering angels (Isa. 6:2) who, though unseen, are always present with you in your places of worship (Matt. 18:10-31; Ps. 138:1; 1 Tim. 5:21; ch. 4:9; Eccles. 5:6)" (112). Most who refer verse 10 to good angels think the good angels present in our worship would be upset by women not showing proper subjection to men. Robertson and Plummer have a slightly different slant: "...one other suggestion is worth considering, viz. that [it] might mean 'because the angels do so.' Angels, in the presence of their direct and visible Superior, veil their faces (Isa. vi.2); a woman, when worshipping in the presence of her direct and visible superior (man), should do the same" (233-234). Applebury applies it to both women and men: "Angels who left their proper place were punished. This is a warning to women who try to be men or to men who try to pose as women" (206).

Several have suggested that evil angels are in view in 1 Corinthians 11:10. Some think what happened to evil angels who rebelled is meant as a warning to women who disregard customs of propriety. McGuiggan thinks the angels rebelling and not keeping their proper sphere (Jude 6) is a warning to women who would dispense with the veil that symbolized their subjection to man's authority: "I think Paul is reminding the women of the danger they play with when they reject their 'own domain' or 'proper sphere.'" (149). Coffman wrote, "...the simplest

explanation (since Paul was speaking of the proper subordination of woman) is that this is a reminder [to women—CJA] that the ‘angels who kept not their first estate’ lost heaven; and it is not far-fetched to draw the analogy that those precious angels called women should not go beyond the limitations imposed upon them by their creation” (171). Butler too thinks angels who rebelled and forfeited their rights are a warning to women (205). Some have thought that evil angels might be tempted by unveiled women, which Robertson and Plummer reject: “And the suggestion that the Apostle is hinting that unveiled women might be a temptation to angels (Gen. vi.1, 2) is somewhat childish. Is it to be supposed that a veil hides a human face from angels, or that public worship would be the only occasion when an unveiled woman might lead angels into temptation?” (233). Besides that, Jesus’ statement to the Sadducees in Matthew 22:30 indicates that angels are not sexual beings.

Allen cites seven explanations that have been given: 1. Angels cover their faces before God, Isa. 6:1-2; women should do same to indicate reverence. 2. Women should imitate angels in showing respect to visible Superior (Driver & Plummer, 233f.) 3. Bad angels lusted after women in Gen. 6:2, but that is a bad tr. of “sons of God,” and Matt. 22:29-30 shows angels are sexless. 4. Church leaders are “angels” so she should defer to them. 5. Guardian angels would be appalled if their charges failed proper attire; at home also? 6. Angels represent God; [then why not say so here?] 7. Angels observe worship and would be shocked at this. Quotes Alford, p.203, “Because in the Christian assemblies the holy angels of God are present, and delighting in the due order and subordination of the ranks of God’s servants, --and by a violation of that order we should be giving offense to them” (Allen, 135)

Application

How shall we apply 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 to our lives in the 21st century? Some have thought it means a woman must wear a hat to church, and that would be true if our custom held it necessary to indicate modesty and submission, but it does not. In

1964 Tom Gaumer wrote,

Since the wearing of a covering in public is not a custom in our society, the principle cannot be applied to us in this way, and consequently, the wearing of a covering is not Paul's admonition to us in the twentieth century who live under western customs." ...Paul gives us a lesson right from the scriptures, which is as true today as it was then; namely that the man is the head of the woman. We do not symbolize this truth in the way that the people of the East did (and do), but we should accept this truth and practice it, for it rests on divine authority. (1-2)

This is still true in 2012, and the authority of man over woman is not the only application here.

Regarding gender implications, Butler says: "No matter how much political and philosophical rhetoric and no matter how practical and appropriate it may sound when some activists demand that females have, not only the right, but the obligation to reject the customary, biblically-taught functions of femininity, and step into the world of maleness and function as any man, it is clearly not the revealed will of God!" (204). Our passage affirms that women ("wives" – ESV) are to be subject to men; it also insists that men and women have different clothing and hair styles that represented their gender roles in all first-century churches (16), and this has remained the case down over the centuries in spite of feminist and other efforts to promote unisex clothing and hair styles. While customs have changed regarding length of hair and types of garments, it has remained generally true that men have shorter hair than women, and garments are sufficiently different that in most circumstances one can tell women's clothing from men's. The principle in Deuteronomy 22:5 to not dress like the opposite sex is still the norm in most cases. Women today may wear long pants and men may wear shorts, but one can see, for example, that male and female clothing button on opposite sides and have zippers in different places.

Another principle here about appearance is that as Christians

both men and women should wear hair and clothing that will cause people who see them to think highly of Christ and the church because we are conforming to what our culture perceives as high moral standards. We should represent Christ to those who see us. If Christians wear borderline hair styles and skimpy, too-tight, too-revealing clothing they are “pushing the envelope” and are presenting a less-than-Christian appearance to those who see them. Authority is not the only issue in the appearance presented by male and female dress and hair styles; moral standards are also part of it.

As this was being written, front-page news reports in local papers said the American Civil Liberties Union demanded that the public school systems in Wood, Kanawha, and Cabell Counties in West Virginia end all gender-specific classes (*The Parkersburg News and Sentinel*, May 22, 23, 2012). It is politically incorrect to have an all-male or an all-female class; political correctness in modern America calls for a unisex society in many ways, blurring the differences between men and women in clothing, sports, jobs, and in other ways. What about churches and worship? Women preaching and presiding over other forms of worship has long been the norm in many Protestant churches, and it is creeping into some congregations of the church of Christ. If this form of political correctness is fully enacted into our legal code, Christians may again find themselves outlaws for choosing to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Positions taken by the ACLU and others like them go far beyond the questions of custom and moral principle that often in the past have been raised about 1 Corinthians 11 and other passages.

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Biographical Sketch

Charles J. Aebi is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the Gospel in 1949 and began preaching early in 1952. He has a B.S. degree from Penn State, an M.A. from Abilene Christian, and a Ph.D. from Ohio University. Charles has served for 60 years as minister for churches in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and West Virginia, and has preached and held workshops in several states and in foreign countries.

He has served as an elder for several years each in three congregations. He currently serves as a minister and an elder at the Barlow-Vincent Church of Christ in Vincent Ohio, which he helped to start in 2003. He taught Bible for 34 years at Ohio Valley College (now University), serving 15 years as academic dean and 6 years as chairman of the Bible Department. He retired from the college in 1998 and has taught at the West Virginia School of Preaching since 1999.

Charles and his wife Imogene have four children and twelve grandchildren. All of the men in the family preach on occasion; all of the men and women teach Bible classes; and all the grandchildren have obeyed the Gospel. Six of the grandchildren are now college students; four are married; two are in high school.

Unity in the Body

1 Corinthians 12:1-30

Sam Bartrug

No discussion of church problems can be of ultimate profit apart from a discussion of unity within the body. The importance of God's people achieving a state of unity is alluded to by David in Psalm 133:1 when he speaks of "how good and how pleasant" such a state is between brethren. No less than God Himself addresses the power of unity among any group provides when He observed during the building of the Tower of Babel that the people "are one...now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (Genesis 11:6). Abraham understood the appropriateness of unity among brethren when he said to Lot that the fact "they were brethren" was reason enough to avoid "strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen" (Genesis 13:8).

A correct understanding of the importance and nature of unity within the church will help insure that the pressures, personalities, and problems that exist within any congregation can be successfully addressed. It is not essential that the church be characterized by union, uniformity or unanimity; but there is no substitute for unity. Swindoll observes in this regard, "Union has an affinity with others but no common bond that makes them one in heart. Uniformity has everyone looking and thinking alike. Unanimity is complete agreement across the board. Unity, however, refers to a oneness of heart, a similarity of purpose, and an agreement on major points of doctrine" (599).

There are many passages contained within the pages of the New Testament extolling the value and essentiality of unity among brethren. Jesus prayed for such, even indicating the success of evangelism would hinge upon it (John 17:20-21). Paul instructed the church to be "endeavoring to keep" it, and then set forth some truths upon which God's people must agree (Eph. 4:1-6). He pled for such oneness when writing the church at Philippi (Philip. 2:1-4). He chastised the church at Corinth

sharply for their lack of unity and even suggested their lack of such hinted more at carnality than it did spiritual growth (1 Cor. 3:1-4). While admitting that brethren could and would disagree on some issues, Paul went on to encourage them to handle such disagreements in a manner that would depict mutual respect and promote unity (Rom. 14:1-23).

Other examples from Scripture could be cited in regard to the unity of believers but, all in all, it is overwhelmingly apparent that God desires His people to live in unity. Internal peace demands that God's people dwell together in unity and the effectiveness of the Gospel is affected by whether unity among God's people is present or not. It now becomes the mission of this lecture to examine the matter in some detail from 1 Cor. 12:1-30. In much the same manner that chapter 7 addresses marriage, chapter 13 addresses love, chapter 14 addresses worship, and chapter 15 addresses the resurrection; Paul uses the section of his epistle we know as chapter 12 to address unity among believers. This was of special relevance to the brethren in Corinth because of the internal disputes and division they were experiencing, and it will always be of special relevance to the people of God in any generation because of the centrality of unity to the peace and prosperity of the church.

Paul begins his discussion of unity in chapter 12 with a brief reminder of the previous religious experiences of his audience. The church at Corinth was made up primarily of Gentiles who had turned from idolatry to the true and living God (12:1-3). In their idolatry they worshipped many gods and Paul rather bluntly reminds them that they were but "dumb idols." Now they have come to the one God, and it is this fact that will allow Paul to remind them of the importance of unity within their ranks. With Jesus as their Lord and the Holy Spirit endowing them with spiritual gifts and deeper understanding of the true nature and identity of Jesus, they should be growing ever closer together.

In 12:4-6 Paul shows them that there is unity despite the diversity of gifts they have received because they have come through the one Spirit. There is unity in spite of the diversity of ministries they have been entrusted with, because they have but one Lord. There is unity despite the diversity of activities they

are involved in as Christians, because it the one true God who is working through each and every one of them. It is so easy to drift apart when we have different talents or gifts, when we pursue different areas of service, or when we are involved in different activities. We often find ourselves forming cliques as we are drawn to others who share the same interests, etc. that we do. Paul would simply remind us that in the church we may differ in some respects, but we all serve the same God, we all follow the same Lord, and we are all endowed through the same Spirit. What should hold us together is greater and more important than what could separate us.

It is at this point that Paul illustrates the differing spiritual gifts he mentions in verse 1. He introduces the list by pointing out that the various gifts that manifest the Spirit in their lives are designed, despite their variety, to allow each to serve the greater good of the rest (12:7). Spiritual gifts were never designed to produce cliques and result in brethren dividing; they were designed to make each member a part of all the others in mutual sharing and caring. Spiritual gifts would not profit the church at all if they resulted in division rather than unity.

Paul now enumerates nine differing spiritual gifts (12:8-10). They include the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, ability to heal, the working of miracles, prophecy, the ability to discern spirits, being able to speak in tongues, and being able to interpret when someone spoke in tongues. Interspersed throughout the list were constant reminders that despite their variety they were all from a common source. Unity does not mean that everybody is just alike or that they all can do the same things; but it does mean that we work together for the common good and understand that our differences should bind us more closely together instead of drive us apart.

It should not be supposed that they are listed in some order of significance, nor should it be assumed that these were the sum total of the spiritual gifts the Spirit endowed the membership of the church with in this time of miracles. More likely this is simply a representative list of gifts rather than an exhaustive one. When it is compared to the list in Romans 12:3-8, this list is different enough that it is obvious that neither list covers every

gift bestowed in first century Christianity. We don't even know for certain exactly what each of the gifts consisted of. Lipscomb sagely remarks, "The gift bestowed on each one was for the instruction and help of all the church, and not for the private benefit of the gifted. The apostle now gives the separate gifts bestowed by the Spirit. It is difficult to define the scope, as they have all disappeared in the appearing of the completed word of God contained in the New Testament" (181).

A quick glance at the various gifts would lead us to conclude that some were designed primarily for the instruction and edification of the entire church. Some were designed to meet physical needs such as sickness or injury. Some were apparently more in line with evangelism and being able to communicate with people of other nationalities. Each had its purpose, each met some particular need, all worked together to help the church grow up (13:8-12) and to help confirm the hand of God in the preaching of the Gospel wherever it might be taken (Heb. 2:1-4).

Having illustrated the differing gifts from a single source, Paul ties his message to this point together in 12:11. Here he points out again that all of these things are the result of the "one and the same Spirit" and that they have been distributed as the Holy Spirit desired. They were not given on the basis of merit, they did not imply superiority or inferiority, they were simply dispersed throughout the church to different members for the common good. It would have been wonderful if the church at Corinth had realized and accepted that all along. They would have been closer, more interdependent, and possessed a level of unity that would have provided invaluable assistance in the growth of internal spirituality and external conversion.

Paul now moves on to another illustration designed to emphasize unity despite differences. In 12:12-26 he utilizes the human body to make his point about unity or working together as one. 12:12 presents the basic premise: the body of Christ (the church – Eph. 1:22-23) is much the same as the human body in that each, while but one, is possessed of many members. In 12:13 he points out that by the one Spirit we are all baptized into the one body. This was true whether you were a Jew or a Greek, whether you were a slave or a free man, and all have drank of the

same Spirit (Lipscomb suggests this is figurative for His influence in and on our spiritual lives – 181). He then stresses that it is obvious that no body is complete with only one member, but through the working of the many that comprises it (12:14). From this point Paul will take some time to develop exactly what he means by this assertion.

He first points out that no member of the body is less important than any other member (12:15-17). In fact, he discourages the tendency that often exists among believers to feel a little insignificant because you cannot do what another member may be able to do. To any Christians that might feel the preacher is more important than the janitor, the eldership is more vital than the teaching staff, the song leader more indispensable than the usher, etc. Paul would simply say that we need to look more closely at our physical body. The foot cannot do what the hand can do. That doesn't mean that the hand is more vital than the foot, just that they fill different roles. It would be silly for the foot to conclude it was not part of the body because it doesn't fulfill the duties of the hand. The ear would be wrong to assume it is less important than the eye. How silly for the ear to do nothing or attempt to leave the body because it can't see. Paul uses hyperbole in 12:17 to provide a vivid image of how foolish various members would look if they were all there was to the body. Imagine you were nothing but a 200 pound eye. You might be able to see hundreds of miles away, but you couldn't walk toward what you saw, or hold it close, or hear what was happening right behind you. Suppose you were nothing more than one big ear. You might be able to hear a pin drop 500 yards away, but you couldn't pick it up, or see where it fell. There is no room for self-disparagement by any member of the body for they each have a role to fill that is unique to themselves and vital to the overall performance of the body as a whole. God has given each member its unique place in the body; it can do just what He desires it to do (12:18). Any change in His arrangement would impede the body's ability to function normally and effectively (12:19). No matter what role a body part plays, it is not the only necessary role to be played. No body can function if it is just one big ear, or just one big eye, or just one big foot, or

just one big hand. God knew what He was doing when He put together the human body, and He also knew what He was doing when He designed the Body of Christ!

Just as the existence of a variety of spiritual gifts did not excuse division and disunity in the church, the existence of various body parts does not suggest more than one body (12:20). Again, God's intent is that they all work together for the common good of the single body they comprise. He now takes a slightly different slant in regard to how various members of the body react to differences in the role they might play. In 1 Corinthians 12:21 he emphasizes how out of place it would be for one part of the body to disparage the role of any other part because of their differing functions. The eye cannot afford to disparage the hand, the head cannot disown or underplay the importance of the foot. Earlier Paul had shown how ridiculous it would be for one member to conclude it was unnecessary because it couldn't do what another part could do. Now he shows that it is equally ridiculous for any one part of the body to dismiss what any other part brings into play. Churches can be divided because some members feel unimportant, but they can also be divided because some members feel too important. Either attitude may well disrupt the unity of the church and keep it from being able to function as a healthy spiritual body.

Paul now suggests that the fact of the matter is that there is little connection between appearance and value when it comes to the functioning of the body (12:22-24). We have some body parts that are far more important than they appear to be on the surface. I have never seen my pancreas, but I could more easily survive without an eye than I could it. Your liver is hidden from view, but it is more vital to your overall health than your hand. We also have some body parts that are more private than others (probably our reproductive organs are under discussion in 12:23) so we go to great lengths to cover them. We don't have to do this with many of our body parts (12:24), and God has given some of those most private and unpresentable parts indispensable roles in the survival of the human race.

All of this is according to God's ultimate plan and design (12:25) so that the body works together as a unit rather than each

member operating on its own and without regard for the other members around it. The end result of the way God has comprised the human body is that no member can nor must suffer or rejoice alone (12:26). It is obvious through this entire illustration that Paul is talking about more than the physical body. His ultimate aim is to make us see that the church (Christ's spiritual body) is, in principle, just like our physical body. No member is less or more important than any other. Some members are more important than they appear, and all must work together in unity. We must share both bad and good times and be there for one another because we are truly one though we may be many (12:27).

Paul's concluding section (12:28-30) makes application of all that he has been trying to convey in the preceding verses and illustrations. The church of the first century was composed of a variety of members, each provided especially by God. His appointments were designed to help the church function efficiently.

He first provided the apostles. The church had its beginning through their efforts (Acts 2) and they provided a vital link between the growing church and Jesus Himself. Not every member of the church could be an apostle, nor did they need to be. Since there is no mention of replacing individual apostles after Acts 1 it is logical to assume that God never planned that the apostleship be a permanent part of the body.

He secondly provided prophets. These members are thought to be individuals who were given special messages or insights necessary to the spiritual growth and needs of the infant church. They were evidently endowed with information the church needed from time to time and were vital to the work of the church up till the time the New Testament was completed (200-201). Not every member could be a prophet, nor did they need to be. Even those who were gifted with this ability operated under some restraints and guidelines peculiar to their role (Chapter 14).

Thirdly God provided teachers. Lipscomb (181) suggests that these members were endowed with the ability to feed and teach fellow Christians on an ongoing basis. Not every member could be a teacher and James 3:1 suggests not every member

should be.

Paul then lists other provisions God made for the church by endowing different members with miraculous powers, the ability to heal, the ability to help, the ability to administer or lead, and the ability to speak in tongues. Not every member could do any one of these things, nor did they need to do so any more than a foot needed to be able to perform the duty of a hand, or an ear the role of an eye. What God was doing was like unto what He did with the human body. The one church would exist and function through the role of many members, each with a role to fill and a duty to perform. As long as each member does its part the body functions in a normal and healthy manner.

As strange as it may sound on the surface, it is our differences that unite us in Christ! We need what each other brings to the church. Whatever our talent or gift may be (and even in this time when miraculous gifts have ceased, each of us have particular abilities and talents) God wishes us to use it/them to His glory and to the betterment of the church. We need each other! Our different gifts and abilities allow us to function as a healthy spiritual body. Our different personalities equip us to handle a wider variety of situations that may arise during the course of our serving the Lord. Even our differing views on some issues may well be the impetus for deeper study and ultimately a clearer understanding of how we might more correctly handle the truth (2 Tim. 2:15). When we can set aside self-pity and/or ego and simply do what we can do and allow others within the church to do the same the resulting unity will allow the church to survive and flourish in whatever community it may be located.

I once heard a speaker in a lectureship make the following statement, "In the Day of Judgment I would rather be the Roman soldier who pierced the side of Jesus at the cross than to be one who causes division within His spiritual body the Church!" As the years have gone by I have given that statement a lot of thought. Originally I felt it was a classic case of overstatement, but after years of seeing congregations of God's people argue and divide I have changed my mind. I can see his point more clearly now and I have come to agree with his assessment. What happened to the physical body of Jesus had to happen and the

Roman soldier was simply doing his job despite the gory nature of his action. When one divides the spiritual body of Jesus it more often than not is a callous and selfish act that leaves church and community devastated.

As previously noted in David's Psalm of Ascents unity among God's people is a "good and pleasant" thing. It is little wonder that God lists among His list of hated things the "one who sows discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). It is within the context of his chastising of the brethren at Corinth for being so divided that Paul observes that the church there was the temple of God and such division defiles the temple of God and will not go unpunished. In fact, he plainly says that God will destroy those who defile (i.e. bring division to) the church.

In summary let it be understood that unity among brethren is an essential element in the life of a congregation. Where there is constant disputing peace eludes the family of God. When congregations fracture due to a lack of unity and harmony the cost runs high. Influence is lost, opportunities squandered, and often congregation never recover. In my personal experience I have seen several congregations split. One in particular comes to mind in which a congregation of about 60 in attendance allowed unity to be sacrificed and the end result was two congregations of about 20 members each and the loss of another 20 who were either visitors who never returned or members who left the church in disgust and disillusionment.

Paul would point us to the united source from which all we have and are spiritually is derived and point out that our differing gifts come from a single source. He would point us to the human body and remind us that it functions in a normal manner only when the many members work together, each doing its own part, to allow the one body to operate. In much the same manner the spiritual body, the church, is healthiest and most pleasing to God when each member does his part and when the blending of different members, talents and personalities provides all that the church needs to do the work Jesus calls it to. He would also point out to us that God never intended all of us to be just alike in gifts, personalities or any other thing. It is our differences that allow unity to flourish in spiritual growth and

accomplishment.

May God bless us with a willingness to lose self in the bigger cause of mutual service to Jesus. May He help us to use self to the greater good of the one body of Christ. And may He always be able to depend on us to muse upon the beauty and power of a united people of God!

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Biographical Sketch

Sam Bartrug was born and raised in rural Wetzel County, WV. He graduated from Hundred High School in 1969 and attended Ohio Valley University (the College) receiving both the A.A. Degree and the B.A Degree in Bible. He has been preaching for 39 years on a full-time basis.

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He enjoys gardening, hunting, and brush-hogging some acreage down in Meigs County, Ohio. He plans to preach for a few more years then retire from that aspect of ministry.

The Resurrection and Emptiness

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Dan Jenkins

Mankind has always been fascinated by what happens after one dies. When Paul told the Athenians that God had in times past overlooked ignorance but now commands everyone everywhere to repent, he added one additional fact. “Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). The Athenians who assembled in the market place in Athens “spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). When they heard Paul’s mention of the resurrection their response was so interesting. “When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter’” (Acts 17:32). Men have always been fascinated about death and what, if anything, lies beyond.

It was not just the Athenians who were fascinated about the resurrection. One of the largest Jewish “denominations,” the Sadducees, made a denial of the resurrection a vital part of their doctrine. Paul used this to his advantage in the trial he had before a mixed audience in Jerusalem. Some of them, the Pharisees, believed in the resurrection and some of them, the Sadducees, denied there was one (Acts 23:7-11). As the Sadducees became part of the church, we should be surprised that they brought this into the church. Today we see denominational people bring wrong beliefs into the church, and human nature has not changed. The church in Corinth, with both Jews and Gentiles as members had some who denied the resurrection.

There may be some aspects of future events that have little bearing on our faith, but such is not the case of the doctrine of the resurrection. Paul said, “Some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:12). Paul showed the result

of such a belief and it is this section of 1 Corinthians that is the focus of this lesson. It is of such importance that Paul devotes 58 verses to discuss the truth about the resurrection. We turn our attention to 1 Corinthians chapter fifteen and study verses twelve through nineteen to see how the Holy Spirit dealt with this problem in the church.

If There Is No Resurrection, Christ Is Not Raised

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ is not raised” (1 Cor. 15:12). It is remarkable that any Christian could say there was no resurrection without seeing the implication of the fact that such a belief destroys the resurrection of Jesus himself. How important is the resurrection to a Christian? Paul references the power that is found in the resurrection of Jesus. To the Philippians he wrote, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection of the dead” (Philip. 3:10-11). Without His resurrection suffering and fellowship are meaningless.

How important is the resurrection of Christ from the dead? It is tied directly to our own salvation. Leaving out the words in parentheses, look at the words of Peter. “There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism through the resurrection of Jesus Christ who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Pet. 3:21-22). Baptism saves through the resurrection of Jesus. What if there is no resurrection?

How important is the resurrection of Christ from the dead? Hebrews chapter one speaks of the Son through whom God has spoken and then describes that Son and His work. “Whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom He made the worlds...upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:2-3). If Christ has not raised then He through whom the world was created is powerless to uphold all things! Even more striking is that He has *not* purged us from sin. The denial of the resurrection of mankind is a denial of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Thanks be to God that the

tomb was not empty!

If There Is No Resurrection, Then Preaching Is Empty

Hear the words of Paul and think of the consequences of their meaning. “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty” (1 Cor. 15:14). How often was the resurrection part of the preaching in the book of Acts? It is mentioned at least 21 times in connection with the preaching by the apostles. Now imagine preaching if Christ has not been raised. The New Testament should no longer be used as the basis of preaching, for the book is from a dead man who was so weak that pagan Romans and unbelieving Jews put Him to death. What topics could be discussed? The Sermon on the Mount loses its force if that “which you have heard has been said,” for the most part, came directly from the living God of the Old Testament, but the “I say unto you” comes from a man who was powerless to save his life. There could be no invitation for He who said, “Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28) could give them nothing. He died! There is no resurrection! His words bring no hope and no comfort!

Think of the emptiness in the preaching of a man who is dead and who never can exist again. John 14 loses all its force. He has gone, but He has not gone to prepare a place for us! He has gone, but He can never return again to receive us unto Himself. His opening words in this chapter should say, “Let your hearts be troubled; you can believe in God, but you cannot believe in me.” Think of the sermons you hear every week. Every reference to Jesus and His work becomes meaningless. No wonder Paul says that if there is no resurrection, then there could be no resurrection of Christ and preaching simply becomes meaningless sound from a grave which offers no hope!

If There Is No Resurrection, Then Faith Is Vain and Futile

Twice in this section under discussion, faith without the resurrection is described. In the King James Version in both places (1 Cor. 15: 14, 17) the word vain is used. However, in the Greek text two words are used. The New King James Version indicates this by translating the first phrase as “your faith is

empty” and the second phrase as “your faith is futile.”

Each of these words describes the close relation between the resurrection and our faith. The first word emphasizes the emptiness of faith without the resurrection. This kind of faith is the one that unbelievers describe as blind faith. Without looking at the evidence, they see faith as a bold leap over a dark chasm with no particular expectation that beyond that darkness is another ledge to receive us. Such could not be further from the truth. Nicodemus had faith in the fact that Jesus was a teacher but there was reason. “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). The sermon on Pentecost made the same argument. “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22).

However, if there is no resurrection of the dead then Jesus is not raised from the dead. All of His miracles fall by the wayside, for those who killed Him were mightier than He! Without the resurrection Jesus is simply a man who had a life’s philosophy, which may or may not be as good as some other man’s ideas. It is the miracles of Jesus coupled with His resurrection that gives substance to faith. The faith that we have is not a blind faith. Neither is it a *dead* faith!

The word used in 1 Corinthians 15:17, translated as futile in the New King James Version, looks without the resurrection and adds another emphasis. It looks far more at the *results* of faith. It is the word used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, 41 times in the book of Ecclesiastes. When Solomon described the meaninglessness of life without God, his conclusion was “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” The word is used in Acts 14:15 to describe the nature of idolatry. Paul used it in Romans chapter 1 to describe the degradation of those who left God and ended up in the bondage of sexual perversion—they became futile in their imaginations. It is used of Judaizing teachers who sought to get Gentiles to abandon the one faith and accept circumcision and the law (Titus 1:10). It is used of the language of false teachers who sought to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (2 Pet. 2:18). Look at this list. Each time the

word is used it refers to the reality of human philosophy about living. Which one is greater—materialism, hedonism, fleshly circumcision, idolatry? Without the resurrection Christianity is no greater and has no greater reward than any other humanistic view of life! If there is no resurrection faith is empty and futile!

If There Is No Resurrection, the Apostles Are False

Witnesses

Paul said, “Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise” (1 Cor. 15:15). Notice how in this chapter Paul changed words to indicate specific groups. It was “our” preaching, “your” faith, “some” among you say there is no resurrection. This use should be noted because Paul does not say “*you* are found false witnesses.” The Corinthians are not included in this statement. Then who is the “we” who are false witnesses if there is no resurrection?

In our day people talk about “witnessing” for Christ in their attempt to bring the lost to Jesus, but the Bible does not use the word witness in this way. When the Lord selected the apostles He had in mind a very special place for them to serve. This is highlighted by qualifications given in the selection of someone to replace Judas. “Of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22). Pay special attention to the last few words. The apostles were to be individuals who knew the Lord for years. They had to have seen the resurrected Lord in order that they might bear witness to His resurrection. A major aspect of their work was to provide eye witness evidence that He had been raised. Before His ascension He told the apostles, “You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In that first sermon, Peter and the apostles, having shown from the Scriptures that Jesus was to die and be raised, affirmed, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32). Following the healing

of the crippled man, Peter told the multitude who assembled on Solomon's porch that they had "...killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). The Divine record of the Acts of the Apostles continues in the next chapter, "And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33). Then in the following chapter Peter and John told the Jewish Sanhedrin, "We are all His witnesses to these things" (Acts 5:32). The household of Cornelius was told, "And we are witnesses of all things which He did...whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead" (Acts 10:39-41).

Thus the apostles were "witnesses chosen before by God." How then does Paul qualify? Ananias told Paul before his baptism that the Lord had appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:17) and God had chosen him that he might be a witness to all men (Acts 22:14-15). God made special provision for Paul to see the Lord and he was the last one to see Him (1 Cor. 15:8-9).

Now if there is no resurrection, then these men, chosen by God, are all liars! Paul's argument to the Corinthians was that if there were no resurrection then he and all the rest of the apostles contrived an amazing plot and uniformly lied to make it a reality. How deep was the conviction of these apostles? Perhaps it is best seen when we note that the same Greek word for witness in the passages used above is the word translated as martyr when talking about Stephen and Antipas (Acts 22:20; Rev. 2:13). The apostles were not false witnesses and their martyrdom shows how deeply they believe the reality of the resurrection!

If There Is No Resurrection, We Are Still in Our Sins

The resurrection of mankind is tied directly to the resurrection of Jesus and that is tied directly to our salvation. *A dead savior is no savior at all!* This fact is why Paul speaks so plainly about this matter. "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). The word "still"

emphasizes the fact that in the past the Corinthians lived in sin and were therefore separated from God. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 he states this so vividly. “Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you.” The Corinthians knew this so well. However, if there were no resurrection, they were still guilty of all of this! How wonderful to see the rest of 1 Cor. 6:11. “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” He has been raised! He has paid the price! He is our Savior!

Look at the implication of an “unresurrected” Jesus in the presentation of what Jesus did for us in the book of Hebrews. Chapter one speaks of Him sitting at the right hand of God, having purged our sins. In chapter two He is the one who by His own death destroyed Satan, the one who has the power of death. He is the propitiation for our sins and the one who even now is able to aid those who are tempted. In chapter three He is our high priest, the one who makes sacrifices for sins, and is over the house in which we serve. In chapter four He is the high priest who has passed into the heavens where He sympathizes with our weakness and gives us the right to come boldly before the throne of grace. In chapter five He is that high priest, called of God to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin. In chapter six He is that forerunner who has entered the presence behind the veil and has announced our coming to that place. In chapter seven He is that sinless, perfected and eternal priest, who lives forever to make intercession for us. In chapter eight He is pictured as a priest, but not like one on this earth for He was not from the tribe of Levi. He is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a servant in the true tabernacle erected by God. In chapter nine He is our priest who brought, not the blood of goats and calves, but His own blood into the heavenly holy place to obtain eternal redemption for us. He was offered once for all mankind and He will appear the second time to all who await Him. In chapter ten He is the one who did what it was not possible for the blood of animals to do, and thereby opened the

way behind the veil so that we can with full assurance enter in the presence of God with boldness. In chapter eleven He is the one who makes it possible for us to be perfected with all those men of faith, who did not receive the promise apart from us. In chapter twelve He is the one who has finished the race and thereby became the author and finisher of our faith and now sits at the right hand of God. In chapter thirteen He is the one who has sanctified His people by His own blood and awaits us in that continuing city.

Reread the previous paragraph. If Jesus has not been raised there is not a single word of it true!

If There Is No Resurrection, Then the Dead Have Perished

“And if Christ is not risen...then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Cor. 15:14a, 18). Several times in this section Paul has gone from the general resurrection to the resurrection and applied it to the resurrection of Christ and the blessing He brings. He now turns the argument around to point out that if Christ has not been raised, then there is no general resurrection. Christ is described as the first fruit of the resurrection and the godly are the “second fruit.” However there can be no second without there being a first.

Think of how often the Bible uses sleep as a word to refer to being dead. While this list is not exhaustive look at the following: Psalm 13:3; Isa. 14:18; Matt. 27:52; John 11:13; 1 Thess. 4:14-15; 2 Pet. 3:4. It is used that way four times in 1 Cor. 15, the resurrection chapter of the Bible. What is the significance of this usage? Every morning we awaken after a night of sleep and we shall all awaken in the morning of joy!

Imagine how empty life would be if there were no resurrection. How many times have we walked away from the grave of a loved one with a heart filled with confidence. When they were alive we walked away from their house and often said to them, “We will see you later.” It is the faith in the resurrection which allows us to leave the open grave and say to the one in that grave, “We will see you later.” One of the glorious beauties of heaven is the prospect of being reunited with those saints who have gone before. As a child we might have thought of heaven

only in terms of streets of gold and gates of pearls, but as we grow older we see that street of gold filled with the most wonderful people we have know who are now on the other side. There is a resurrection and we shall see them!

David knew two things for sure about the resurrection. First is the fact that the Shepherd led us *through* the valley of the shadow. Then when his baby died he knew that he could not bring the dead back to us but that we could see them when we go to them. If there is no resurrection, our dead loved one will never be seen again!

If There Is No Resurrection, We Are of All Men Most Pitiable

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Cor. 15:19). With these words Paul ends the discussion of the emptiness of life if there is no resurrection. Perhaps it is the most powerful for it seems to sum up the sacrifice which Paul, the Corinthians and we have made to that which is nothing more than a fable! Those apostles left their profitable business and had devoted a quarter of a century to this fable! The Corinthians had become the object of ridicule of all those around them. It may have cost many of them their livelihood. Hebrews described the fact that early Christians joyfully accepted the plundering of their goods (Heb. 10:34), and the saints in the Book of Revelation could neither buy, sell or make any profit because they would not worship the pagan gods (Rev. 13:17). Then there were those who had lost family members and suffered hardship (perhaps this is one of sources of the many widows mentioned so often in the New Testament) and all of that was of no avail.

Most pitiable? Absolutely! Oh, the folly of following a dead Savior and believing He has anything to offer! Forget salvation. Forget heaven. Forget prayers. Forget intercession. Forget providence. They all are a myth and what you believe is a fable!

If there is no resurrection the only folks who have it right are the Epicureans! Their philosophy of eat, drink and be merry because tomorrow we die is the only meaningful way to live this life. The mistakes of yesterday do not matter. There is no sin, no

moral standard, no judgment, and no accountability. The only regret about yesterday is that you were not more selfish. There is no tomorrow. Live for today! Fulfill every fleshly desire! You are nothing more than an animal so live like one!

If there is no resurrection then feel sorry for those who assemble to worship a dead man. Their faith which they professed in becoming a Christian is folly. He did not ascend into the heavens, but when He descended into the abyss, He stayed there (cf. Rom. 10:5-9). You may think you were buried and raised with Him in baptism, but He was not raised! You are singing to a dead man. Your prayers in His name are powerless. Your sacrificial giving each week is wasted money. Your Lord's Supper which you think should proclaim His death till He comes is mockery—He is not coming! There is nothing in any of this, you are of all men most pitiable!

If a modern Elijah were here, he would not just be saying, "Cry louder, He is asleep; He is on a journey; He is meditating. He would be saying, "He is dead!"

If There Is a Resurrection

On the other hand, look at how the resurrection changes all of these matters discussed. There is a resurrection and there is a resurrected Savior with all the blessings He brings to us. Preaching is not vain, it is filled with words of encouragement, edification, instruction, rebuke, instructions in righteousness and hope. Preaching is proclaiming the message for a risen Lord. Our faith is not vain and empty. It is tied to a revelation brought by a risen Lord. The words of the apostles and their witness are not false. When we hold their words in our hands, we hold the words of God in our hand just as certainly as Moses did when he descended Mt. Sinai. We hold the words of a risen Master. We are no longer in our sins. The price for redemption has been paid. He carried His blood into the heavenly holy place and paid the price! Our sins are no longer remembered. We are no longer guilty. We are no longer objects of His wrath, but forgiven sons. Add all of these together and we are *not* the most *pitiable*, we are the most *blessed*.

There are those verses which describe the grave and how

hopeless and bleak it is, if life ends at death and there is nothing beyond the grave. “For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who can give Thee praise” (Psa. 6:5). Without the resurrection we will never again be able to praise our Maker. The same concept is found in Psalm 115:17. “The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any that go down into silence.” Consider the following words from Isaiah and what it says of hope. “For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth” (Isa. 38:18). In a day of despair, David cried out for help from God. “Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness” (Psa. 88:10-12). How bleak life is if there is no resurrection. Job’s view of life and what lies beyond depicts this. “Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue....But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breaths his last and where is he? ... If a man dies, shall he live again” (Job 14:1, 2, 10, 14).

There is a resurrection. Every negative which comes from not having a resurrection is turned into a resounding blessing because there is a resurrection!

The Expectation of the Resurrection and You

We know there is a resurrection! We know that the empty tomb is a fact of history and that changes our view of all that happens. He has suffered and died and now as a risen Savior sits at the right hand of God and feels our infirmities (Heb. 4:15). He is present when we pray (Matt. 18:20). When we sing He is there in our midst singing with us (Heb. 2:12). We sit with Him around His table for He said He would eat that feast again in the kingdom. When you worship this Sunday imagine Jesus sitting beside you and joining with you in singing, “There’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” Can you visualize the first time the apostles passed the bread and the cup from hand to hand in their worship? The last time this had

happened it was the hands of Jesus who gave the bread to those beside Him and said, "This is my body." He is just as much with us in our worship, as the bread is passed to you this Sunday, hear Him say, "Take eat, this is my body."

The next time you stand beside a grave look beyond that grave and see another tomb that is empty. Have the faith of Martha who sought to deal with her brother's dead. Listen to the faith in her words. "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24). Then as you walk away hear His reply. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Do you believe it? Let your souls be surrounded and embraced by His promises.

There is a resurrection. Like us, He died. Like Him, we shall be resurrected. He has gone to prepare a place for us and is coming again. There is hope in this life, and there is hope in the grave. The final trumpet will sound and we shall all be raised on that last day. While you await that day, live in view of the reality of the resurrection. The empty tomb insures that our faith and life is not empty. Lord, hasten the day for all of us!

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The Right View of Preachers

1 Corinthians 3:1-15

Jack Gilchrist

There may be no more confusing position in the modern denominational world than that of the preacher. For years, there has been confusion over whether the preacher is a pastor. Now, the denominational world is seeing preachers that are administrators, project managers and more. It seems that denominational preachers do everything but preach. Unfortunately, in an effort to “keep up” with the denominations, some churches have the same problems. Preaching students are even required to learn how to be administrators, educators, educational leaders; but, less emphasis is put on how to preach and be a good Bible student.

In 1 Corinthians 3:1-15, Paul addresses the church in Corinth about what the preacher is. The root of the problem seems to be pride. Whether it is the pride of the preacher or the pride of someone following the preacher, pride is often behind an incorrect view of the preacher.

It is also good to remember what was going on in Corinthian society. In regards to religion, the majority of Corinth remained polytheistic and pagan. There were many temples in Corinth, all competing for the allegiance of the people. No doubt, there would be devoted teachers in each of these temples trying to convince the crowd to worship their chosen deity. Therefore, the Corinthians may have been reliant on these teachers and even upheld them in a higher position than they deserved. This would no doubt create rivalry within the pagan world.

The Corinthian Christians were converted out of this pagan world (1 Cor. 6:9-11). As is with most Christians, sometimes the past is hard to leave behind. It should be left behind, but the damage to the individual’s thought process is already done, and sometimes those thoughts linger in the mind. Therefore, some of the Corinthian Christians may have brought these thoughts of rival pagan teachers into the church. This would easily create

division in any church. When men start being devoted to other men over God, division will occur. Whether in the pagan world or today's denominational landscape, Christians must resist devotion to individual men. This is why Paul taught the Corinthians the right view of preachers.

In teaching the right view of preachers, Paul criticizes and corrects the Corinthian church (Willmington 645). Paul was often trying to help his Christian audience rise to the point they should be in their faith. Here Paul states that he wants to speak to them about spiritual matters, but instead, he must speak to them about carnal matters. Vincent states that this is a "very strong expression" for "made of flesh" (80). Vine adds that the word for carnal means, "given up to the flesh" (89). The idea that Paul presents is that the Corinthians were giving in to fleshly temptation in their view of what the preacher should be. Paul also points out that this is because of immaturity. Paul echoes the Hebrew writer with the familiar symbol of a baby needing milk and not being able to process solid food. This symbol is used here to display that the Corinthians should be more mature than they are (Heb. 5:12-14). The world of solid food is so much more enjoyable than the mild food reserved for babies. Solid food gives more pleasure and more nutrients. Children on the verge of switching to solid food will even start to stare at the plates of the adults who are enjoying solid food. There is much to gain by maturing to the point of needing solid food. In the same manner, Paul wants to teach his readers these elementary principles, so they can mature to better things spiritually.

Not to leave the Corinthian church guessing, Paul tells them exactly why they are still immature. In verse three, he lists that they have envy, strife and divisions keeping them back from where they should be. These qualities are making them carnal, but this word for carnal is milder than the word in verse one (Vincent 200). The difference between the words in verse three and verse one is that in verse one, Paul is telling them they are flesh; in verse three, they are like the flesh. Robertson explains, "*Sarkikos*, unlike *sarkinos*, like *-ikos*, formations mean adapted to, fitted for the flesh, one who lives according to the flesh.... Both classes are *sarkino* made in flesh, and both may be *sarkikoi*

though [they] should not be” (93).

The reason they are carnal is that they were acting like mere men, as opposed to acting like Christian men. The qualities of these mere men were envy, strife and division. “Envy” in this verse is actually translated from the word *zelos*, from where the English word “zeal” is derived (Vine 204). This word can also be translated as “zeal” or “jealous,” and refers to how there were competing parties in the Corinthian church. These competing factions would create strife or contention (Vine 604). This contention, or infighting, would lead to flat out division in the church. So, the progression of the problem is seen in this verse and can be summed up to say that because of their earthly motives, they would end up dividing the church that Christ established.

In verse four, Paul gives an example of what is leading to the division. He states that some were showing allegiance to Apollos and some to Paul. It seems some were dividing the church over allegiance to ministers or first century preachers. It is unclear whether the division was over Paul and Apollos specifically, or whether he is using these names as examples. Either way, Paul’s use of himself clearly points out that Paul had no aspirations to be the head of a church. He is condemning his own party, if such a party existed.

The reason this condemnation appeared is men like Paul and Apollos are just ministers. The Greek word for “minister” is *diakonos* and is translated in the New Testament as “servant” seven times, “minister” twenty times and “deacon” three times (Jackson 123). Both Vincent and Robertson point out that Paul is saying that he and Apollos are not heads of rival parties, but mere servants (200, 94). This is quite a picture; Paul is painting the idea that he and others would not even be worthy of leading a party because they are just servants. Now, if Paul is just a servant, how should modern preachers, who have not “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6), view themselves? If Paul is just a servant, preachers today are no higher and should not accept or encourage people to lift them up to a plane they have no right to approach. Really, to sum up the right view of preachers is to say that they are servants.

Paul goes on to point out that they are servants with the same goal. The divisive parties in Corinth needed to understand that Paul, Apollos, or other teachers did not come to create factions in the church, but to establish the Gospel of God. “The first two verbs are in the aorist tense, marking definite acts; the third is in the imperfect, marking the continuous gracious agency of God, and possible the simultaneousness of his work with that of the two preachers” (Vincent 200). Vine adds that the increase that God gives is “the growth of that which lives” (Vine 283). The work of a servant that Paul and Apollos did was to preach the Gospel, but all the credit for the success of the Gospel belonged to God. Since Paul and Apollos taught previously and were not currently in Corinth their work had a definite time frame, but the Gospel preached still continues to grow according to the grace of God.

Paul uses images from the farming realm to describe how this works. Just as a farmer plants and waters, but has no control over the outcome, so it is the same with teachers of the Gospel. They throw the seed, they try to give the seed every opportunity to sprout, but any success that the seed has belongs to God. “The work that each did as servants of God was necessary to the growth of the plant, but all the power that produced the fruit came from God” (Lipscomb 49). Therefore, preachers are not qualified to create and lead parties, but should be united in the cause of being lead by God with all other Christians. Again, if Paul was not qualified to create and lead a separate party within the church, then no modern preacher could be so arrogant as to think he can lead such a sect.

Paul continues to lower the view of the preacher. In verse seven he downgrades him to nothing. At first, this can be alarming to a preacher, but the whole verse explains why the preacher is nothing. The preacher is nothing because God is everything. Vincent recorded that a devoted sister, Angelique Arnauld, was consoled by her sister when a religious mentor was not available with the following, “I have never put a man in God’s place. He can only have what God gives him; and God gives him some thing for us only when it is His will that we should receive it through him” (201). Ultimately, any preacher

who creates division or lifts himself above the status of a servant is trying to stand between God and man, but there is only “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). This mediator is also God. Therefore, when a preacher tries to raise his own position, he attempts to put himself in the place of God. This is obviously a wrong view of a preacher. It is better that the preacher is viewed as nothing, because only God can continually extend His grace to mankind (1 John 1:7).

Paul is continually emphasizing unity over the divisive attitudes in Corinth. This unity is to be found only in God, not in ignoring immoral or doctrinal differences. Apollos and Paul are united as workers for the same cause: the cause of God. The planter and the waterer have to be united in their work. “If no one planted the watering would be useless. If not one watered the planting would come to naught” (Robertson 94). God will reward His workers. No matter what the preacher receives on earth, God will know his work and reward him accordingly. Preachers, as well as all Christians, do not need to worry about their physical rewards because Christ promised they will have enough (Matt. 6:33). The reward here, as is the increase, is spiritual. God will reward His workers spiritually as well as physically. Paul confirms this, and there is no doubt that most modern preachers have a more comfortable life than Paul. As the common saying goes, many preachers today are doing “better than they deserve” because God is blessing them.

Not only are the preachers to be united in the work of the Gospel, but they are also to be united with God. If fellow preachers are united with God, moral and doctrinal differences will vanish. It is only because so many refuse to be united with God that there is so much division. The idea of being a fellow laborer with God is that the preacher works for and belongs to God. Preachers are to be part of God. The picture of unity Paul paints is that preachers are so connected to God they are part of Him and that preachers are so united with one another that they are part of each other. The correct view of the preacher presented here is that when a preacher is viewed, it is his connection to God that is seen because he is united with God and His cause.

Paul calls the Corinthians God's field and God's building. These images first point out that the Corinthians, like the preacher, belong to God in such a way that they are united with Him. It is not Paul's field or Apollos's building, but all the work of the Gospel, all the success, belongs to God. When one becomes a Christian, he is united with Christ, who is God (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). This unites all Christians into one field or one building. The field and building are just illustrations Paul uses to emphasize that Christians need to stop dividing into carnal parties and be united with God and therefore, with one another.

The field, or husbandry, is a reference to tilled land and is a word used only here in the New Testament (Vincent 201). The soil of the field is made ready, like the hearts of men need to be before they can be sown with seed and watered. Paul turns to a new illustration with God's building. The metaphor of the church being a building is used 26 times in the New Testament, all but two of those times by Paul (Ibid.). It is synonymous with the idea of edifying the church and is referring to the idea of constructing what God wants. Thomas C. Edwards compares the two metaphors by stating, "the field describes the raw material on which God works, the house the result of the work" (qtd. in Vincent 202).

So far, Paul has made preachers a lowly servant and a farmer. His final illustration is that a preacher is a builder. Note that in each one of these illustrations the preacher is to be careful how he does his work. He needs to be exact and understand his true position. He needs to understand that his only success is God's success. So as a builder he needs to build on the right foundation with the right material.

Paul states that he is only a master builder because God allows him to be one. Preachers are only preachers because God allows it. Therefore, preachers must be humble in their own opinion because without God's grace they would not have their position. Robertson suggests that this reference to being a master builder may be Paul's way of removing any guilt or blame from Apollos for the divisions in Corinth (95). It may also point to Paul's position as an apostle, for which he is extremely thankful (Rom. 1:5; Eph. 3:7). This office does give him a certain amount

of authority to command the Corinthians to stop being divisive. McGarvey states, “All this Paul asserts without any shadow of boasting, for the skill or wisdom by which he had done it had been imparted to him by God” (64).

Being a “wise master builder,” points to Paul’s ability to skillfully command the Corinthian church. So while he constantly points to God as the one with whom the preacher must be united to have success, he also admits that the preacher must have some ability to do the necessary building of the church. This is made clear by emphasizing the foundation of the church. The foundation of the church is not Paul, Apollos or anyone else except Jesus Christ.

If Paul were to pose verse 11 as a question, he might have asked, “Who do you want as your foundation?” or “Who else is worthy of being your foundation?” Christ is the foundation of the church. He came to build it, and He built it on the fact that He is the Son of God (Matt. 16:16-18). Who else could be a worthy foundation? What man can be equal to Christ? The answer, obviously, is no one. Yet many people are putting their faith, or building, on men, particularly on modern day preachers. To build is to take action. Many will say that they are building on Christ only, when they are building on men. When men are quoted more than Scripture, men have become the foundation. When Scripture is ignored in favor of a man’s opinion, men have become the foundation. When the Christian world is divided into thousands of denominations, many named after men, men have become the foundation. When worship is altered to meet men’s preferences, men have become the foundation. Much of this starts when a preacher has a wrong view of himself or allows others to have a higher view of him than he really deserves. Therefore, Paul concludes there is no other foundation that can be laid than the foundation of Christ. Christ is the chief cornerstone (Matt. 21:42).

Preachers are building on the foundation of Christ. They may use different materials, but that is the foundation on which they must build. Paul illustrates the building materials with six physical materials which can be used to build. Some materials are obviously durable: gold, silver and precious stones

(Robertson 97). Some materials are perishable: wood, hay and straw (97).

Paul's sentence continues that it will be clear what kind of material a preacher has used. The point in time when it will become clear is in "the day." Many writers believe this to be a reference to the judgment day (Coffman, McGarvey, Robertson). Others suggest that it may be a day of persecution that was approaching the Corinthian church (Lipscomb, Winters). Winters writes, "The context strongly favors the testings which come in this life—a testing of the fire of time and temptation" (43). Though the language may be vague to modern readers, there is no doubt that the original readers knew of what Paul spoke. Today, this verse still applies in that it will be revealed whether a preacher has used good materials when building on the foundation of Christ. On the judgment day all will be revealed, but even before the judgment day, the fruits of preachers are evident. If a false teacher appears, it is very likely that at some point he was under the influence of another false teacher. The same goes for sound Gospel preachers. More than likely, they were influenced by other sound teachers. This is why the preacher must be aware of his influence, as it may extend well beyond his location and time. Preachers need to use the best material, the words of Christ and God Himself, to build on the foundation that Christ established for the church.

Paul concludes this thought by painting a picture of reward or condemnation. All that is built will be tested by fire (1 Cor. 3:13, 15). The goal is that after the fire has past, the work a preacher has done will remain. If it burns up, he has not built properly with the right material. If the structure stands, the builder or preacher will be rewarded. The reward here is a reference to wages (Vine 533). It is not a special reward or bonus, but what the worker deserves or needs. That is always what Christ has promised, the deserved needs of an individual.

On the contrary, some of the work done by preachers will be burned up. The preacher will suffer a loss when this work is burned, but the loss is not his own soul. Each individual is responsible for his relationship with Christ. One cannot be saved or lost based on the action of another. The only actions of

another individual who affected our salvation were the actions of Christ when He established the Gospel in His death, burial and resurrection.

Yet, a preacher of the Gospel does feel loss when one he teaches turns back to the world. There is heartache over a lost soul, just as there is rejoicing over a saved one. Paul compared preachers to farmers earlier. Christ also uses the image of a farmer, or a sower, to describe the teaching of the Gospel. The sower Christ speaks of has a 25% success rate (Luke 8:4-18). So, unfortunately, some who are taught and have obeyed the Gospel will fall away.

Paul's inspired view of the preacher is that he is a lowly servant who works for God, a farmer cultivating a crop in God's field with the Gospel and a builder, teaching those in and out of the church by building on the foundation Christ has already laid. This is how we must view preachers today. They are not to be administrators. They are not to be divisive leaders. They are to be constantly pointing their own lives and others' to Christ.

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Biographical Sketch

Jack Gilchrist has been blessed to receive his education from Freed Hardeman University (B.A. in History '02) and the West Virginia School of Preaching ('05). He has been blessed to work with the Massillon church and Christ and Hermitage Church of Christ. Most of all he has been blessed with a beautiful wife, former Katie Grear, and an energetic son, Andrew.

Jesus Christ and Him Crucified

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Charles C. Pugh III

In the historic Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at the Divinity School of Yale University in 1931, George A. Buttrick said, “Apostolic Preaching had but one word—Christ. Apostolic preaching linked to that Word one overmastering objective: ‘Christ *crucified*’” (195).

Lest one conclude that Buttrick was guilty of oversimplification, may we give careful attention to the authoritative source of his observation—i.e. the following from Paul the apostle of Christ:

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:1-5, ESV)

“*Christ and the cross*—this was all he knew...” (Findlay 775). What did Paul mean? What did he not mean? My basic affirmation is that there is the sense in which, as one understands the meaning of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” he comes to understand the basic meaning of human life. Jesus Christ and Him crucified is ‘the clue’ to the meaning of human life. The following poignant statement from the Alexander Robertson lectures given at Glasgow University (1988) sums it up: “... [T] his biblical interpretation of the human story, with its center in the double event of Jesus’ death and resurrection, is our clue...” (Newbigin qtd. in Edgar and Oliphint 530).

Misconception of the Meaning

First, *Paul did not mean that he was unschooled*. In fact, Paul was schooled (i.e. educated) to a very high degree. A. T. Robertson says Paul “gained a thoroughly trained mind. He was all in all the most gifted man of his time [excluding, of course, Jesus of Nazareth].... [H]is brilliant intellect had received magnificent training...” (*Epochs* 19). Former renowned atheistic philosopher Antony Flew, who renounced atheism and embraced theism in 2005, called Paul “a first-class intellectual” who “had a brilliant philosophical mind and could speak and write in all the relevant languages” (185-86). One of the apostle’s contemporaries, before whom Paul defended the case for Christianity, also believed that Paul was educated to a high level. On one occasion, the Roman governor Festus said, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind” (Acts 26:24, ESV). *Learning* in this verse is from a word that means “information acquired in school or from the study of writing, learning, education, elementary knowledge and higher education” (Rogers and Rogers 304-05). Whether one is formally educated or not does not determine if he knows Jesus Christ and Him crucified. In Paul’s case, he was “determined not know anything...except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2), and he (Paul) was formally educated to a very high level. However, two other apostles, Peter and John, preached the same message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified (cf. Acts 3:12-21; 4:10-12) even though they were uneducated and untrained men (Acts 4:13). Therefore, to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified does not mean that one must reject formal education (even to the highest levels). Likewise, it does not mean one must be schooled to such a level in order to know Christ and Him crucified.

Secondly, knowing Christ and Him crucified *does not necessarily mean one is unskilled as a communicator or that he gives no attention to such skill in public speaking*. Some misunderstand what Paul meant when he stated that he did not come to Corinth “with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming...the testimony of God” (1 Cor. 2:16, ASV), and that his preaching consisted not of “persuasive words of wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:4, ASV). *Excellency* (*huperoche*) means

“prominence, superiority” (Rogers and Rogers 350). Robertson says it means “rising above” (*Word Pictures* 4:82) and notes its only other New Testament occurrence is in 1 Timothy 2:2 where it describes civil rulers who are “in authority” (KJV); “in high place” (ASV). In the context of Paul’s usage in this description of his emphasis in preaching, it refers to “*being pre-eminent in reputation*” in speech (rhetorical ability) and/or (human) wisdom (Arndt and Gingrich 849). In other words, Paul’s emphasis was not rhetorical display (i.e. oratorical art) or “wordy cleverness” (Rogers and Rogers 350), but his emphasis was Christ and Him crucified. “...Paul is stating that his preaching does not derive its power to convince from the rhetorical art of human wisdom” (Bultmann 9).

It is a mistake to conclude that this means Paul was unconcerned with *how* he (or other preachers of the Gospel) delivered the message. Furthermore, it is wrong to conclude that he was unconcerned with *how* he used words to persuade (convince) those who heard the Gospel. He wrote, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col. 4:6). Although he reminded the Corinthians that his speech and preaching were not in “persuasive words of wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:4), please note how Dr. Luke summarizes Paul’s preaching at Corinth: “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and *persuaded* Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4, emp. added). *Persuaded* (from Gk. *peitho*) here is derived from the same root as *persuasive* (ASV) and *enticing* (KJV) in 1 Corinthians 2:4. Hodge is correct: “Paul does not mean to say merely that he did not declare the testimony of God in a rhetorical or philosophical manner; but that what he declared was not the wisdom of men, but the revelation of God” (30).

Neither is it the case that Paul was rejecting all philosophy. All philosophy is not in conflict with Christianity (Christ and Him crucified). What is in conflict with what Paul affirms here is philosophy that is not based on the sufficient revelation of God in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:21-25). It is false philosophy that conflicts with Christianity. Philosophy is simply a worldview-how one views reality. It is the effort to integrate (connect, fit

together) all available truth as one seeks to know what life is all about, what is of ultimate value and what isn't. Warren explains:

The Bible, not the unaided intellectual powers of men, is the source of truth in religion. Clearly, some philosophy is in conflict with Christianity. Paul emphasizes this! But is everything that has to do with philosophic endeavor in such conflict? It seems clear that such is not the case. (*Philosophy* 15)

Neither was Paul rejecting all rhetorical skill or persuasion. Robertson wrote, "... [S]urely the preacher desires to be persuasive [cf. Acts 18:4].... [However] Corinth put a premium on the veneer of false rhetoric and thin thinking" (*Word Pictures* 4:83). Such is the rhetoric or persuasive skill Paul rejected. To these very Corinthians he also wrote, "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men..." (2 Cor. 5:11). Findlay insightfully observes:

[Paul]...disclaims all skill in...the spurious art of persuading without instructing, held nevertheless in high repute in [Corinth.... The Apostle's purpose in discarding the orator's and the sophist's arts was this: "that your faith might not rest in wisdom of men, but in (the) power of God."... Paul was God's mouthpiece in declaring the Gospel.... Had he persuaded the [Corinthians] by clever reasonings and grounded Christianity upon their Greek philosophy, his work would have perished with the wisdom of the age... (776-77)

Paul stressed "the fact that he strives to convince men by argument...for the sake of the gospel that he proclaimed" (Becker 590).

Third, it is the case that knowing Christ and Him crucified *does not mean that one is unsound in argumentation*. Soundness in argumentation means reasoning from valid arguments with true premises. It is properly using logic. The message of Christ and Him crucified does not deny the proper conjunction of reason

and revelation (logic and Scripture).

Philosophy which holds that human reason, unaided by divine revelation, is the adequate and only guide to religious truth is clearly in conflict with Christianity. (The Bible is the complete, authoritative guide to all truth in religion. 2 Tim. 3:16-17.) The rationalist (in religion) holds that the intellectual ability of man himself is able to arrive at all conclusions and to solve all problems which may relate to human existence. This view the Bible emphatically denies (1 Cor. 1:18-25; Jer. 10:23; Prov. 16:25).

On the other hand, the view that reason should be excluded and that religion is totally a matter of faith (which is exclusive of reason and/or logic) is also in conflict with Christianity. Such a view entails the position that the existence of God cannot be proved and denies all contact between religious faith and reason. Such a view is clearly in conflict with Christianity. Those who hold that religious faith should be entirely divorced from reason could not consistently give any reasons *why* they are right. So far as they reject reason or logic, they renounce any claim of truth which is entitled to the respect of anyone else. If they happen to have any truth, it is an entirely private truth for which they can make no case. In true Christianity, faith and reason are not divorced but are always related in proper order. This is made clear in such biblical statements as: (1) “Be ready always to give an answer [defense] to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15); (2) “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1); (3) “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

It is clear that the Bible recognizes that the existence of God can be proved from the “things that are seen” (Rom. 1:18-20; Ps. 19:1). The apostles presented evidence that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and then—and not until then—did they expect people to

believe that He was (Acts 2:14-41). Christianity is *not divorced* from logic and/or reason. (Warren, *Philosophy* 16)

Paul did not reject the need to be rational when he affirmed “Christ and Him crucified.” In fact, Paul defended his commitment to Christ and Him crucified as that which is the foundation for the only worldview that is rational. He declared to Festus that the words of the Gospel of Christ are “words of truth and reason” (Acts 26:25, NKJ); “true and rational words” (ESV); “truth and rationality” (NASV). The claim by Paul is that he was simply “being rational...intellectually sound” (Luck 1097).

When Paul went to Corinth to preach Christ and Him crucified, “he reasoned” (Acts 18:4) just as he had done in Athens (Acts 17:17), and just as he did when he preached to Felix (Acts 24:25).

...Primitive evangelism was by no means mere proclamation and exhortation; it included able intellectual argument, skilful study of the scriptures, careful, closely reasoned teaching and patient argument.... If it had had an inadequate intellectual basis it would not have lasted long.... They looked for faith which was self-commitment *on evidence*, not a leap into the dark. They were tied to history by the very fact of the incarnation and they did not seek to escape from it. The gospel does indeed challenge men to decision, but not an emotional or ill-considered commitment. Mediated to us as it is through human beings, it always engages every aspect of our humanity. (Green 160-61)

Perception of the Meaning

What *did* Paul mean when he said, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 1:2)? McGarvey and Pendleton answer, “He does not mean to say that every sermon was a description of the crucifixion of our Lord, but that *all his teaching and preaching related to the atonement* wrought by Christ *on the cross*...the

foundation of the Christian system” (58-59, emp. added). It is Christ (the person) and the cross (His work) that “constitute the sum of the gospel” (Hodge 30). Alford explains, **For I did not resolve to know anything**...meaning, *‘the only thing that I made it definitely my business to know, was’* [nothing] **among you except Jesus Christ** (His person) **and Him** (as) **crucified** (His office) (483).

Christ and the cross, understood biblically, provide the summation of Christianity as revealed in the Holy Scriptures (John 5:39; 1 Cor. 1:18, 21-24; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; Rev. 19:10, et al.). John Stott attested to this when he wrote:

[Paul defined] his gospel as ‘the message of the cross,’ his ministry as ‘we preach Christ crucified,’ baptism as initiation ‘into his death’ and the Lord’s Supper as a proclamation of the Lord’s death. He boldly declared that, though the cross seemed either foolishness or a ‘stumbling block’ to the self-confident, it was in fact the very essence of God’s wisdom and power. So convinced was he of this that he had...told the Corinthians, to renounce worldly wisdom and instead to know nothing among them ‘except Jesus Christ and him crucified’ (1 Cor. 2:1-2). When later in the same letter he wished to remind them of his gospel...which had become the foundation on which they were standing and the good news by which they were saved, which was ‘of first importance’ (he said) was ‘that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, the he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and the he appeared...’ (1 Cor. 15:1-5)... No wonder Paul boasted in nothing except the cross (Gal. 6:14). (35-36)

The person of Jesus Christ is the very essence—the center—of the true Christian worldview. He is the Jesus of (1) the virgin birth [Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-37; Matt. 22:41-45], (2) the virtuous life [John 10:21; Luke 4:22], (3) the vicarious dying [2 Cor. 5:14-15, 21; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; cf. Isa. 53:1ff], and (4) the

victorious resurrection [Rom. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:19-23]. What a contrast there is between Christianity and the religion of Islam on this most foundational principle of the true worldview!

The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam... says, "The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger..." (Surah 5:75). Furthermore, it claims that those who said Christ is God are unbelievers (5:17). There are more than 6,000 verses in the Qur'an, and Jesus is named in only 28 of these verses! How unlike the Bible, in which the deity of Jesus Christ is virtually on every page of the New Testament (Col. 1:15-19). (Pugh *Doctrine* 30)

"In the dome of the Cathedral at Milan, there is a circle of carved figures representing the prophets, each of which with hand uplifted points to the figure representing the person of Jesus in the center of the dome" (Tarbell 14). He is central to all of the Bible and to all of life! Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24)—Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

Michael Green provides the following summary of this powerful, undergirding Christocentric nature of apostolic proclamation:

We find them proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus, of the Lordship of Jesus, of the cross of Jesus, of the resurrection of Jesus or simply of Jesus himself.... For however expressed...the early preachers of the good news had one subject.... Jesus. This was their supreme concern....

The deity of Jesus is fundamental; he is the Truth, the Light of the world, the Word of God who is himself God. He is also attested in the witness as the Saviour of the world, the Lamb of God who takes away the world's sin, and the one who is filled with God's Spirit and imparts the same to believers. This testimony to Jesus, his incarnation, his real death on the cross, his real resurrection from the tomb is all eye-witness stuff. (51, 75

-76)

As Buttrick said: “Apostolic preaching had but one word—Christ” (195). In an apologetics book being published at the very time I am writing this manuscript, Rolland Pack, Bible and Philosophy professor at Freed-Hardeman University, sums up the end of this message:

Jesus is our exemplar. He is the end of Paul’s message in Acts 17:30-31, the answer to our problem of sin (Romans 3:21-26), the finisher for the faith, and the final example listed in the line of faithful heroes (Hebrews 11:1-12:2). Jesus is the ultimate example of faith; and He is waiting at the finish of our own journey, our race towards the destination God wants for us. (59-60)

It is Christ! But it is ***Christ crucified!*** The threefold cord of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, dipped in the crimson blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), is the “pivot point” of the Christian faith. “‘Jesus Christ and Him crucified’ remains the very heart and soul of the gospel message” (MacArthur 243). As the cord that binds all the constituent elements of the Christian faith together, there is the sense in which it is threaded from the beginning of the revelation of the scheme of redemption in Genesis to the revelation of redemption’s completion reported in the final book of the Bible. It is “the everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6, NKJ); the “eternal good tidings” (ASV); “an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on [E]arth, to every nation and tribe and language and people” (Rev. 14:6, ESV).

Foundation of Revelation

The wisdom of God has declared: “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint [are unrestrained, NASV]; But happy is he who keeps the law” (Prov. 29:18). A New Testament parallel to one of the principles implied in this Proverb’s affirmation is the statement of Paul in the context of his discussion concerning the message of Christ and Him

crucified—the essence of the Christian revelation. Paul wrote, “For since in the wisdom of God, the world through [its] wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). The “message preached” is the message (word) of the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:18) that came not by “human wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:4), but by divine revelation. ***The foundation of divine revelation is the crucial key to discovering the clue to the meaning of human life.*** The way of man is not discovered in (by) man himself (Jer. 10:23). To man, there is a way that “seems right” but the end of man’s way is death, not life (cf. Prov. 14:12; 16:25). In the two worldviews that Paul contrasts with the Christian worldview in 1 Corinthians 1-2 (i.e. Judaism and Greek Roman philosophy) there is a kind of summation of the inadequacy of all of man’s ways (philosophies, religions) to provide the ultimate answer or solution to the major human question or problem.

The following description is a good summation of how the philosophy and political action so influential in the culture of the first century world could not (cannot) solve the basic human problem. On the other hand, Christ and Him crucified did (and does) provide the answer through the foundation of divine revelation.

Plato and the philosophers who came after him thought that our biggest problem is ignorance and that if, through education, we developed the powers of human reason and conditioned people properly, our main personal problems would be solved. They also assumed that the biggest problem with society is lack of good government and that if society were governed well, our main social problems would be solved. Many people still think this way. Despite the Bible’s message and the lessons of history, people still hope for philosopher-kings to save the day.

The Bible teaches that our problem is much more serious than humanistic philosophers and politicians realize, so the solution must be something unlike anything human wisdom or power can offer. Our basic problem is

sin, alienation from God. No amount of reasoning and education can bring us back to God. No political system can make a wicked society into a wonderful place to live. Sin infects our individual character and our society so badly that nothing short of divine intervention can save individuals and change the world. ***We need not only human education but divine revelation.*** We need not only human politics but the reign of God.

God's wisdom comes to us in a revelation that human wisdom would consider foolish. God's power comes to us in an action that human politics would see as weakness. God's wisdom and power come to us in Jesus Christ: born in poverty, raised without any great school or educator, executed as a criminal. The cross of Christ—his suffering, death, and resurrection—is not the sort of thing humanistic educators and politicians count on to change people or to improve society. And yet Christ has done more to save individuals and change societies for the better than all philosophers and politicians combined.

In 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul wrote to Christians surrounded by a culture that adored education and power. Paul said that Christ had sent him “to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1:17-18)....

Does this mean Christianity is totally anti-education and anti-government? Not at all. But it does mean that education and government [do not] matter as much as Jesus Christ and that they often do more harm than good apart from Christ. Education can impart real, transforming wisdom only if it's Christ-centered. Government can rule well only if it honors the higher government of the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Feddes 23-25, emp. added)

What the Cross Reveals

Thus, Divine revelation provides the foundation of the Christian faith. The everlasting existence and infinite nature of God (including His infinite goodness) are implied in “the things that are made” (Rom. 1:20; cf. Ps. 19:1ff; Acts 14:17, et al.). The (complete) revelation of the Divine is given through the Holy Scriptures with the fullest revelation in the Christological (doctrine of Christ) and soteriological (doctrine of salvation) found therein (2 Tim. 3:14-17; John 5:39; Rev. 19:10; cf. Pugh 95). These “defenses [i.e. Christological and soteriological] provide the ultimate case for the Christian worldview, resting in the person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord” (Pugh, “Foreword” 9-10). The biblical doctrines of Christology and Soteriology are summed up in Paul’s description of the Gospel message of “Christ and Him crucified,” or simply “the cross” (1 Cor. 1:17-18). And, in the cross is revealed an understanding of five essentials to discovering the meaning of human life.

- ♦ ***The Plight of Humanity.*** Christ and Him crucified (the cross) reveals the insufficiency of human knowledge, human goodness, and human effort. Bales observed that man is in “desperate need of what the cross teaches about God and what it teaches about man (79). He then elaborated on the latter:

The cross shows that we are not sufficient in knowledge, for the way of redemption through the cross is not the product of man’s knowledge of the divine revelation. Man would like to think that he can merit the blessings of God, but the cross shows man that he is not good enough of himself. No man has done all God required and has done it all of the time. If man is to be saved it will not be through self-sufficiency, but through the renunciation of self-righteousness and the acceptance of God’s mercy in the gift of His Son. (80)

Paul implied the insufficiency of human effort (apart from

divine intervention through revelation for knowledge and divine strength for power) when he reminded the Corinthians that he was “with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3). Hodge explains,

The weakness of which he here speaks was not bodily weakness.... [T]he whole context shows he refers to his state of mind. It was not in the consciousness of strength, self-confident and self-relying, that he appeared among them, but as oppressed with a sense of his weakness and insufficiency. He had a work to do which he felt to be entirely above his powers. (31)

Findlay says Paul’s language “expresses... his conscious want of resources for the task before him” (776). In his book on sermons on First Corinthians published in 1947, George De Hoff commenting on Paul’s “weakness,” “fear,” and much “trembling” wrote,

...Every faithful preacher must tremble at the fearful responsibility placed upon him. I used to hear it said of some [preachers] that they were never afraid, that their knees never shook when they got up to preach. I would not give the snap of my finger to hear such a preacher. Any man who knows the truth, who loves the church, and is anxious to save men and women must tremble at the responsibility placed upon him.

...Many times in different parts of the country I have looked out on a great audience of hundreds of people and, knowing that I would never see many of them again until the judgment day, I trembled. I felt my own unworthiness to preach to them. They had come for the bread of life and it was my responsibility to make them fall in love with Christ and obey His commandments. (29)

Jesus said, "... [W]ithout Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Paul, in another letter to the Corinthians, wrote: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5). "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (Gal. 6:14). The cross of Christ has an infinite way of stripping the veneer of ultimate trust in human effort, knowledge, power, strength, righteousness and goodness, and manifesting that it is, "but by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). We need to receive the revelation of Christ and Him crucified as did the soldier and "the whole crowd who came together to see that sight [*spectacle* from Gk. *theorian*], seeing what had been done, [they] beat their breasts" (Luke 23:47-48). "See [the crowd] slowly wending their way back to the city from this tragedy of the ages which they had witnessed in awe" (Robertson, *Word Pictures* 2:288). The cross at Golgotha manifests (1) the glory of God, (2) the greatness of Christ, and (3) the guilt of man (cf. Luke 18:13). It shines the light on divine power, but it also evinces the human plight.

At the conclusion of an article published in 1776 in *The Gospel Magazine*, which was "intended to show that as England could never pay her national debt, so man could never liquidate his sin account" (Bailey 119), the author published the following:

Nothing in my hand I bring: Simply to Thy cross I
cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless, look to
Thee for grace;
Vile, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I
die. (Toplady)

- ◆ ***The Price of Sin.*** "Christ and Him crucified" also reveals the awesome price that had to be paid to recover man from the plight of sin. Cottrell succinctly states, "*The fact is that philosophies and religions outside the sphere of God's revelation have never had a true concept of sin in the first*

place” (159, emp. added). The reason? Humanity cannot truly understand sin without special revelation (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6-16). Bales identified the crucial questions concerning sin and how the cross is the revelation that provides the answers:

How does God view sin? Is sin a serious matter? Is forgiveness easy and cheap? The cross reveals that it was not easy to forgive sin. Although it is beyond our power to comprehend, the cross is related to the justice of God. In order for God to be just and to justify the sinner, Christ had to die. God’s way of making men righteous is through Jesus Christ and His death. The law showed the need for mercy, and it prophesied of the atoning death of Christ.... [T]he cross reveals the sinfulness of sin. Sin stands between man and God. It alienates man from God and the blessings God wants to bestow on man. Sin brings a fate worse than death itself; otherwise, why did Christ die to save us from sin? ... No one can survey sin in the light of the cross and take a light view of sin. (79)

More than four decades ago I read for the first time a book of sermons that, to this day, remains, in my judgment, the best in sermon literature that I have read. *McGarvey’s Sermons*, delivered in the Summer of 1893 in Louisville, KY, and published in December of the same year, contains numerous extremely insightful statements among which is the following concerning sin:

I wonder if any of us has ever realized what it is to commit sin. I believe that I would esteem above every other gift that could be bestowed upon me as a preacher, the power to adequately conceive what sin is, and to adequately set it before the people. A number of times in my ministrations, I have prepared sermons designed

to set forth the enormity of sin; but I have every time felt that I made a failure. I found, I thought, two causes of the failure: first, a want of realization in my own soul of the enormity of it; and second, inability to gather up such words and such figures of speech, as would, with anything like adequacy, set it forth before my hearers. The pleasures of sin have blinded our eyes to its enormity. So I have come to the conclusion, after a great deal of reflection, and a great deal of mental effort, that about the only correct [gauge] we have with which to measure the enormity or heinousness of sin, is the punishment that God has decreed against it. God is infinite in all His attributes; infinite in mercy, in love, in compassion; and when we find the punishment that such a God as that was constrained, by the justice that also characterizes him, to enact against sin, I think we shall be better able to form an idea of its enormity than we can from any other view of the matter. (16-17)

It is when Christ went to the place called *Golgotha*—the place of a skull—“the appellation of the most momentous and awful spot upon the whole earth... enriched only by the blood of criminals, and covered with the bones of executed rebels.... An accursed spot... where naked justice alone sits enthroned, with scales and sword, and from which every passer-by turns with abhorrence” (Krummacher 327)—*there* we see the awesome revelation of the price of sin! And Jesus paid it all, and the cross reveals that infinite price that was paid so that humanity might be set free from the guilt, bondage, and eternal consequences of sin (Acts 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 5:25; 1 Peter 2:24).

Christ went to that cruel hill called Golgotha,
soaked with the blood of criminals and scattered

with the bones of miscreants, murderers, and the off-scouring of the human race. There they laid Him on the Cross. They took spikes and with hammers began to pound them through His flesh. Dear one, those blows ringing down through the corridors of the centuries have awakened countless souls that were asleep in their sins to the deadly peril of their condition. Those blows have smashed and broken the hard hearts of many sinners and caused them to yield themselves to the Savior.

That Cross was set up in place, and then 200,000 billion trillion suns focused, as it were, the wrath of God into the very core and soul of the God-man there upon that Cross, and Christ suffered in body and soul an infinite wrath, an infinite penalty. (10-11)

Isaiah foretold the price paid by God's righteous servant—the Messiah, the Christ—eight centuries before Jesus paid that debt: “He shall see the labor of His soul and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many. For He shall bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11). “The labor of His soul” (NKJ) is literally “from the suffering of his soul” (Chisholm 196). This suffering of His soul is “trouble experienced not only in His body, but into the inmost recesses of His soul” (Delitzsch 336). In conjunction with His physical suffering, here is the ultimate representation of that which Christ suffered. Here is the answer to what sin deserves. Through what it cost to get man out of sin, and the punishment awaiting those who live and die in it, one can know (by revelation) what sin deserves (cf. Warren and Flew 169).

- ◆ ***The Passion of God.*** “The cross is the revelation of God's love.... The cross shatters the illusion that God does not care” (Bales 80-81). The preaching of the cross impacts the honest heart because it is the message of infinite compassion.

It says, “Someone cares!” and “That Someone is Deity!” The Psalmist expressed the feeling of many when he declared, “... [T]here is no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul” (Ps. 142:4). The cross shouts, “**God cares!**”

The ardent love of Christ for each of us is vouchsafed and verified in: (1) His substitutionary death, (2) His glorious resurrection, and (3) His continual intercession for us. His pierced hands have loosened the cords that once bound my soul to the Earth. Because His love is fervent, my hope is bright. Who (or what) shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing, unless we allow such. And He has provided *everything* necessary to enable us to have the strength to not allow it to happen. Oh, the love of Christ that passes all human comprehension (cf. Eph. 3:16-19)! May the image of His bleeding self be imprinted on the tables of our hearts! (Pugh, *Joy* 107)

- ♦ ***The Power of God.*** Further, the cross reveals the power of God unto salvation as being the Gospel of Christ (cf. Rom. 1:16-17). The message is one of weakness and foolishness to those who reject the divine revelation, but to those who yield their volition to its divine origin and authority—to the salvation of their souls—it is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18, 24). “...Christianity...proclaimed that the wisdom of God was exhibited in the cross of Jesus” (Green 43). Furthermore, it claims the cross is the revelation of divine power that unlocks the door to understanding the solution to the greatest human problem and question. “But what possible claim had the execution of a criminal on a horrid Roman cross to exhibit the rationale of the universe? To the Roman such a death was a demonstration of servility, of weakness, of inferiority and guilt” (44).

How is the cross the revelation of the power of God? The

cross reveals the power of God through Christ and Him crucified to *bear our sins* (1 Peter 2:24). The cross reveals the power of God through Christ and Him crucified to *bind our broken hearts* (Luke 4:18). The cross reveals the power of God through Christ and Him crucified to *bring us hope in death*. Anchoring the hope of the great resurrection discourse penned by Paul near the end of First Corinthians is that which Paul delivered “*as of first importance*” (1 Cor. 15:3; NASV, NIV, ESV, emp. added). “It is the Cross that gives meaning to the resurrection life. Only insofar as we are united with Him in the likeness of His death, can we be certain of being raised with Him in the likeness of His resurrection (cf. Romans 6:5)” (MacArthur 242-43).

The cross of Christ retains an unchanging persistent power that transcends time. Culture, education, and science do not possess this power. “Even if science, culture and secular education were able to usher in a good society in terms of well clothed, well-housed and well fed people, we would still be faced by deep problems of the human spirit” (Bales 83). Science and technology can do some good things, but they cannot take away the sin and guilt that stains the soul of man, or bind up a broken heart, soul, and life. Science cannot take the gloom out of the grave or the pain out of parting. Science cannot give a hope that is steadfast and sure, but Christ crucified can! (cf. Lee 141-42).

- ◆ ***The Purpose of Suffering.*** A fifth essential revealed in the cross that enables one to see the meaning of life concerns suffering. Some of the most crucial questions concerning the meaning of life and man’s relationship to God relate to the issue of human suffering.

- * How can God be both good and just while allowing an innocent or righteous person to suffer?

- * Can one know, in view of intense suffering, that there are good reasons for what happens in the world?

- * Is all suffering the consequence of sin?
- * What is God's solution to the "problem" of suffering?

These and other questions concerning human suffering are addressed at least implicitly in the special revelation of God, the Sacred Scriptures, and in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Supreme and final revelation of God to humans. Biblical revelation makes it clear that suffering in the world (just as the world itself) is teleological. This means that suffering has purpose or design. It may be the case that man may not know the specific reasons why he is suffering in a particular case. However, for the world to be the ideal environment in which man is offered the challenge of choosing to become and live as a son (daughter) of God and a brother (sister) to one's fellow humans, it must be an environment that allows for the occurrence of adversity. Thomas B. Warren addresses these great issues in his book, *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?* Warren says,

... [I]t is in harmony with the infinity of God that man should have a probationary life in a world in which it is possible for him to experience pain and suffering, that pain and suffering are things for which we in this life should thank God, that pain and suffering are things without which (during earthly life) the lives of men would be worse than they are, that *pain and suffering* are things which *mark our ultimate relationship with the crucified Son of God.* (82, emp. added)

We (humans) must not know all the specific details of our lives, but we must trust God, because of what we learn in His creation and in His Word. It is not that we cannot know anything. ***God does not call us to a blind trust.*** We can (and must) know that (1) God is and (2) He can be trusted. From evidence such as that manifested in God's questions to Job, when he was suffering greatly (cf. Job 38-41), man can know

that there is good reason for what happens in the world. If one knows God, it must be such that he also knows this is the case. However, this does not mean a man can know the details of his own situation. We can (and should) trust God when we cannot see “why” something has happened. We trust God because of “the very evidence of purpose on the face of the universe” (Hailey 347).

However, beyond the teleological nature evident in the world (Rom. 1:20), divine revelation has given a “supreme instance” of purposeful suffering (Christ and Him crucified) by which one is able to interpret properly all lesser events of suffering. The cross reveals purpose in suffering by implying that if there is purpose in the most intense, horrible, horrific, and agonizing instance of suffering (i.e. the cross of Christ), then it is possible for all lesser instances to be purposeful and result in something good, though one may not know the details yet (Rom. 8:28). Paul argued this very implication as revealed in the cross of Christ when he affirmed and asked: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). The cross reveals purpose in all suffering. No matter what happens to me in the world, by the cross (Life’s Greatest Plus Sign) I am given the assurance that through it (the Supreme Instance of Suffering) and the Empty Tomb (the Supreme Victory) I can overcome any suffering by which I am challenged in this life (Rom. 8:31-39).

... [T]he crucifixion [becomes] a clue. “If God were Good,” says the world, “the sin of the earth would break His heart!” to which the preacher answers, pointing to Calvary, “See His breaking heart!” “If this kind of a universe with its griefs and graves is somehow necessary for our growth, then God, if He were good, would at least share its pains with us,” says the world; to which the preacher answers, pointing to that strange Man on the Cross, “See God sharing our pains!” “If God

is God,” the world says, “then in compassion He will bear our sins as only God can”; to which the preacher makes answer: “Behold Him bearing our Sins! Behold in Calvary a focus in time and space of that travail which God bears from the foundation of the world”.... There in the Cross is the clue which, followed, leads us to the assurance that the heart of life, however mysterious, is yet kind. (Buttrick 206-07)

Conclusion

“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). It is the clue to the meaning of human life. It is the very essence of the true Christian worldview. It is the person (Christ) and His work (the cross) that constitute a summation of the Gospel. It is the summation of Christianity as revealed in the Bible. It is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. It is the very heart and soul of the Gospel. It is the crimson cord that binds all the constituent elements of the Christian faith together. It is the ‘pivot point’ of Christianity. It—the cross—is the foundation of revelation. It reveals the plight of man. It reveals the price of sin. It reveals the passion of God. It reveals the power of God. It reveals purpose in suffering. With Christ and Him crucified the “burden of guilt can be lifted, the futility of life replaced by meaning and purpose” through the message of the cross (Bales 84).

THE CROSS OF CHRIST is the greatest of all paradoxes. It was the most tragic event in the history of the world, yet the most wonderful thing that ever happened. It was the saddest spectacle man ever beheld, yet out of it came the greatest joy. The cross was Satan’s greatest victory and Christ’s most humiliating defeat, yet it was the most stunning defeat Satan ever suffered and the most glorious victory Christ ever won. CHRIST WON BY LOSING. HE CONQUERED BY SURRENDERING.

The cross was the greatest exhibition of divine justice in condemning sin, yet the most wonderful demonstration

of divine mercy in pardoning sin. It was God's greatest manifestation of hatred for sin, yet his supreme proof of love for the sinner. The cross was the means by which God's justice condemned sin, and his mercy forgave it.

The cross was the darkest hour in history, yet it was the time of greatest light. Though the sun refused to shine and God hid his face from Christ, the cross was the means by which Christ really became the "light of the world." In the cross we see Christ's love for man. There we see human vengeance as they cry for his blood, yet we see divine forgiveness as Jesus prays, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

The cross portrays man's sinfulness and God's holiness; human weakness and divine strength. It demonstrates man's inability to save himself, and God's ability and power to do this for him. The cross, from the human standpoint, is foolishness, yet it is a revelation of the highest wisdom of God. (Banister qtd. in McGuire 51-52)

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Biographical Sketch

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Loose Litigation

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

Brad Poe

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Introducing the Text

Paul planted churches along arteries of commercial traffic in the Mediterranean world that could broadcast the Gospel in those communities. Healthy congregational life in these churches depended upon internal relationships. The letters of the New Testament have a record for how Paul and the others taught and enforced traditional ethical norms in these churches. No group needed the enforcement more than Corinth.

The Church in Corinth

Acts contains a narrative of Paul's original mission at Corinth (Acts 18:1-18) around A.D. 50 (Grosheide 13). Paul wrote at least four letters to the church following the founding (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9; 2 Cor. 2:3f), two of which we have as Scripture. Aside from these writings, Paul visited them personally (1 Cor. 16:7; 2 Cor. 1:15-16; 12:14; 13:1), sent members of his missionary team (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6-7; 8:16-18) and received members from Corinth while working elsewhere in the field (1 Cor. 1:11; 16:17). Whether or not this amount of interaction between Paul and Corinth was typical of his interaction with churches is unknowable, but in the case of Corinth the volume of correspondence does help readers appreciate the group.

First Corinthians

First Corinthians was written during Paul's third major journey with Antioch (Syria) as his home-base; written from Ephesus; and written in the spring shortly before Pentecost likely

in A.D. 53 or 54 (16:8). The letter seems to be a response to two prompts: first, information from two sources (1:11; 16:17) with possibly others (11:18); and second, an actual letter from the Corinthians (7:1) perhaps delivered by a courier in the roster at 16:17. Structurally, the epistle is halved at 6:20/7:1: the prompt of eyewitness reporting and/or anonymous grapevine chatter directs the first half; and the “things of which the Corinthians wrote” directs the second.

The epistle is a complex of moral, relational and doctrinal topics. Paul begins by correcting disunity (1:10). Paul plants his feet firmly in this patent, easy evidence—no one at Corinth could deny that they are bickering—then extends his discipline to the other issues. Our assigned text is in Paul’s address of the other issues.

Unity of 4:18-6:20

While the chapter division indicates the beginning of a new article at 5:1, the pattern of the epistle argues for a beginning at 4:18 (Terry 3). The discourse of 4:18-6:20 contains teaching on sexual norms for the Christian community. The discourse has the additional advantage of making Paul’s movement into material generated by the lost inquiry-letter less wooden since there is an overlap of subject matter with 7:1-8.

Some students consider the unity of 4:18-6:20 to be curious. Paul censures the church for a case of public immorality (“*porneia*”) by one of its members (5:1-13), then censures the church for loose litigation (6:1-8), then reverts back to the subject of *porneia* (6:9-20), likely in connection with pagan temple prostitution (Witherington 12-14), before extending the *porneia* address in response to “the things of which you wrote” and marriage (7:1-9). The result is a sandwich with the lawsuit teaching nested in *porneia* teachings. What is Paul’s (the Spirit’s) strategy? Does the insertion break up what appears to be a uniform discussion thread [“sexual immorality” (5:1), “go to law” (6:1), “sexual immorality” (6:13; 7:2)] or how does 6:1-8 impact this discussion thread? Why is our assigned text embedded here?

Readers are ignorant about the entire situation which called

forth Paul's intervention by the epistle. We simply do not know all that was happening. Any attempt to figure out the approach taken by the text must accept that limitation and leave exegetical space to account for any situational mystery. We may, at best, conjecture about the composition of 4:18-6:20. Of the views that emerge on the composition, this lecture will cite three.

The first is to interpret 6:1-8 as completely separate from 4:18-5:13 and 6:9-20. This view understands 6:1-8 as an intentional digression (Ciampa and Rosner 130; Hall 131; Harvey 127). The pattern is not unfamiliar to Paul. This view has merits and is possible.

The second is to interpret 6:1-8 as part of the material in 4:18-6:20 in the matter of *porneia*. This view understands the legal case as tangled up with the immorality case (Richardson; Deming). Has the matter of immorality now become a matter of law? While there may be evidence of tone or forms of speech to link the three sections (4:18-5:13; 6:1-8; 6:9-20), other considerations make this view unlikely. Before 6:1-8 Paul maximizes the threat of a publicly immoral brother and the congregational response; after 6:1-8 Paul maximizes the treachery of participating in the cult activity at pagan temples. Does it make sense—in the midst—for Paul to use minimizing language by categorizing any legal case associated with *porneia* as “the smallest matter” (6:2) then characterizing it as “things that pertain to this life” (6:3, 4)? Language used to discuss the legal case does not seem to match language used in the incest case. This discrepancy alone would discount an interpretation that equates the two.

A third view results from interpreting 6:1-8 as part of the material in 5:1-13 in the matter of judgment (Meeks 129). In the case of the sexually immoral brother, Paul is appalled more by the misconduct of the entire group who lack the awareness or ambition to “judge” themselves (5:9-13) than by the misconduct of the individual offender. Paul then moves quite naturally to another example—the lawsuit. As with the immoral brother, the Corinthians lack initiative or a mechanism within their community to police internal matters, keep issues “in house” and resolve conflict between members without airing dirty laundry to

outsiders. This deficit is garbling the Gospel and compromising their influence on unbelievers. This view, then, allows 6:12-20 to serve as a cushion between the first half of the epistle and the second half [“judge those who are inside?” (5:12b), “judge between brethren?” (6:5b), “sexual immorality” (6:13; 7:12)].

This lecture will understand 6:1-8 as contextualized by the third view above. This helps ease any apparent tension in the placement of our text. Paul expects more maturity from them (cf. 3:1-3). By not taking matters into their own hands, either in the matter of public immorality or in the matter of two brothers wrangling over some legal issue, the church demonstrates their immaturity. They should be “grown-up” enough to judge. This deficit is disabling them from being able to function evangelistically. Paul uses this discourse to correct them.

Unwrapping the Text

Paul continues to fix a lack of internal control at Corinth by moving from the *porneia* case to a pending legal case. The Greek text of 6:1-8 has twelve sentences; nine are questions. The questions are leading and tend to answer themselves, not asked expecting an answer but for effect, allowing Paul to hang his argument upon their rhetorical force. This conventional device draws readers into a virtually interactive discourse. From the rhetoric, we should understand that Paul is intensifying an effort to engage them into serious consideration of what they are doing.

“Dare” (NKJB) opens the discourse in the present tense (6:1). Paul writes not to prevent potential misbehavior but to stop ongoing misbehavior. He uses a generic, non-technical term to refer to the matter of contention, legal dispute or suit, between the brethren (BDAG 858-59). “Go to law before” is to be taken in a permissive sense: “are you actually allowing yourselves to be judged?” The present tense may indicate that the case is in progress, having not reached a final decision. “Unrighteous” is probably a reference to the local Roman court rather than judges in the Jewish synagogue.

Both verse 2 and verse 3 employs the formula, “Do you not know” to affirm some kind of cosmic, even celestial, jurisdiction for the Christian community. The structure of both verses reflects

an “a fortiori” (“if it is true for the greater, then it is true for the lesser”) argument, and the leverage is hard: since the range of your legal administration extends to the world, even to angels, is the church not able to enforce justice in “the smallest matters”—a superlative for the small and insignificant (Rienecker & Rogers 401)?

How will saints judge “the world,” a term denoting “the system of human existence in its many aspects” which “appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin” (BDAG 562)? Or “judge angels,” a term identifying “angels who sinned” (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4)? Both verbs are in the future tense. Further revelation on the participation by saints in judgment is lacking. Hebrews 11:7 praises Noah who prepared an ark “by which he condemned the world.” The word translated “condemned” is from the same family-group as the word translated “judge” in verses 2 and 3 of the text. We may understand that, by our obedient faith, we will stand in contrast to the disobedient of the world and the angels who sinned, thereby “judging” them.

To clench this point, Paul uses a conditional clause in verse 4. The sense is, “since you outrank ‘the unrighteous’ in your legal authority—‘the world’ being a lower court—why would you turn to the unrighteous of the world to litigate this ‘matter against another’”? They must see the incongruence between what they are doing and who they are.

The first clause in verse 5 is the first one in the discourse not presented as a question. “Shame” reframes this situation as an honor issue. Paul thereby appeals to an ethical norm in Greco-Roman culture, perhaps the meta-norm, since most “transactions of life...passed through the honor-shame, praise-blame filter” (Sampley 11). “Is it so?” or “Has it come to this?” conveys their deficit, namely, they are so congregationally undeveloped that they do not have “even one wise man...able to judge between his brethren.”

To turn on the incredible situation identified in verse 5, Paul uses a strong adversarial conjunction here (“But”) to introduce the reality of the Corinthian situation. Rather than keeping the “matter against another” behind closed doors, the whole church is shamed by dragging the case publicly “before unbelievers.”

The clause “and that” is emphatic with a demonstrative giving it a climactic force. The KJV punctuates this verse with a period. The NKJB uses an exclamation point. The NASB is literal and punctuates with a question mark as in the original text. However, the NKJB is probably correct in its translation since it renders the rhetorical question with an exclamation mark for emphasis. Paul’s first correction of the situation is to object based on the fact that the church already has the asset that they are looking for elsewhere.

To begin verse 7, Paul uses the conjunction translated “Therefore” to signal an advance in his argument. “Against one another” translates a reflexive pronoun emphasizing corporate unity, which may be construed literally as “you go to law with yourselves.” Herein is the “utter failure,” not as a judicial defeat but as an ethical one: which side will be able to claim victory if they are involved in a legal wrangle *with themselves!* This accusation exposes a blind spot, namely, they are not grasping their corporate unity (cf. 1:10), that they are “on the same side.”

The final two questions which continue verse 7 contain Paul’s second move to correct the situation, the suggestion of a third possibility for resolving the “matter against another.” Instead of resorting to pagan courts; or taking the case to a spiritual brother for mediation; another alternative is to “accept wrong” and “be cheated.” These two verbs are passive. “Why don’t you allow yourself to be injured? Why don’t you allow yourself to be deprived?” This, finally, is Paul’s preference, and the ethical recourse which love should compel them to take.

“No” (NKJB) begins verse 8 and translates another strong adversarial conjunction which might be paraphrased “But instead.” The “you” is emphatic, a force which does not come through in the written text (“But instead of accepting a legal defeat in this smallest matter, **YOU**...”). The word in the active voice translated “wrong” here is the same word in the passive voice translated “wronged” in verse 7; and the active “cheat” here is the same as the passive “be cheated” above. Paul: “You not only are not allowing yourselves to be wronged and cheated in this insignificant matter, you are doing more, you are actually engaged in wronging and cheating others, *even your own*

brother!

The assignment of this lecture is 6:1-8. It is possible to take 6:9-11 as part of this discourse. If that is the case, then: (1) Paul signals a pivot into the next discourse at verse 12, perhaps by reciting a Corinthian slogan; (2) the vice list here (6:9-11) would echo the vice list above (5:10-11) further proving an un-apparent organic connection between 5:1-13 and 6:1-11 in the matter of a Corinthian deficit in intra-congregational judgment; (3) the result would permit 6:12-20 to go with 7:1ff and serve as a cushion or transition into the second half of the letter.

Applying the Text

“Christians should never sue.” This position is problematic. Wringing a ban on all litigation by Christians out of this discourse would be difficult. The American justice system is available for use. Christians can also suffer hurt, get wronged or wounded; under certain circumstances, loss or damage can be compensated. Given the situation, this text would not forbid them from finding redress through legal process.

“Are there times which a Christian should not sue?” Yes, the right thing to do could be to do nothing legally. The ability of a church to function evangelistically and present the Gospel loud and clear to its community trumps many of the claims its members may make to “protect rights.” If a Christian can make a mark on his adversary’s soul by not pursuing a case when he occupies the position of legal advantage and choose, instead, to accept the wrong and let himself be cheated, then shouldn’t he?

“Can a Christian sue another Christian?” He could. The question is, should he? Of course, in the range of disputes possible between brethren, to say that this should never happen is saying too much. Perhaps, of legal necessity to satisfy some red-tape requirement, for example, two brothers must allow the legal system to be involved in a personal or business matter. However, for most cases, if this passage does not criticize a Christians for suing his brother in public courts and recommend that he keep the matter private by allowing a “wise man” to arbitrate a favorable outcome, then of what use is this passage?

While considering “ethics among the redeemed,” it should be

noted that the incest case and the legal case share common ground with the whole moral fabric of First Corinthians. Paul employs a verb in the epistle meaning “to puff up or make proud” six times, both actively (8:1) and passively (4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 13:4). The verb is only found once more in the NT (Col. 2:18). His usage may make it a hermeneutical key to his overall ethical thrust in the letter. That is, an arrogant disposition (“that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. For who makes you differ from another?” [4:6b, 7a]) can explain much of the un-loving behavior reflected in the letter, from the plea at 1:10 through to the instructions on worship disruptions (chapter 14). As a counter, Paul implants love (“other-regard”) as an ethical spine (6:7; 8:1-3; chapter 9; 10:28-33; 11:33; chapter 13).

Love, then, lurks as a meta-theme of the letter over every discourse to the Corinthians. This quiet, ambient purpose may also explain their lack of passion for policing their own church. Maybe Corinth is not properly judging themselves because they are not truly loving themselves.

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Biographical Sketch

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Separation and Divorce

1 Corinthians 7:10-16

J.D. Conley

Once again I am thankful for and humbled by the invitation to appear on this good lectureship program. In my estimation the Victory Lectures is one of the finest lectureships hosted anywhere in our brotherhood. My deepest thanks to all who have worked so hard in making this one a reality. The theme selected is much needed and the book produced will be of immense help in providing 1st Century Solutions to 21st Century Problems. As long as the human race exists there will be problems, but God's enduring Word will always be on hand to solve those problems. May more men and women and boys and girls consult the Divine codex and diligently apply it to their problematic lives. Only then will life here be happier and the life hereafter a glorious reality.

Introduction

It is not necessary to clutter and choke the outset of this lecture with statistics that verify the sad truth that separation and divorce are rampant, and that marriage which has the smiles of heaven upon it, is in steep decline. Numbers, graphs, surveys and studies do not have to be cited in order for the obvious to be seen. Though mountains of documentation could be provided, one even with the most anemic of cognizant abilities is able to recognize that the problem of separation and divorce is an overwhelming and ubiquitous one indeed. It is not only a 21st century problem, but it has been a problem for every century since God created time and the husband and wife relationship. Separation and divorce have laid its putrid hands upon the newlywed, as well as those who have been joined in matrimony beyond the half century mark, and every tenure of marriage in between. The only solution to this gargantuan problem is a sincere and wholesale return to what Christ and His apostles taught on the matter. Then, and only then, will this terrible affliction be remedied.

Consider the terms, “separation” and “divorce.” What is the difference? For the most part, none. While they are different words, they carry basically the same idea. Both denote a distinct “apartness.” The only difference is one of nuance. Divorce carries with it the concept of legal finality or termination, of which Jesus gave one exception (Matt.19:9), whereas separation is unencumbered with any judicial baggage. Other than that difference the result is essentially the same, i.e., the husband and wife are no longer together. Sometimes it is said, “We are not divorced; we are only separated.” But the facts of the matter remain, they are no longer living together as husband and wife. So such a statement is not all that commendable. Unless such a statement is made by a brother or sister in Christ with the Divine endorsement of 1 Corinthians 7:15.

Reams have been printed regarding the passage for this particular study (1 Cor. 7:10-16). It is considered to be one of the most difficult sections of New Testament Scripture, therefore ignorance abounds. Much confusion has been stirred up by those who have failed to make the diligent effort required to understand what the beloved apostle is teaching. Consequently, a lot of false teaching has spewed forth in print and from pulpit by those seeking a loophole to pacify and coddle those who are in unholy unions or who intend to be joined unlawfully.

The purpose of this study is two-fold: to dismantle the false doctrine that is taught from these seven verses and then establish the truth of this vital portion of God's Word. In order to accomplish this, questions from each verse will be posed to the peerless apostle Paul. Thus, this study will take on the format of an interview with him. The interview opens with this question:

Paul, Who Are “The Married?” (1 Cor. 7:10)

“And unto the married I command...” Some have attempted to limit Paul's use of the word “married” here with reference to only Christian marriages. But Paul does not make this distinction explicitly or implicitly. He simply uses the all-inclusive phrase “the married” apart from any other qualifier. The Lord in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 certainly did not restrict His teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage to only Christians. Instead, in

both passages He too used the all-inclusive term "whosoever." Paul certainly must not be accused of teaching anything that would contradict what Jesus taught, regardless of the subject matter.

The plain fact of the matter is that verses 10 and 11 relate to *all marriages* - not just to marriages of believers to believers. Paul speaks plainly "...unto the married." *What married?* Answer: *All* the married - believers married to believers, believers married to unbelievers, and unbelievers married to unbelievers. There can be no justification whatsoever for attempting to make "the married" in this reading to mean *some* of the married. The law which is dealt with in verses 10 and 11 relate to *all marriages*. (Deaver 247)

Our next question in the interview is:

Paul, Are You Even Inspired To Discuss This Subject? (10)

"Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord. Let not the wife depart from her husband." The answer Paul gives is an unequivocal "yes!" Don't make the mistake that somehow Paul is saying he was not personally speaking by inspiration when he wrote the words, "...yet not I, but the Lord." All he is saying is "I have gone from giving inspired advice regarding the unmarried and the widows back in verses 8 and 9, to commanding. What Paul says here cannot be sloughed off. His words were not just for that day and time but are for all time. Paul's teaching here is bolstered by what our Lord had already taught in

Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18. In other words, what Paul commands here had already been commanded by Christ. Therefore, it was inspired and infallible. Without quibble, Paul was inspired (1 Cor. 2:10-13; 7:40) thus what he says must be strictly adhered to. To reject the words of the apostles is to reject the words of Christ (John 17:8, 14, 20). When Paul says, "Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord," he is saying that both *he and the Lord*, are issuing these orders. Instead of inspiration being denied it is absolutely underscored and

underscored boldly!

A third question:

Paul, Is Separation Ever Justified? (11)

“But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.” Marriage is for life (1 Cor. 7:10). It’s a contract a man and woman make in the eyes of God that He Himself binds them to. It is for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, until death dissolves the marriage. Yet, Paul appears to say that there is justifiable cause for separation (not a divorce) in certain situations, as evidenced by his phraseology “But and if she depart.” Along these lines my father has written the following:

By leaving her husband, a wife, even though she doesn't have anything to do with another man, is being untrue to her responsibility to her husband and to what the Lord demands of her as a wife (Eph. 5:24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6). The husband of course has corresponding responsibilities to the wife and to God. Therefore, leaving one's partner is a very serious step. Surely certain situations arise where such a step could be taken without sin; for instance, if one's life or the life of a child were in danger. But in such an event the wife or husband must remain unmarried or else go back to their partner. (Conley 46)

Many a wife, due to physical abuse, who desperately wanted to preserve their marriage have nonetheless been forced to separate from their husbands. Such abuse may have been brought on by alcohol or other drug use. Perhaps no catalyst at all was involved in the cruelty of the husband. Yet, fearing for her life, or the life of her children, she reluctantly makes the decision to separate. Who could impugn such a decision? Neither the Lord nor Paul, faults a wife who is forced to take such a step, *provided* she remain true to the Divine stipulations of the separation. Either she remains unmarried or she returns to

her husband. There are no other options. Thus, these conditions show just how seriously the Lord views marriage! Of course what is applicable to the wife is also applicable to the husband.

As this important interview progresses we inquire:

Paul, Are You Putting Words in The Lord's Mouth? (12)

“But to the rest speak I, not the Lord...” Again from all we know about the authority of the Lord's apostles coupled with Bible verbal plenary inspiration, Paul is moved to answer this silly question with a resounding "No, I'm not putting words in the Lord's mouth!" It has been argued that Paul was prefacing his forthcoming words as his personal ideas. Some translations have added this twisted thought (See *Phillip's New English Bible, The Living Bible*). Once again my Dad has this to say: “In effect Paul would be saying, ‘I've been inspired up to this point, but now I'm going to turn the inspiration off because I want to inject some of my personal ideas’...Paul is simply declaring that what he is about to say is something the Lord did not reveal while on earth” (Conley 47).

The thrust of what Paul is saying is the Lord did not deal specifically with the questions the Corinthians were asking him at the time. Shame on those who have (for whatever reason) relegated this verse and the ones to follow as simply Paul's natural ideas in place of Supernatural inspiration (1 Cor. 2:12-14)! When will modernistic commentators finally absorb the truth that what Paul wrote were the *very* words of God and not his own?

Now this query:

Paul, Who, or What, Is “The Rest?” (12)

It has been advanced by more than a few that "the rest" here refers to mixed marriages, i.e., a Christian married to a non-Christian. If that is so then “the married” in v.10 would necessarily be only marriages wherein both parties are Christians. Yet Paul gives not even a mere shade of a hint that "the married" in v.10 refers exclusively to Christian marriages. Again, he offers no such qualifier that indicates he means *only* Christian marriages. Instead he simply states, “the married,” which

includes mixed marriages. Regarding the idea that “the rest” means mixed marriages Roy Deaver wrote the following:

This is pure assumption. Paul said, in verse 1, that he would be dealing with the matters about which they had asked. He had discussed some of these in verses 1 through 9. Now, he says he is going to deal with "the rest." Did Paul do what he indicated he was going to do? Yes. Then what did he do? He discussed three things: (1) the marriage of a Christian man to a non-Christian woman who was content to dwell with her husband; (2) the marriage of a Christian woman who was married to a non-Christian man who was content to dwell with his wife; and (3) the marriage of a Christian to a non-Christian who was not content to dwell with the Christian. If Paul said he was going to discuss "the rest," and if Paul proceeded to discuss these three matters indicated, and if Paul did what he said he was going to do - then "the rest" must refer to the rest of the questions which the Corinthian brethren had asked about, the rest of the problems. (10-11)

Although “the married” in verse 10 means all marriages, the Lord did not specifically address these questions the Corinthians were asking Paul. Thus, equipped with apostolic authority and the impossibility of contravening *anything* the Lord had already taught on the subject of marriage in general, he begins to answer "the rest" of their questions. Questions Jesus did not deal with while on earth.

Now with the "the rest" of these questions before us let us now ask:

Paul, Are You Saying It Is Not a Sin to Remain with an Unbelieving Partner? (12-13)

As long as that partner is willing to stay the Christian has no right to leave. He or she has no grounds for divorce, i.e., “put away,” v.12, nor to even separate, i.e., “not leave,” v.13. Paul's teaching in these two verses is unmistakably clear. Marriage of a

non-Christian to a Christian does not defile the husband and wife relationship, despite that the opposite was evidently being taught at Corinth. Nor does it give the right for the Christian to divorce or separate from their non-Christian mate. Earl Edwards has added some additional thoughts to these verses:

There is probably no justification in these verses for a believer marrying an unbeliever. Rather these people were already married when Paul came to preach and one obeyed while the other did not. This passage does, however, presuppose that a marriage between two non-believers (who are marriageable) is recognized by God. In fact, the family was instituted by God in Eden long before there was a church. The teaching about marriage found in the Bible is not, just “covenant legislation” as some suppose. (35)

Wayne Jackson concurs: “Mere religious incompatibility is not a cause for dissolving a marriage. Marriage is a divine institution for the entire human family, commencing with Adam and Eve. The fact that one partner is not a Christian does not affect the essential integrity of the union” (313-14).

Thus Paul's answer to the question is, it's not a sin to remain with an unbelieving partner.

Next question:

Paul, Do Verses 10-13 Show That Matthew 19:9 Is a Covenant Passage?

What is meant by the term “covenant passage” is that the passage under consideration only applies to those within the covenant. In other words, it's argued that the Lord's words in Matthew 19:9 *only* apply to Christians who are married to Christians, that it does *not* apply to mixed marriages or marriages in which neither partners are Christians.

If this is true, it would not matter how many times a person married, divorced or remarried prior to becoming a Christian. Also the reasons for doing so would not matter either. Such a cavalier concept makes a mockery out of the sacred institution of

marriage and a farce out of the Lord's plain teaching! In Matthew 19:9 the Lord said "Whosoever." This word necessarily means *anyone*. It is all inclusive and excludes no one, whether they be a non-Christian or a Christian.

Upon what basis is it concluded that Matthew 19:9 is a "covenant passage?" No basis whatsoever other than a gross mishandling of 1 Corinthians 7:10-13. Some brethren will passionately argue that vss.10 and 11 deal *only* with two Christians married to each other.

Once more, Paul does not intimate this in the least, rather it is a grand *assumption* that is made on the part of those who wish to find support for Matthew 19:9 being a covenant passage. Based on this assumption they argue that since vss.10, 11 deal with Christians being married to Christians; and since Paul said Jesus dealt with this kind of union; and since vss.12, 13 deal with a Christian being married to a non-Christian; and Paul says Jesus did *not* deal with this kind of union; and since Christ in Matthew 19:9 discusses marriage, divorce and remarriage then it must be that Matthew 19:9 only applies to 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11 with Christian marriages. And that Matthew 19:9 does *not* apply to the mixed marriages of 1 Corinthians 7:12, 13. The grand erroneous conclusion to this shallow reasoning is that Matthew 19:9 applies only to those within the covenant, i.e., only to the Christian who is married to a Christian.

But that makes Matthew 19:9 bereft of any universal application! This cannot be because such an interpretation has Paul teaching something contradictory to what Christ Himself taught. If Paul was inspired, and he was, then he is not going to say anything that counters the teaching of Christ, such is an *impossibility!* It matters not if Paul said it or the Lord said it, all people everywhere are amenable to it because everything both said on the subject is truth! Truth never contradicts itself; therefore, Paul gives a thundering "No" to this question in the interview. He states that 1 Corinthians 7:10-13 in no way shows that Matthew 19:9 is a covenant passage. To the contrary it is a universal passage that all must submit their will to.

Another question we want to make sure we ask the matchless apostle is:

Paul, How Do You Define Separation and Divorce?

Four times in these seven verses he uses the term “depart.” The phrase “put away” twice and the word “leave” once. What does he mean by these words? Do these words describe divorce or merely separation? As stated earlier the end result of both is the same, that is the husband and wife are no longer together. Nonetheless, let us define these terms one at a time.

The word "depart" in the KJV is used four times in vss.10, 11, and 15 is translated from the Greek word *chorizo*. In the RSV it is rendered “separate,” and both “separate” and “leaves” in the NIV. Earl Edwards has stated: “...but it evidently is a synonym of divorce here since the woman who does it is ‘unmarried’ according to verse 11” (34). Greek scholar Gary Workman says, “...Chorizo...can embrace both separation and divorce” (385).

But “unmarried” in v.11 does not necessarily have to mean divorced, rather it can simply mean unmarried to someone else. In other words, it can mean to be just separated. Since it is the case that the Greek word *chorizo* can refer to both separation and divorce only stresses the constant desire of God that He does not want *any* Scripturally married couple to part, either by separation or by a dissolution of the marriage itself, (divorce).

Paul also uses the phrase “put away” twice in vss.11, and 12, as well as the term “leave” in v.13. These are both translated from the Greek word *aphiemi*. This is a term, unlike *chorizo*, that leaves no ambiguity. This word according to *Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker Lexicon* means “in a legal sense divorce.” “Put away” is rendered as “divorce” in the RSV, NRSV, NKJV, NIV, etc.

Why did Paul use two different words here? To impress upon both the husband and the wife that both separation and divorce are forbidden by God, *unless* the exception of fornication is present (Matt. 19:9), or some radical reason (e.g. physical endangerment) is involved resulting in separation. Even then, however, the only Scriptural alternatives are reconciliation or remaining unmarried to another (11).

Paul, How Is an Unbelieving Mate Sanctified? (14)

Some at Corinth were evidently teaching that if one of the marriage partners was not a Christian the marriage was unholy and invalid. Paul says the opposite, i.e., the unbeliever has been sanctified by the believer. The word “sanctified” as it is used here does not mean redeemed or forgiven. Paul is not saying that simply because an unbeliever marries a believer that this puts him or her into a state of salvation (v.16; Acts 2:38 etc.) refutes such an idea. Thus the "sanctification" mentioned here does not make the unbeliever a Christian/saint (Rom. 1:7).

What then does Paul mean, and how is a non-Christian marriage partner sanctified? They are sanctified in the sense of being made a suitable marriage partner. If the believer were made unclean by the marriage then the children would be also. But the children are holy; therefore the marriage is not sinful. Consider these additional Christian viewpoints:

Notice that it is not the “*union*” that is sanctified but rather the unbeliever. And since “*sanctified*” and “*holy*” are but two forms of the same Greek word, whatever meaning obtains with the mate also holds with the children. Notice also that it is the Christian, not God, who does this sanctifying. And since verse 16 speaks of the Christian saving the unbeliever, the word “*sanctified*” must here be used in a spiritual sense as well. The non-Christian mate and children begin to exhibit sanctified behavior which will eventually lead to conversion. All of this puts the focus on the personal relationship between the Christian and his spouse and children...The children are not “*unclean*,” but both they and the non-Christian mate have come under the sanctifying influence of the Christian in the home. (Workman 388)

An unbeliever, in a scriptural union with a believing wife, is in a relationship which God approves...he is not in an adulterous or unclean union. Children, born to this union are not illegitimate; they, too, are sanctified because they are in a “*holy*” (approved) relationship, being sanctified by it. (Woods 198)

Children born in such a relationship are not “unclean,” but actually are under the influence of at least one Christian parent. The unbeliever who is married to the Christian is in a “sanctified” environment that might well lend itself to his conversion. (Jackson 314)

All of this serves to emphasize the sacredness of the marriage relationship as well as the value of only one person in the family being a child of God. It is the will of the Heavenly Father that such a marriage remain intact.

Paul, What Is Your Privilege? And Are You Allowing Another Ground for Remarriage? (15)

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

Despite the fact the Roman Catholic Church centuries ago concocted a so-called “Pauline Privilege,” the Apostle Paul himself *would not, could not, and did not*, give another ground for divorce and remarriage in this verse! Rather, Paul's only privilege was to preach, write and record a large portion of the New Testament of Jesus Christ. This he did infallibly by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16) without any personal inclusions or deviations. The fact of the matter is the Roman Catholics came up with this perversion of truth, *not* Paul. Tragically, many members of the Lord's church have swallowed this poisonous doctrine in a desperate but futile attempt to defend their divorce and remarriage dilemmas. Several well-known preachers across our brotherhood have readily embraced this supposed additional ground for remarriage and are boldly and unapologetically preaching it. But a careful look at v.15 reveals nothing of the sort!

Thus far Paul has taught that the Christian is not to leave the non-Christian companion, vss.12, 13. But what if the non-Christian decides to depart on their own accord? Paul says: “let him depart,” the brother or sister (i.e., Christian partner) “is not under bondage in such cases.”

An Everest of false teaching has been done based on a shallow, misguided and even a dishonest interpretation of v.15. Even as it reads in *reliable* English translations, coupled with an understanding of what Jesus plainly taught in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 an individual with a modicum of common sense can know Paul is *not* giving another exception for divorce and remarriage here. Regarding the non-existent, yet much clung to, “Pauline Privilege,” the following has been written:

Basically, it adds another ground to Matthew 19:9. It amounts to an apostolic countermanding of what the Christ taught. It makes shambles of “*except - if and only if*” - in Matthew 19:9. If desertion of the believer by the unbeliever provides another ground for divorce and remarriage, then the grammatical force of “*except it be for fornication*” in Matthew 19:9 is shattered forevermore. (Taylor 63-4)

Thus armed with a good reliable English translation of the New Testament, along with even a cursory knowledge of Jesus words regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 can easily be understood.

With that said, if one was to delve a little more into the matter and consult the original koine Greek, it would be quickly discovered that it is not only *doctrinally* impossible to extract another ground out of v.15, it is also *grammatically* impossible. Of course the two go hand in hand, but if it can be shown what the original said, then it should forever silence those who teach otherwise, as well as enlighten the scores who have been, and are, being duped.

“Not under bondage” is at the vortex of all the doctrinal controversy that has blown with hurricane force across the brotherhood wreaking untold eternal damage. Therefore, it greatly behooves us to understand what it means. It is has been readily and recklessly embraced by those displeased with Jesus' teaching, that “bondage” means the marriage bond. As earlier noted, even using only a trustworthy English translation, and knowing what Jesus said in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 is sufficient

to know “bondage” here *cannot* mean the marriage bond. Be that as it may, a quick look at the Greek unequivocally proves this to be the case! Regarding the Greek word translated “bondage,” Roy Deaver, an erudite Greek scholar and Gospel preacher said this:

This is the Greek *dedoulotai*, perfect passive indicative, third person singular of the word *douloo*. In three passages where the *bond* referred to is unquestionably the *marriage bond* (1 Cor.7:27, 39; Rom.7:2) the word used is *deo*, not *douloo*. In this very chapter, in referring to the marriage bond, Paul twice uses *deo*, but in verse 15 *he uses a different word*. This fact is significant!....The word *douloo* (in some form) occurs 133 times in the New Testament, and not a single time - unless 1 Cor.7:15 is the exception - does it refer to the marriage bond. This word refers to slavery...The Christian - the deserted Christian - does not stand, and - in fact - *never did stand under that kind of bondage*. This very construction - the perfect tense verb - makes it impossible for the bondage under consideration to mean the marriage bond. The perfect tense means: is not NOW, and in fact NEVER HAS BEEN, in the kind of bondage referred to. But the deserted Christian HAS BEEN in the marriage bondage. Therefore, the bondage referred to here is NOT (AND COULD NOT BE) the marriage bond. (248)

Thus informed with this explanation what is the practicality Paul is conveying to the reader in verse 15?

...in some cases the unbeliever is determined to depart. The unbeliever may lay down the challenge, “You leave the Lord or I will leave you!” ...no doubt, with this challenge or by some other intolerance of the faith of the Christian, the unbeliever intends to leave! Paul has stated, “If this be the case, **LET HIM DEPART!**”....the believer is not so bound, or enslaved, or tied to that person that effort should be put forth to FORCE his/her remaining,

and most certainly not so bound or enslaved that for the sake of the companion the Christian then gives up his/her faith! Remember, **“let him depart”** - you are not obligated to force the companion to remain. (B. Jackson 63-64)

If the unbelieving partner leaves, the believer is to let him go. “Not under bondage” does not mean that the believer is released from the marriage vows so that he or she may remarry; but simply that they are not required to compel their partner to remain or return. They are guiltless before God in respect of the separation, but they may not marry another. (Conley 47)

Verse 15 concludes by reminding “...but God hath called us to peace.” It would simply

be unfitting for the Christian mate to coerce the non-Christian to remain. There are times when a Christian has done all they can to peaceably stave off separation. But if the non-Christian is determined to leave, the Christian follows the course of peace and allows, i.e. “lets him/her depart” (15). This of course gives neither one the right to divorce and marry again. Undoubtedly there are a host of reasons why a separation in a mixed marriage might come about, but there is only *one* whereby the wronged party (innocence assumed) may put away/divorce the guilty party and remarry another innocent party, i.e. fornication, (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Such is the Lord's unalterable and universal standard, and one Paul did *not* make exception to in 1 Corinthians 7:15. Thus Paul himself is the first one to refute and reject any such privilege attributed to him. He would vehemently argue that his and the Lord's teachings on the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage are *precisely the same!*

The final question we pose to Paul in this interview regarding marriage relations is:

Paul, Is There Any Hope for Mixed Marriages? (16)

He responds by saying "absolutely!" "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how

knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" These are words of hope. Paul is reinforcing everything he has said about marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. It is the hope of eventual conversion to Christ that further justifies keeping the marriage together. By either a Christian wife or husband acting appropriately, even if the unbelieving mate departs, the Christian may *still* be able to exert an influence that would lead to their mate's salvation. Peter alludes to this same hope and possibility in his discussion of religiously mixed marriages (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1ff). One who is in such a marriage ought never to think their Christian influence is feeble or entirely ineffective. Both Paul and Peter declare there is reason for hope and pressing on in the marriage. A godly wife or husband may very well be *the* critical factor in bringing their unbelieving mate to Christ and ultimately having their company in heaven! This verse lends great encouragement to all who are married to non-Christians.

Conclusion

Separation and divorce are blights that have destroyed countless marriages. The only thing that can eradicate the problem is an understanding of what God has taught through His Son Jesus Christ and His apostles, along with the other inspired writers of the New Testament. Not only must His/their teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage be understood they must be embraced and defended. Too many, for too long have set aside our Lord's teachings in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 et al and have wrested other passages, viz. 1 Corinthians 7:6-10 to their own spiritual undoing. May all Christians study and practice God's Marriage Manual. Only by doing so can marriage be protected and nourished and separation and divorce eliminated.

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Biographical Sketch

J. D. Conley was born in El Paso, TX., in 1959. He is a third generation Gospel preacher and is in his twentieth year of full-time preaching. He preached his first sermon in Larose, LA., at age 15. He majored in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University and is a graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Fort Worth, TX. He is now in his ninth year working with the Harmar Hill church in Marietta, OH., where he also serves as one of the elders. He has been married to the former Denise Cooper for 33 years, and they have six children, two of which are preachers.

The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Terry Jones

Introduction

On the very same night in which Jesus was betrayed, He assembled with His apostles in that upper room to observe the Passover. This marked the end of that Jewish feast, being fulfilled by Christ who is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). At the conclusion of that meal, Jesus instituted a new memorial feast which would be observed in His kingdom (Matt. 26:29). Acts 2 records the beginning of the church and how that the disciples began to observe the Lord's Supper as a part of their worship to God. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41-42).

All three of the synoptic gospels provide a record of the institution of the Lord's Supper. It is found in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25 and Luke 22:14-20. Sadly, only a short time after its beginning, abuses of that sacred feast started to surface. The church at Corinth was guilty of such abuses, along with a number of other severe problems. In the Apostle Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians he addressed those issues and provided instruction and correction for their observance of the Lord's Supper. The assigned text for this study is 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. In our examination of that passage we will endeavor to arrive at a proper understanding of Paul's intended message to the Corinthian church, and try to glean those things from the text that will improve our knowledge and observance of that sacred feast.

Divisions Corrupting the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-22)

The church at Corinth had been plagued by those who were causing division and factions among them. Paul began addressing that issue in the very first chapter of this epistle. He

said, “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you” (1 Cor. 1:11). Chapter eleven reveals that there were divisions that were springing out of their disrespect for the Lord’s Supper.

Divisions Are Shameful. “Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse” (17). Paul shows a definite change in tone here from verse 2 where he said, “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions as I delivered them to you.” This praise quickly turned to criticism and shame in regard to their church assemblies. As difficult as it is to imagine, their worship services were more harmful than beneficial.

The problem that Paul was currently addressing was that they apparently were being unloving and inconsiderate in their love feast and, in the process, desecrating the Lord’s Supper. Wendell Winkler has provided a wonderful summary of the issue. “There was a problem in Corinth concerning the Lord’s Supper (11:17-22). This probably grew out of the Corinthian brethren engaging in their ‘love feasts’ (cf. Jude 12; 2 Pet. 2:13) and integrating and mixing the same with the Lord’s Supper. Accordingly, in eating the common meal, some had more than others, eating the same before the others. They became filled, while others were hungry” (54). Not only was this a selfish disregard for brethren, it was a corruption of the Lord’s Supper. No wonder Paul was prompted to say, “What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you” (22). Paul could not praise them because their actions were divisive and shameful.

Divisions Are Sinful (18-21). Not only is it the case that divisions are shameful, but they are also sinful. From this context we learn that divisions are sinful for at least three reasons.

1. Condemned by the Lord. In His final hours upon this earth Jesus prayed for unity among His disciples. In John 17:21

He prayed, “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” Furthermore, an attitude of division was not to be tolerated in the church. “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18). To the Corinthians unity was emphasized and division condemned. “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

2. Causes contentions among the Lord’s people. “For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you that those who are approved may be recognized among you” (18-19). Paul had been hearing reports of divisions and factions among them, and though he didn’t want to believe it, he knew that there was bound to be some truth to it. Even though there was strife among them, there were faithful brethren that could be recognized as they contended for the right. “Divisions caused by carnal thinking tend to separate those who are striving to meet God’s standards (2 Timothy 2:15) from those who are not. The ‘approved’ Paul mentioned would be those who, like metal, pass the test and prove to be genuine” (Hampton 53). Wayne Jackson made the observation that, “While heretical schisms are most unfortunate, at least one advantage results—those approved of God become ‘manifest,’ i.e., apparent. The ‘cream’ does rise to the top” (323).

3. Corrupts the Lord’s Supper (20-21). When divisions are present, problems will abound. In verses 20 and 21 we find two problems that are a direct result of their divisions. First, there is a problem with their *coming together*. “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper” (20). The word “therefore” points back to the divisions and factions discussed in the two previous verses. Because of

them, it was impossible for the Corinthian brethren to come together and properly partake of the Lord's Supper. Second, there is a problem with their *communing together*. "For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk" (21). When the disciples came together to worship they commonly shared a meal together as well. There would have been no problems with that were it not for those who abused that meal and, in turn, abused the Lord's Supper as well.

Perhaps because the Lord ate the Passover feast with his disciples before instituting the Lord's supper, the church at Corinth ate a feast, often called a love feast, before partaking of the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians were each bringing their own meals and partaking of it in party groups. They did not wait on each other and while the poor went hungry, the rich drank to excess. Thus, the love feast was not a true communion at a common table where each could receive alike. The poor were shamed instead of being fed. (Hampton 53)

Wayne Jackson commented:

In a factious environment "it is not possible" to assemble in peace and partake of the communion supper in the tranquil mode God expects. Selfish ambition and elitism segmented these saints. What should have been a simple memorial service reflecting upon the Savior's death had become a common meal during which social classes had been segregated, resulting in some being left hungry while others were gorged (vv. 20-21; cf. vv. 33-34). It was the opposite of the spirit of brotherhood unity. Their assemblies had abandoned the original purpose. (323-24)

The church at Corinth was obviously very guilty of a very serious offense against the Lord, His church, and her worship.

This verse is an indictment with three counts. There

could be no communion supper when: 1. The parties did not eat at the same time, but some before and some after; 2. When each ate his own meal, instead of sharing in “the one bread” (ch. 10:17); 3. When some ate to the full and others ate nothing at all, because there was nothing left. (McGarvey and Pendleton 115)

Doctrine Concerning the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Having condemned their divisive attitudes and practices that had corrupted the Lord’s Supper, Paul now reminds them of the doctrine that was to regulate their worship. In so doing, he reminded them of three vital aspects of that doctrine.

The Origin of the Doctrine. “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread” (23). Although Paul was not present when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, the Lord revealed it to the apostle by inspiration. What Paul had received from the Lord he had taught to the church in Corinth. Now he is delivering it to them in written form. It would be their obligation to abide in it, as did the brethren in Jerusalem. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

The Observance of the Doctrine. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper He not only gave them the doctrine for it, but also a demonstration of it. In verses 24-25 we must learn three key points for proper observance of the doctrine governing the Lord’s Supper. First, there is the Lord’s blessing. Jesus took the bread, “and when he had given thanks” (24a). Both Matthew and Mark state that Jesus took bread and “blessed” it, while Luke and Paul say that He “gave thanks.” Obviously, these phrases are here being used interchangeably. This bread would have been the unleavened bread used during the Passover.

Second, there is the Lord’s body. “...He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me’” (24b). When Jesus said that the bread “is My body” He was using a metaphor, meaning that the bread represents His broken body. When Christians break the bread,

they must do so remembering the broken body of Jesus as He suffered for our sins.

Third, there is the Lord's blood. "In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me'" (25). The cup, which represents the contents of the cup, is the fruit of the vine (Mark 14:25). In drinking the fruit of the vine, one should do so remembering the shed blood of Jesus that sealed His covenant.

The covenant referred to was the one mentioned by Jeremiah (31:31-34), and quoted with comments in Hebrews (8:7-13). It was the new covenant or will of God set forth in his blood, shown in shedding it for the sins of the world. God, through Jesus Christ, made a new covenant, as that made through Moses is called the old covenant. This is the memorial of that blood to seal and confirm this new covenant. The old covenant was sealed with the blood of animals; this was sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ shed for the remission of sins. (Lipscomb 174-75)

The Ordinance of the Doctrine. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (26). Having provided the particulars for observance, Paul now gives the accompanying ordinance, or law, concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. That ordinance consists of three parts.

1. Perpetuating the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper was given as a weekly observance that we might always remember Jesus' death. "The frequency is not stated here. But the early church met on the first day of the week, each week, every week (16:1-2), to break bread (Acts 20:7). This establishes a precedent for us – the early church showed us by example how often we should partake. Why not do it as they did?" (Winters 157).

2. Proclaiming the Lord's death. Paul stated that in partaking of the Lord's Supper "you proclaim the Lord's death."

Every time that the Lord's Supper is observed there is a grand proclamation of the death of Jesus.

3. Promise of the Lord's coming. The observance of the Lord's Supper is to continue "till He comes." With our minds squarely focused upon the body and blood of Jesus who died for us, Paul now brings into view the resurrection of Christ with the promise of His future return. The Lord's Supper is a lasting memorial that will proclaim the Lord's death until the very last day when He returns.

It is a commemoration of his death, *for* it is in its very nature a proclamation of that great fact.' And it was not a temporary institution, but one designed to continue until the consummation. As the Passover was a perpetual commemoration of the deliverance out of Egypt, and prediction of the coming and death of the Lamb of God, who was to bear the sins of the world; so the Lord's supper is at once the commemoration of the death of Christ and a pledge of his coming the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hodge 229-30)

Directions Correcting the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:27-34)

The beloved apostle had condemned their divisions which had corrupted the Lord's Supper and reminded them of the doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper. He now provides them with some directions intended to correct their abuses of the Lord's Supper.

Partake In A Worthy Manner. "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (27). Here Paul points out clearly that it is possible to commune in an unworthy way, and that there are consequences for so doing. Obviously, this was an indictment against the Corinthian brethren.

If the Lord's Supper be in its very nature a proclamation of the death of Christ, it follows that those who attend upon it as an ordinary meal, or in an irreverent manner, or for any other purpose than that for which it was

appointed, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. That is, they contract guilt in reference to the body and blood of Christ. See James 2, 10. The man who tramples on the flag of his country, insults his country; and he who treats with indignity the representative of a sovereign, thereby offends the sovereign himself. In like manner, he who treats the symbols of Christ's body and blood irreverently is guilty of irreverence towards Christ. (Hodge 230)

Practice Self-Examination. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body” (28-29). In order to avoid partaking in an unworthy manner, Paul instructs each one to examine himself. This exercise of self-examination was to help the individual to arrive at a proper attitude that would enable him to partake of the emblems in a way pleasing to the Lord. The Corinthians had displayed several wrong attitudes (i.e., division, factions, selfishness, irreverence, carnality, etc.) which led to their observing the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. In so doing, they brought judgment to themselves, not properly discerning the Lord's body. That is, they did not have a mindset that enabled them to give reverent thought and consideration to the intense suffering endured by our loving Lord as He sacrificially died on the cross for their sins. “The Person who comes to the Lord's table without proper mental preparation is a *mere* eater and drinker. He is not ‘communing,’ or ‘remembering,’ or ‘proclaiming.’ He who eats and drinks without examining himself eats and drinks judgment unto himself” (Reese 413).

When Paul used the phrase, “not discerning the Lord's body,” it is unclear to which body he was referring. Was he intending us to understand this to be the Lord's physical body, or was he referring to the church, the Lord's spiritual body? There is really good evidence for both of these options. Winters offers a wise and sensible approach to this dilemma.

Does the body here mean the church (as in 12:12-13; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) or the sacrificed body of Christ? Standing alone, the former would be easier to explain (it would mean taking the communion without regard to or respect for the church and its unity, as appears to be the case in vv. 19-22), but in context I do not see how it can be understood in any sense but the latter. In vv. 25 and 27 it is His sacrificed body which is in view, and, in the absence of some reason to think that Paul changed the way he was using the word when he reaches this point, it seems highly unlikely that it has a different meaning here. (158-59)

Prevent Spiritual Illness. “For this reason many are weak and sick among you and many sleep” (v. 30). Failure to examine self and partaking of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner will result in spiritual decline, disease, and death. “Thus Paul’s point is that by abusing the communion many of them had suffered a decline in spiritual health (3 John 2) and a number had completely fallen away – they had turned back and again polluted their souls with unpardoned sins” (Winters 159).

Prepare For The Lord’s Discipline. “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come” (31-34). When a doctor examines a sick patient he makes a judgment concerning the malady and the remedy. In like manner, Paul had had instructed the Corinthians to examine themselves. An honest assessment of one’s own attitude will prevent communing in an unworthy manner and promote spiritual health. Now Paul warns that if we don’t judge ourselves God will do it for us. That may lead to chastening by the Lord. “Consequently, if God’s people would take inventory of their spiritual condition and correct their conduct, they would not be subjected to Heaven’s judgmental wrath. If we do not attend to our soul problems, the Lord may chasten us (cf. Heb.

12:10) to nudge us in the right direction that we may not be ‘condemned with the world’ (v. 32)” (Jackson 324-25).

Paul concludes this discussion by admonishing them to be considerate of one another when they came together for worship. Instead of being disrespectful to one another, Paul commanded them to wait for one another, and if they were that hungry they should eat at home before they came. “The Lord’s Supper is not a common feast; it is not designed as a place where a man may gratify his appetite” (Barnes 223). It was Paul’s desire that they would eliminate every possible hindrance that would keep them from properly partaking of the Lord’s Supper.

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Biographical Sketch

Terry G. Jones was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia and was raised in Toll Gate, West Virginia. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They have two sons – Austin (Jillian) and Quintin.

Terry is a 1986 graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, Tennessee. He received the A.A. and B.A. degrees from Ohio Valley College in 1996. He worked with the church in Mountain City, Tennessee from 1986 to 1989. He then moved to Pennsboro, West Virginia where he has been preaching to the present.

He serves as secretary on the board of directors of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp and is on the faculty of West Virginia School of Preaching. In addition, he is a writer for West Virginia Christian and has served as its lectureship director on five occasions. He also has made missionary trips to the countries of Moldova and Ukraine.

Charity for All

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Paolo DiLuca

On Saturday, March 4, 1865, the 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, concluded his Second Inaugural Address declaring: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in...” Just a little more than a month before being assassinated by John Wilkes Booth on April 15, President Lincoln indicates the three fundamental attitudes he believed necessary to solve the great constitutional, military, and moral crisis that the United States was facing at that time. It was clear in his mind that to “finish the work” of keeping the Union and continuing the American dream, it was necessary that all should live “with malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right” according to God. Even if today there is the increasing sad attempt to negate the influence of the Word of God in the constitution and management of this Republic, it is evident that President Lincoln strongly believed that those three biblical principles were the solution to the problem! And in reality, the Bible contains the solution to any problem we face.

As we consider 1st Century Solutions for 21st Century Problems, we approach one of the most important “Principles for Remedy.” The Bible highlights this remedy as the answer to the different problematic situations we are called to face during our pilgrimage on this Earth: ***Charity for all.***

Charity is an English noun that can convey many different meanings. Webster says it is: “1. benevolent goodwill toward or love of humanity; 2. generosity and helpfulness especially toward the needy or suffering; 3. a gift for public benevolent purposes, an institution (as a hospital) founded by such a gift; 4. lenient judgment of others” (“charity”).

Biblical charity is different. The Encyclopedia Britannica well describes this kind of charity as:

[T]he highest form of love, signifying the reciprocal love between God and man that is made manifest in unselfish love of one's fellow men. St. Paul's classical description of charity is found in the New Testament (I Cor. 13). In Christian theology and ethics, charity (a translation of the Greek word *agapē*, also meaning "love") is most eloquently shown in the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ. St. Augustine summarized much of Christian thought about charity when he wrote: "Charity is a virtue which, when our affections are perfectly ordered, unites us to God, for by it we love him." Using this definition and others from the Christian tradition, the medieval theologians, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, placed charity in the context of the other Christian virtues and specified its role as "the foundation or root" of them all. ("charity")

C. S. Lewis considers, "Charity means 'love, in the Christian sense.' But love, in the Christian sense, does not mean an emotion. It is a state not of the feelings but of the will; that state of the will which we have naturally about ourselves, and must learn to have about other people" (129).

The thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is one of the most recognized texts of the Bible, along with Psalm 23 or John 3:16. It is considered by many as the greatest, strongest, and deepest composition that the Apostle Paul ever penned thanks to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is often called "The Hymn of Love" or "The Portrait of Love." It certainly is not the only chapter in the Word of God which deals with the subject of love (cf. 1 John 4), but it is the one that is most known by the casual reader of the Bible. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (ca. AD 347-407) affirmed that "Paul saith that the love which we are speaking of is the mother of all good things" (193).

It is important to consider where this chapter was inserted by the Holy Spirit in the letter: in the middle of a section that deals with the charismatic spiritual gifts. The Christians in Corinth

were facing several problems and were confused about many doctrinal subjects. They were divided (1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-6); they were proud (1 Cor. 5:2; 12:1-3); they were willing to destroy each other over food (1 Cor. 8:2, 11), and to fight in a spirit of rivalry (1 Cor. 1:10; 3:4). One of the major issues of discussion among that church was charismatic spiritual gifts: they mistakenly thought that the measure of spirituality was the ability to manifest supernatural signs. In chapter 12 Paul discusses the distribution, the receiving of these gifts and the way in which God puts them together in the local church so that it can function at best. He encourages the Corinthians to be content with what they have received and not to feel inadequate, jealous, and envious of what others might have received. Then in chapter 14 the apostle deals with the proper exercise of those gifts—the how to do and the how not to do it. Paul encourages the Corinthians not to be proud, selfish, self-seeking, or boastful.

In the midst of this stands chapter 13—the “more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31). Here Paul shows the way of charity/love as the only alternative to their spiritual immaturity and wrong attitudes. The apostle addresses the Christians in Corinth with the specific purpose of reminding them that love is the source that produces the right attitude and the valid motivation for their service and for their use of the spiritual gifts they desired so much. D. Bonhoeffer, reflecting on 1 Corinthians 13, affirms:

This is the decisive word which marks the distinction between man in disunion and man in the origin. The word is love. There is a recognition of Christ, a powerful faith in Christ, and indeed a conviction and a devotion of love even unto death—all without love. That is the point. Without this “love” everything falls apart and everything is unacceptable, but in this love everything is united and everything is pleasing to God. What is this love? (52)

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, the inspired apostle not only provides the answer to the question, “What is love?” but he also details, in a clear and unmistakable way, why charity/love is *the more excellent way*.

Love is the more excellent way because it is not based on performance.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

The Christians in Corinth were making the huge mistake of esteeming the people in their assembly based on their outward performance. To correct this wrong understanding, Paul uses a series of illustrations: with the supernatural gift to speak in every known language eloquently (1 Cor. 13:1), the supernatural, divine understanding and faith (13:2), and the supernatural benevolence, even to the point of death (13:3). While the Corinthians loved, esteemed, and valued people like this in their midst, Paul makes it clear that all of these things can be manifested without a proper attitude of heart which makes them totally irrelevant to God's purpose. That is why the performance of those charismatic gifts without proper heart attitude produces just empty, noisy clanging (13:1); does not change the inner person (13:2), and has no effect on one's spiritual condition (13:3).

Many think: "If I perform well enough, they will love me." or/and "If I perform well enough, they will believe that I love them." Paul succinctly states that love is not a performance but a mental and practical attitude continuously shaped by the Word of God: "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philip. 1:9-11). So, if the thinking process is wrong and

the heart is not filled with charity/love, then the performance is meaningless, shallow, empty, vain, and worthless.

Love is the more excellent way because it is patient or long tempered.

We have here the beginning of the list of the special quality traits of charity/love. “Suffers long” indicates the attitude of being forbearing or patient. W. Barclay noticed that:

The fourth-century Church father John Chrysostom said that it is the word used of those who are wronged and who have it easily in their power to avenge themselves and yet who will not do it. It describes people who are slow to anger, and it is used of God himself in his relationship with men and women. In our dealings with others, however difficult and however unkind and hurting they are, we must exercise the same patience as God exercises with us. (140-41)

In other words, charity/love has a long fuse and makes us slow to anger and ready to forgive any offense: “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.” (Col. 3:12-13) “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. . . . And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:1-3, 32). Biblical charity forms the proper spiritual attitude, that realizing all that Christ has forgiven us, so brings us to be ready to forgive others and not hold grudges.

Love is the more excellent way because it is kind

Christians should be the kindest people on earth, the kindest people at work, the kindest people in every situation! Being kind

is not just an attitude, but it is an attitude in practice, it is an action motivated by the willingness to do good to others. Kindness is the action to ease someone's pain and to calm the fears, the anxiety and the worries of someone. Kindness is one of God's characteristics: "The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." (Psalm 145:8-9; cf. Titus 3:4; 1 Peter 2:3). Jesus is the perfect example of kindness: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30). If we search the Greek text of the New Testament we will notice that the word "easy" in v. 30 has the same root of the word "kind" in 1 Corinthians 13:4. When the disciple of Jesus accepts to switch yoke with the Lord, then he will be able to obey to the commandment of the Scripture: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

Love is the more excellent way because it does not envy; it is not jealous.

Solomon affirms that "envy is rottenness to the bones" (Prov. 14:30) and asks "who is able to stand before jealousy?" (Prov. 27:4). Barnes comments:

This word properly means to be *zealous* for or against any person or thing; i.e. to be eager for, or anxious for or against any one. It is used often in a good sense (1 Cor. xii. 31; Note, xiv. 1, 39; 2 Cor. xi, 2, &c); but it may be used in a bad sense—to be *zealous against* a person; to be jealous of; to envy. Acts vii. 9; xvii. 5; James iv. 2, It is in this sense, evidently, that it is used here—as denoting zeal, or ardent desire *against* any person. The sense is, love does not envy others the happiness which they enjoy..... To envy is to feel uneasiness, mortification, or discontent at the sight of superior happiness, excellence or reputation enjoyed by another; to

repine at another's prosperity; and to fret oneself on account of his real or fancied superiority. (246)

Envy can be considered as the inner "boiling" or "steaming" over the success, beauty, or actions of others. The Christians in Corinth were envious of the spiritual gifts that others possessed (1 Cor. 12:15-19). They were not able to enjoy and appreciate what God did provide for them, because they were affected by the "grass is always greener on the other side of the fence" syndrome.

Love is the more excellent way because it does not parade itself, it is not boastful.

Charity/love is not self-centered or egotistical, does not brag. In the Corinthian church there were some who desired to show off their gifts, who wanted to be in the spotlight and be the center of attention. This evil attitude proceeds from the idea of being superior to others and for that reason they have to be talked down by proclaiming one's boasts. When that happens, someone gets hurt! "They utter speech, and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves" (Ps. 94:4) "But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (James 4:16). Love corrects this attitude by producing the desire that others might be served and places them as objects of our encouragement and service: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philip. 2:3-4). To *boast* about one's talents or gifts is not to employ them for the advantage of others because boasting is empty sound vs. real action!

Love is the more excellent way because it is not puffed up, it is not arrogant.

We all know people who are big headed, proud of themselves to the point of becoming arrogant snobs. C. S. Lewis highlights some important considerations when he wrote:

The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-Conceit: and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called Humility.... According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.... Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense. (121-23)

It is known that the famous Italian opera composer Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945) was a real proud, big headed man. In 1900 he was mentioned in an Italian national newspaper not just for fact that he composed a new opera entitled “Le Maschere” but the very singular dedication of that opera: “A me stesso con grande stima ed immutabile affetto” - “To myself, with great respect and unchanging affection.” (<http://italianplease.com/mascagnidedication/>) This is the arrogant attitude of the puffed up! The Corinthians had that arrogant attitude: “Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power” (1 Cor. 4:18-20). The biblical condemnation of the puffed up is clear: “When pride comes, then comes shame.... Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.... A man’s pride will bring him low” (Prov. 11:2; 16:18; 29:23).

Love is the more excellent way because it does not behave rudely.

Charity/love is actions and not words. It is evident in good and godly behavior. Some other translations read: “Doth not behave itself unseemly” (KJV, ASV); “It does not dishonor others” (NIV); “does not act unbecomingly” (NASB). Barnes explains: “Acts an unbecoming part, imposes an unnecessary, painful, and improper constraint, crosses her inclinations which are in themselves proper” (132). This action is not something

done accidentally, by mistake and corrected as soon it becomes evident. Love refuses to act in an inconsiderate way, not paying attention and not caring about the consequences of its behavior. Love cares about the feelings of others and is sensitive and caring toward all. Rude behavior can severely damage the best relationships. That is why one of the characteristics of elders is to be “of good behavior” (1 Tim. 3:2) and the exhortation to all Christians is to “be courteous” (1 Pet. 3:8).

Love is the more excellent way because it does not seek its own, it is not self-centered.

The Corinthians are completely self-absorbed by measuring their self worth by the spiritual gifts they possess. This causes them to not think of themselves as a part of the body of Christ. In fact, we see they have a high level of “self-esteem” and they disregard Paul and the other apostles (cf. 1 Cor. 4). They are so self-centered they demand to practice their assumed rights even if it destroys a weaker brother (cf. 1 Cor. 8). They assert themselves in the church meeting with little or no regard for others and for edification (as unfortunately happens today in many congregations of the Lord). Charity/love is not a matter of self but of others: “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being” (1 Cor. 10:24; cf. Philip. 2:3-5). Jesus shows how love does not seek its own very clearly as noticed by Bonhoeffer: “From His selfless love, from His freedom from sin, Jesus enters into the guilt of men and takes this guilt upon Himself” (237). Furthermore, “A love which left man alone in his guilt would not be love for the real man. As one who acts responsibly in the historical existence of men Jesus becomes guilty. It must be emphasized that it is solely His love which makes Him incur guilt” (237).

Love is the more excellent way because it is not provoked, it does not lose control.

The original Greek verb indicates the actions of “stimulate, urge, irritate, provoke, arouse to anger, exasperate” (Thayer 490). It is evident (from the epistle) that the Corinthians are obviously provoked in several different areas. Some are

provoked enough to take their brethren to court (1 Cor. 6), others are provoked to divorce their mates (1 Cor. 7), while others are provoked to not consider their fellow Christians when it comes to observing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11). James instructs us: "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (1:19-20).

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (Jas. 3:13-18)

Love is the more excellent way because it thinks no evil.

McGarvey and Pendleton comment: "Is not suspicious of evil, is not careful to retain the memory of it, and does not keep a record of it for the purpose of returning it. It continues its blessing despite rebuffs" (130). The original Greek verb indicates the action "to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over, to take into account, to make an account of" (Thayer 379). Paul tells us that love does not take into account a wrong suffered, keeps no score. So many times people find it hard to forgive and forget when they have been offended or hurt. Some Christians seem to develop a precise photographic memory when it comes to offenses they believe to have received yet suffer from amnesia when remembering the good they have received. One little irritation brings back to mind the entire file of previous offenses, carefully annotated and documented. This kind of mental bookkeeping serves only to fuel resentment and anger. However, charity/love not only does not keep records of the offences

received, but also desires to think well of the others, of their motives, opinions, and conduct until proved wrong by the evidence. Love is never quick to judgmental thoughts or words. Love thinks the best about others. This does not mean that love is gullible or hides its head in the sand. It simply means that charity/love thinks the best, not the worst, about those we love. Love is not always suspicious and questioning the hearts and motives of others.

Love is the more excellent way because it does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

Love is never happy when forced to deal with sin because sin distracts from understanding and accepting the truth about the real condition of one's soul. Only by knowing the truth can we face reality and change our final destination from Hell to Heaven. This is why love

Does not rejoice over the *vices* of other men; does not take delight when they are guilty of crime, or when, in any manner, they fall into sin. It does not find pleasure in hearing others accused of sin, and in having it proved that they have committed it. It does not find a malicious pleasure in the report that they have done wrong; or in following up that report, and finding it established. Wicked men often find pleasure in this (Rom. i. 32), and rejoice when others have fallen into sin, and have disgraced and ruined themselves. ... But love does none of these things. It does not desire that an enemy, a persecutor, or a slanderer should do evil, or should disgrace and ruin himself. It does not rejoice, but grieves, when a professor of religion, or an enemy of religion—when a personal friend or foe has done any thing wrong. It neither loves the wrong, nor the fact that it has been done. And perhaps there is no greater triumph of the gospel than in its enabling a man to rejoice that even his enemy and persecutor in any respect does well; or to rejoice that he is in any way honoured and respected among men (Barnes 250).

Love is the more excellent way because it is consistent.

Love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:7). Paul highlights four special qualities of charity/love, all linked to each other by “all things.” These are four things that love never ceases to possess and practice, four things that can always be expected from genuine love.

The first quality of consistent love is its ability to always go on, no matter what is the opposition, to endure without resentment from any injury inflicted by others. Love holds up rather than folds up. Jesus suffered silently, not responding verbally to the abuses thrown upon Him. Peter affirms that His example is the pattern of silent suffering that His disciples must follow (1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:15-16). Love never caves in or collapses under pressure.

The second quality of consistent love is its ability to always have faith and never reject it. Even when life seems to be crumbling around us or when it is filled with adversity, faith sustains love and love manifests faith. Suffering is not an excuse for the failure of faith; rather, it is an occasion where love and faith may be expressed (cf. Philip. 1). Our love for God and our trust in His Word should generate in us unlimited faith in Him, manifested in practical charity/love (Philip. 1:9-10).

The third quality of consistent love is its ability to always have hope. Hope is the longing and the desire for those things which are to come, which by faith, we believe we will receive: “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance” (Rom. 8:24-25; cf. Heb. 11). Hope eagerly anticipates the arrival of what I strongly desire. Hope enables the Christian to face even the most adverse circumstances, hoping for the promised blessings which will follow. True love is characterized by a consistent hope.

The fourth quality of consistent love is its ability to always persevere or endure not focusing on the intensity but on duration of the trouble. Love does not run out of time. Love lasts, no

matter how long the trial, love perseveres till the very end!

Conclusion

Charity as presented in 1 Corinthians 13 is the more excellent way. The qualities of this special kind of love are presented as unique attributes from the heart of God and must be learned and practiced by all mankind. Bonhoeffer wrote, The love with which man loves God and his neighbor is the love of God and no other; for there is no other love; there is no love which is free or independent from the love of God.... Loving God is simply the other aspect of being loved by God. Being loved by God implies loving God; the two do not stand separately side by side. (56). For all these reasons:

- ◆ “Love never fails” (1 Cor. 13:8).
- ◆ We all need charity/love in our lives.
- ◆ Charity/love is the answer to every problem mankind will ever face.

We are under the false assumption that progress, technology, and culture can help us find the answers to the problems of our days, but unfortunately, it is just a theory, sadly proven wrong every day. God provided the answer, that we so desperately need to find, in the 1st Century through the person and the message of His son, Jesus Christ: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). His charity/love is truly the 1st Century Solution for 21st Century Problems.

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Biographical Sketch

Paolo Di Luca was born in Milan, Italy, and was raised in Ferrara, Italy. He is married to the former Cindy Inman, daughter of the late Clifton and Pauline Inman. Clifton was a well known preacher of the Gospel for 50 years in the Ohio Valley.

They have one son, Marco, who is a graduate student pursuing a master’s degree in Leadership at Freed-Hardeman University, and is working for FHU as a recruiter in the Admissions Office

The Resurrection and End-Time

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Gary Hampton

In December, 2000, my mother, sisters and I, along with our families and friends, stood before the open grave into which the casket bearing my dad's body would soon be lowered. Hardeman Nichols quoted 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and then said, "We stand today before an empty grave that will soon be filled, but we do not do so without hope since there was once a grave that had been filled but God made empty." Those words sustained me then and again in August, 2011 when we stood by my mother's empty, but soon to be filled grave. Then, just about a month later, they came to my mind again as we stood by the grave of my faithful father-in-law, Clifton E. Chester, Jr. As long as I live, those words will remind me of the hope all Christians have in the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. I cannot imagine what it must have felt like to be a Christian in Corinth robbed of any belief in the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

Christ, the Firstfruits

Paul confronted the false teachers head on with clear proof that Jesus had been risen from the dead. No court of law could ever reach any other verdict with over five hundred witnesses to testify to its reality. By the time he reaches verse 20 of 1 Corinthians 15, he "simply announces the great fact" (Lenski 661). "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." "Paul's present concern is to demonstrate not only that the resurrection of Christ stands logically against their view that there is no resurrection of the dead (vv. 12-19), but that his resurrection has inherent in it that which makes the resurrection of the believing dead inevitable" (Fee 748).

...the word translated fallen asleep (*koimaomai*) is used 18 times in the New Testament. In four of these places

(Mt. 28:13; Lk. 22:45; Jn. 11:12; Acts 12:6) this term describes natural sleep. In the other fourteen places where this word is used (Mt. 27:52; Jn. 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 7:39 ["dead"]; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13, 14, 15; 2 Pet. 3:4) fallen asleep describes physical death. (Price 728)

The concept of Jesus being the "firstfruits" from the dead would have been powerful in the minds of all those who understood the Jewish custom of offering the first cut grain in thankful anticipation of the harvest to come.

On the morrow after the Sabbath of the Passover a sheaf of barley (the earliest grain to ripen) was waved as firstfruits before the Lord. (Leviticus 23:9-14.) The firstfruits had to be thus presented before the harvest could be begun, and its presentation was an earnest of the ingathering. Now on this very day after the Sabbath Christ was raised as the firstfruits from the dead, and became the earnest of the general resurrection. (McGarvey 150)

Jesus, like that wave offering of firstfruits, signifies a general harvest of all who are in the grave. "For as the first sheaf cannot be harvested and offered unless the entire harvest is ripe and ready, so Christ cannot be raised unless all of us believers are ready to be raised also. God sees us as being thus ready. The interval of time does not count with him" (Lenski 662). Gordon Fee sees another important emphasis in Paul's mention of the firstfruits.

...the metaphor functions similarly to that of the "down payment" or "earnest money" of the Spirit in 2 Cor. 1:22 and 5:5 (cf. Eph. 1:14); both serve as a present pledge on the part of God for the final eschatological harvest or payment. Thus the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:13) and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:15) are the "firstfruits" in a given geographical area, which means not only that

they are the first converts but the first of a much larger harvest that is yet to be realized. (749)

All Will be Made Alive in Christ

The apostle to the Gentiles went on to say, “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21-22). Lenski says verse 21 should be translated, “For since by man death, by man also resurrection from death” (663). Physical death came for all men as a consequence of Adam's sin (Gen. 2:17). “Through Adam death became part of the ‘circle of life’ (Eccl. 3:2)” (Price 730). A sure appointment with death awaits all men (Heb. 9:27). Thankfully, Jesus told Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25). “Since Jesus was able to raise Lazarus ‘four days’ after he had died (Jn. 11:39), He can and will just as easily raise all people in the future, even if they have been dead for thousands of years” (Price 731).

Paul only considered the resurrection of the righteous in this chapter because of the flow of the argument. Other Scripture clearly teaches that there will be one resurrection of both good and evil dead. When the Jews sought to kill Him because He had said God was His Father, thus making Himself equal with God, Jesus declared,

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:26-29)

Jesus’ explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares also makes it clear that the Master only foresaw one harvest (Matt. 13:36-43). Paul’s discussion of the punishment of those who had

been troubling the saints similarly includes the understanding that both the wicked and the righteous will be raised in the same day. The apostle first said that those who never came into an intimate relationship with God and those who did not keep on obeying God would “be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed” (2 Thess. 1:9-10). This statement is consistent with the apostle’s defense before Felix, when he said, “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15).

The Order of the Resurrection

Paul further spoke of the resurrection as he wrote to the church of God in Corinth, saying, “But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23). Those who might have been attempting to make the resurrection of the saints appear ridiculous, might have asked when the believers would be raised. Paul sets forth the exact “order,” using a word (*tagma*), concerning which Holladay says, “a military term, probably has not only a temporal sense, i.e., ‘each in his own sequence,’ but also implies ‘rank’” (202). Paul further delineated the order of the resurrection of the saints, both dead and living, in his first epistle to the brethren in Thessalonica.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (4:15-17)

The Timing of the Resurrection

The apostle states plainly that the resurrection of the saints will be at “the second coming of Christ at the last day” (Lenski 668-669). The Greek word is *parousia*, which is “a term that described a visit from important people such as kings and emperors. This word is never used to describe Jesus’ coming to the earth and living as a man, but it is used to describe His next and final return” (Price 732). As Findlay says, the word *parousia* “in the N.T. always signifies His future coming” (927). It is the very word used by the disciples in their questioning of the Savior following His statements regarding one stone of the temple not being left standing on top of another (Matt. 24:1-3). They asked, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?”

A simple reading of the text reveals the apostles thought such destruction of the temple could only occur when the Lord came at the end of the age. Jesus, however, answered their questions by breaking them into two parts. First, the Lord dealt with the timing of the destruction of Jerusalem. He used the term “those days” in Matthew 24:19, 22 and 29 indicating an extended period of days much as would be experienced during a siege. That such is the case is confirmed when the Lord refers to prophecy, saying, “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (Matt. 24:15). Luke further recorded the Lord’s words. “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (21:20). The Master was foreseeing the days in which the Roman general, Titus, would lay siege to Jerusalem, eventually crushing it and killing a large number of Jews.

Second, the Lord dealt with His coming at the end of the age, using the words “that day and hour” in Matthew 24:36 and “a day” in verse 50. His use of the word “hour,” designating a short period of time, in verses 42, 43 and 44 further emphasizes the fact that this is a completely different coming. Only the Father in heaven knows when that coming will take place and the Savior highlighted that fact by giving signs that were common, every day occurrences, like eating, drinking, marrying and being given

in marriage (verse 38). The parable of the ten virgins also stressed, “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Matt. 25:13).

Christ’s Kingdom and the Resurrection

Continuing his description of the end, Paul wrote, “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor. 15:24). “No interim is envisioned between the parousia and the end. The term end (telos) can scarcely be taken in any other sense than ‘the end of history’” (Holladay 202). “Jesus’ coming will end His rule as well as end the world” (Price 735). Peter described it when he said, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

Instead of returning to the earth to establish a kingdom and begin to reign, Jesus will return to give up His rule by delivering the kingdom to His Father. The second word “end” is *katargeo*, meaning “to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative” (Thayer 336). “With the resurrection of the dead, the end, or goal, has been reached; an ‘end’ that has two sides to it. On the one hand, the resurrection of the dead will mean that Christ has subjugated, and thereby destroyed, the final enemy death, expressed in this case in the terminology ‘every dominion’ and ‘every authority and power’” (Fee 754).

It is evident Paul thought Jesus was reigning as he penned the words of this epistle, since he wrote, “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). The Lord did not expect His reign to be an earthly one. In fact, He told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36). In actuality, Jesus could not rule on earth. Jeremiah wrote,

Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol--A vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his

descendants, And cast into a land which they do not know? O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord: “Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah.” (22:28-30)

While Coniah, who is also known as Jeconiah, did have children (1 Chron. 3:16; Matt. 1:11), he “was the last king (none of his descendants ever ruled from a throne in Jerusalem). Many have noted how the Hebrew people went into Babylonian captivity after Coniah’s reign (Mt. 1:12) and how Coniah’s grandson Zerubbabel returned from this exile (1 Chron. 3:19), but even Zerubbabel did not rule as a king in Jerusalem” (Price 734). Jesus cannot reign and prosper from an earthly throne in Jerusalem. Price goes on just a few lines later to state, “Jesus can, however, ‘prosper and rule’ from the ‘throne of David’ while He is presently enthroned in heaven (Heb. 8:1). Stated another way, Jesus can and does now reign from the ‘Jerusalem above’ (Gal. 4:26).”

Peter proclaimed that Jesus’ reign had begun on the day of Pentecost and declared that fact to the men of Israel assembled in Jerusalem (Acts 2:33-36). He further stated during the apostles’ defense before the Sanhedrin, “Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). Paul clearly understood the kingdom was already in existence when he told the saints in Colosse the Father “has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (1:13). He seemed to refer to Jesus’ lordship when he later instructed, “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” A few verses later, he sent greetings from Aristarchus, John Mark and Justus, calling them “fellow workers for the kingdom of God” (4:1, 10-11). In the epistle to the church at Rome, he urged them not to act in a way that encouraged their brethren to violate their consciences “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy

Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Paul declared in his letter to the church of the Thessalonians, “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:10-12). In his second epistle to that church, the apostle described them as suffering for the kingdom (1:5).

The writer to the Hebrew brethren who were contemplating going back to the Law of Moses, said, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire” (12:28-29). John clearly believed Jesus was reigning even as he wrote the words of the Revelation, telling the seven churches of Asia that it was “from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1:5-6).

Christ’s Rule Will End at the Resurrection

“Christ’s rule, which by implication began with his resurrection (or subsequent ascension), must continue until Ps. 110:1 is fulfilled, ‘until he has put all his enemies under his feet’” (Fee 755). Death, and its authority, will be overcome at the resurrection of all the dead. The apostle stated, “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26). “Death is here personified as an enemy. This serves to remind us that death is understood as far more than ‘every man’s fate,’ but actually as a force endemic to the cosmic order....With the defeat of death, the work of Christ may be said to be completed” (Holladay 203-204). With the last authority, other than God, conquered, Jesus will then be free to turn His kingdom over to God (see also Matt. 15:13). Jesus must reign in His kingdom until all enemies are overcome. God’s prophet, Daniel, told Nebuchadnezzar that his dream was the means God used to tell him His kingdom,

Babylon, would be conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire, which would be conquered by Greece, which would be overcome by Rome. The prophet went on to tell the king that during the time of the Roman “kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).

The apostle stated death will be the last enemy conquered. That conquest will come when all the dead are raised. Christ was given authority by the Father. All but the One who gave it are subject to Jesus' power (1 Cor. 15:27). In Ephesians 1:19-22, Paul spoke of God's mighty power "which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church." So, Jesus, before ascending, could say, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). Peter, having just explained the power of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to remove sin and grant one a clean conscience before God, went on to state that Jesus “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Peter 3:22).

The apostle to the Gentiles clearly proclaims, “For ‘He has put all things under His feet.’ But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted” (1 Cor. 15:27). The NIV translation of this verse may help us grasp Paul’s meaning. It has, “For he ‘has put everything under his feet.’ Now when it says that ‘everything’ has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.” Jesus' stated purpose while He was on earth was to glorify God and do His will (John 4:34; 6:38; 7:16; 8:29; 12:44, 39; 14:24; 17:8, 2123). That glorification will finally be complete when all enemies are at Christ's feet. “Now when all things are made subject to Him,

then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). “Paul’s point is that in raising Christ from the dead God has set in motion a chain of events that must culminate in the final destruction of death and thus of God’s being once again, as in eternity past, ‘all in all’” (Fee 759). The apostle’s use of “the expression ‘all in all’ in verse 28 seems to describe a state of absolute perfection and completeness. When Jesus returns, all evil and enemies will be removed (verses 25-26), righteousness will reign, all the saved will be together, and God will be all that the saved have and need” (Price 738).

Conclusion

The fifteenth chapter of the first letter to the church of God at Corinth was intended to answer the assertion of false teachers that said Christians would not be raised from the dead. Paul declared that Christ was the firstfruits from the sleep of death. He reassured the brethren that as surely as all face an appointment with death because of the sin of Adam all would also be made alive because Christ had overcome the grave. Paul stated that Jesus was the first to be raised followed by all those who are His at the time of His second coming. Following that resurrection, the apostle said Jesus would hand the kingdom over to His Father. Paul also made it clear that such could not take place until all enemies, including death, had been brought in subjection to Him. Paul’s teaching about the resurrection should give us hope as surely as it must have given hope to the brethren at Corinth. We will be His at the end of time. Praise God for this assurance!

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Biographical Sketch

Gary C. Hampton has been preaching since 1968 and has done work in North Little Rock, Arkansas; Mobile, Alabama; Valdosta, Georgia and Cookeville, Tennessee. Hampton served as the director of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, Tennessee for nearly six years and is now preaching for the Siwell Road church of Christ in Jackson, MS. He graduated from Freed-Hardeman University with a B. A. in Bible in 1976 and received his M. A. in Biblical Studies from Theological University of America in 1996 and his PhD in 2006. Hampton has 18 books in print and has written for The Spiritual Sword, Think, The World Evangelist, The Voice of Truth International and the Gospel Advocate. He has preached in 29 states and done mission work in 6 foreign countries. Gary and his wife Teresa have two children, Nathan and Tabitha.

Sacredness of God's Temple

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Van Sprague

When Aquila and Priscilla were relocated by a decree of Claudius, which resulted in the expulsion of the Jews from Rome, God turned their misfortunes into an opportunity to start a church in the city of Corinth (Acts 18:1-3). The apostle Paul stayed and worked with the tent-making couple, and taught in the synagogue. Paul ceased his teaching at the synagogue after meeting Jewish opposition against his preaching of Jesus as the Christ, and commenced teaching in the house of Justus, a God fearing man who lived next door (6-7). "Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (8).

The great body of converts, however, came from the humbler classes, even from among freedmen and slaves. Some were Jews, but most of them were Gentiles; not many trained in schools, not many of official dignity and power... There were among them contrasts of wealth and poverty... but the weak and baseborn formed the majority of this Christian assembly [1 Corinthians 1:26], and among them were many who had been rescued from the lowest depths of pagan vice.... Moved by envy and enmity, the Jews raised an insurrection and dragged the apostle before the judgment seat of the proconsul Gallio.... [who] disdainfully refused to entertain the charges of religious heresy which the Jews attempted to present against Paul.... The attitude of Gallio has been interpreted frequently as indicating his religious indifference. More properly it should be regarded as an example of religious tolerance and as a practical declaration that Paul had the sanction of the Roman Government to proclaim the gospel in Greece. *Thus when*

sometime later Paul ended his labors in Corinth and sailed for Jerusalem and Antioch, he left behind him a strong and flourishing church, practically under the protection of Rome and able to proceed with the evangelization of the entire province of Achaia. (Erdman 9-10 emphasis added)

The existence of God's church in Corinth may have been considered a mistake according to man's perception, but it was an act of God's gracious providence. Some may have considered it foolish to attempt to spread the Gospel of the true and holy God in a place of idolatry and corruption, but God knew the city needed the light of His Word that much more. If the church in Corinth would fail, it would not be because of government opposition, persecution, prostitution, idolatry, or any other pitfall found within the profligate city. If God's light would be extinguished there, it would smother from within. When Paul authored the first Corinthian letter, he knew this.

Paul knew the residents of the city enjoyed, and suffered from, a constant influx of foreign trades, cultures, and philosophies. One such philosophy was stoicism. To stoics, God was just "the spirit of Reason of the universe." So, death was the end of life. "The wise man was thus encouraged to live according to reason, and in doing so was taught that he was perfect and totally self-sufficient.... much like humanism of today..." (Holladay 56). The Epicurean teaching was that there was no God, or God did not deal in the world's affairs. As such, they believed, "the greatest goal of life was that which afforded man the greatest pleasure (sensual or otherwise)" (Winters 8). Paul quoted such a philosophy to make a point later in his letter to our Corinthian brethren (1 Cor. 15:32). Paul also knew that slaves constituted as much as one half of the population of Corinth (Erdman 8). What is more, he was aware that, even though half were not slaves, they were all wearing the shackles of man-made teachings which would not allow them to see true liberty in Christ. These characteristics, and more, did not escape the notice of the Spirit-led evangelist as he dictated or penned this letter to his beloved children in the faith (4:14-15).

Due to his personal experience, and his writing's God-given infallibility, Paul analyzed and answered the early church's struggles with laser focus. Lenski wrote, "Paul always sees all the facts, he never loses one of them in the course of his presentation, and he sees the true significance of each fact and the true relation of those that belong together" (8). Riggs and Reed observed, in this church's case:

There were intellectual interests both in art and philosophy. No Greek city was without interest in philosophy and schools of philosophy were to be found in Corinth. Her citizens were proud of their mental acuteness; so much so that in their conceit they criticized all men and questioned anything and everything. They loved disputation, but all their intellectual activity resulted in nothing of much value. (3)

With such a disposition of mind, the Corinthians found it easy to classify themselves with teachers of the Gospel they found appealing. This went beyond being encouraging and supportive to a preacher. Plummer explained:

Enthusiasm for one's teacher may be a good thing; but championship for one leader as against another is not, for it is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel and may end in disaster. To cry up Paul or Apollos or Kephass as rivals, if not opponents of one another, was wrongheaded enthusiasm; and to bring the name of Christ into such a connexion was to degrade Him who bore it. (xxxvi, xxxvii)

Plummer went on to elaborate on the possible extent of the problem. "[T]he Corinthian cry, 'I am of Christ,' had implied 'I am His and you are not,' or 'He is mine and not yours'" (xxxvii).

Considering the Corinthians could not grow to maturity in Christ if they did not change their worldview, it is no accident that Paul addressed situations regarding rivalry in the church before he mentioned physical morality, marriage, idolatry, etc.

When Christians could not find their way out of the murky valley of man-centered thinking (1 Cor. 3:1-3), correcting them was not as easy as simply telling them what they should do to change. Their current philosophies left them ill equipped for the climb to spiritual reasoning. Paul had to use a variety of figures as foot holds to aid the honest reader. Considering the landscape of the first four chapters of the epistle, one can see how Paul drew layers of illustrations, forming steps from the dismal hollow where they were, to the summit of true spiritual recognition in 3:16-23. From this vantage point, the reader could then turn, see the depths from which he came, and have the perspective to understand when Paul wrote, “Let a man so consider us...” in the first verse of the next chapter. Such reasoning answered the problems of division in Corinth, and, fundamentally, any that may be found in Christ’s church until the end of time. He led them from carnality (3:1), to observing the farming (5-8), to the field and building (9), and, finally, to the very temple of God (3:16-17). It is in this perspective Paul’s teaching shows us who Christians are, how we should think (18-20), and where we belong (21-23).

One might dismiss divisiveness, rivalry, and other conflicts in the church thinking that there are things that are far worse. That is, until he really comprehends what is at stake. Christians are the temple of God. This is taught in the rhetorical question posed in 1 Cor.3:16, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you?” The form of this question makes it a rebuke. In other words, if they did know, they were not acting like it. “You,” here, is referring to the Corinthian disciples as a group. Together, they made the temple of God. The word for temple is a specific word that does not indicate “the whole temple with all its precincts and its courts” (Morgan 64), like we see in John 2:15, where Jesus drove the merchants from the temple complex. It is a word specifically used for the Holy and Most Holy places. This same special employment of the word “temple” is used and implied throughout Scripture with regards to God’s people (1 Cor. 3:17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; 1 Pet. 2:5; etc.).

Not only are Christians the temple of God, but the Spirit of

God is dwelling in us. Paul's words assure us of a special presence of God with Christians that is not enjoyed by anyone else (Lenski 147). After all, the presence of God has always been the deference between a temple just being a building and a temple being, "the place of Divine manifestation, and...the center of Divine activity" (Morgan 64).

Being considered God's dwelling place on earth would impress the Jewish Christian, who was familiar with the workings of the temple in Jerusalem, and it would have resonated with those from Corinth with a Pagan past. Barnes noted:

Among the heathen also temples were regarded as sacred. They were supposed to be inhabited by the divinity to whom they were dedicated. They were regarded as inviolable. Those who took refuge there were safe. It was a crime of the highest degree to violate a temple, or to tear a fugitive who had sought protection there from the altar. (58)

Since the temple of God, made of the people of God, is so sacred, if someone destroys it, he will be destroyed by God (1 Cor. 3:17). For any other religion, such would be an empty threat, because there is no other god able to mete out justice, but for those following Christ, this is a serious warning. Together, we are the holy temple of God, the church which he purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:19). What a shame that many would hesitate more to burn a cross than to destroy a relationship with a brother. We would resist damaging a relic, but, too often, we thoughtlessly devastate the real thing. Christians are the temple of God. Morgan was right when he said:

There could have been no division in that church at Corinth, or there can be none anywhere if that truth had been, and is known, or remembered. The lost sense of the marvel of the church as the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit is what has alienated us, and caused our divisions and paralyzed our powers. (67)

It is not likely that a teacher begins his ministry planning to harm the body of Christ. So, how does it happen? Paul does not picture the main issue at Corinth as blatant, false teaching, but the culture was steeped in “the worship of intellectual, worldly wisdom.... It is this very worldly wisdom which makes the Corinthians assess the worth and the value of different teachers and leaders.” (Barclay 38). Calvin was convinced that the teachers who were being warned:

...did not openly detract from the substance of the Gospel in any respect; but since they were burning with a misguided and passionate desire for prominence, I think that they had devised a new method of teaching that was not consistent with the simplicity of Christ; and they hoped that it would make them the objects of people’s admiration. (8)

When someone fails to see how he is thinking, he is effectively lying to himself. To avoid, at any cost, causing an unneeded schism in the church of God, in addition to acknowledging the church as the sanctuary it is, one must change how he thinks. Paul instructed the Corinthians to:

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness”; and again, “The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise. That they are futile.” (1 Cor. 3:18-20)

Explaining that this passage is not claiming a person must actually be foolish to become wise, Lenski wrote:

In this statement of Paul’s there is, of course, no repudiation of the genuine results of science in any department as far as these pertain to our earthly life, but

there is complete repudiation of any and all hypotheses, theories, and speculations, scientific, philosophic, or popular, which lord it over Christ and the Scriptures. (152)

Rational and honest science and philosophy actually flow congruently with the Scriptures. However, when irrational bias or ignorance bear works that contradict Scripture, we can rely on spiritual weapons that are “mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

If we really believe we have all we need in Scripture to be “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), why do we rely so heavily on things like church growth books, and not on God’s book about the growing church? When will we all decide that we are not going to be successful in the Master’s work until we decide to work the Master’s way? The church in our region today does not grow like the church did then, because we are not doing what God’s people did then.

For someone to “become a fool” he needs to realize that “the unaided intellect of man is not properly equipped to arrive at the will of God apart from divine revelation. Thus the intellectuals must turn from their attitude of self-sufficiency (that is, become fools) to a total reliance upon the revealed will of God” (Winters 46). Nicoll said it this way: “A ‘wise’ world that knows not God (i.21, ii.6, 14, cf. Rom. i.19-23) will not understand His message until it learns its ignorance” (740). Almost 3 millennia before any of these 20th century scholars, God’s hand moved the proverbs writer to say, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...” (Prov. 1:7). Let us stop looking for the next big preacher, program, or proposal that will “jump start” church growth, and let us start steadfastly down the tried and true pathway of God.

The Old Testament verses that were quoted or paraphrased here better qualify the passage. Verse 19 is a quote from Job 5:13. Eliphaz, though he wrongly accused Job of being

unrighteous, was an uninspired man who said correct things about the justice of God. “The wise” in this context is a negative description of one who is in opposition to God. The inspired paraphrase Paul provided of Psalm 94:11 in 1 Cor. 3:20 is helpful because he used a subtle change in the verse to give a flawless interpretation tool for his writing. The Psalm actually says, “The LORD knows the thoughts **of man**, that they are futile” (emphasis added). Paul said, “of the wise,” not, “of man.” Doing so, he clarified what he wrote in verse 18. The wisdom that is condemned in this section isn’t wisdom at all. It is what man thinks is wise, without considering God, which is condemned. Paul was using the same ironic language as he did earlier in the book concerning a similar topic (1 Cor. 1:21).

Considering the context, Morris commented, “There is an obvious reference to those who thought themselves *wise* in attaching themselves to this or that teacher” (71). When we put such trust and enthusiasm in men and not in God, we forget how we are completely and individually dependent upon the wisdom of God (Jas. 3:17). The Corinthians needed to realize that the best human, alone, is lost, and even if someone is following the best follower of Christ, and not Christ Himself, he is not going to pass the test (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

When we understand who we are, as God’s temple, and resolve to submit and unite, having the mind of Christ, then we can see our correct status on this earth, as well as the relative stations of others. This is the climax of Paul’s argument in verses 21-23. “Therefore let no one boast in men, for all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come – all are yours. And you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

After observing that Paul used this word for “boast” 31 out of the 32 times it is used in Scripture, and that 26 of those occurrences are found in First and Second Corinthians, Earl commented that “Paul was greatly plagued in spirit by the boastful attitudes of the quarreling Corinthian church members” (221). Paul was trying to impress upon the brethren that, given the fact that they were they temple of God, and each person was fully dependent upon the revealed will of God for his

wisdom, God was the only one in which anyone could boast (1 Cor. 1:31).

“Yet the reason which Paul appends for his injunction is surprising ‘**For all things are yours**’ ... “**all yours**” (Lenski 153). Perhaps one would expect Paul to say, “Let no one boast in men, for men are nothing,” but he had already covered that facet of the truth (1 Cor. 3:7). In revealing that all things were in the grasp of all Christians, Paul rendered every conceivable case of man-made rivalry as petty, worthless, and immature.

God did not have to take everything away from mankind to place the prince and the pauper on the same plain. Instead, He gave us everything (Eph. 1:3). This is the perspective from which “Paul or Apollos or Cephas” (1 Cor. 4:6) were no longer seen as men to follow, covet, and fight over, but as ministers who were given for every Christian. Erdman explained the phrase, “do not boast in men,” saying, “do not take honor from belonging to them as your masters; they really belong to you as your servants” (45). Such is also the case concerning life and death. True Christians have mastery of both through Christ (John 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:54-57). There is nothing that one may need now, or may come to need in order to succeed in Christ that God will not freely provide. This goes well with two questions Paul asked in Romans 8:31-32: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?”

However, lest anyone become prideful and abandon all restraint because he thinks he can do anything because he has everything, Paul went on to say that we are Christ’s. Concerning this qualification, Lenski cautioned, “We must take and use ‘all things’ as the Grantor intends so that we remain wholly Christ’s and in no way disturb our relation to him. If this relation is disturbed or broken, all things are no longer ours as God intends” (159).

Right now, Jesus reigns over the church, but there will be a day the Son will deliver His Kingdom to the Father and, “the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:24, 28). When Paul

says, “and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:23), it makes this final section ring with an incomprehensible chord of finality. Through the Spirit’s eye, Paul took the reader to a time after this creation is ended – a time when the only the eternal remains. You will be there enjoying all the goodness of the presence of God for eternity, or grieving in pain without it. This is the only perspective from which anything, ultimately, matters.

The implications of who we are as Christ’s church should end all needless disputes. The precious structure made from the souls of our brothers and sisters and mortared together by the blood of God’s Son is one we should protect and cherish, not neglect and take for granted. When one accepts the concept of being God’s Holy Place, his thinking will be change, and he will learn to trust and boast in the strength and wisdom of God, rather than that of man. When we learn to give up our own selfish ambitions and pride, we gain so much more. Barclay agreed:

The man who gives his life, his strength, his energy, his heart to some little splinter of a party has surrendered everything to a petty thing, when he could have entered into possession of a fellowship and a love which is as wide as the universe. He has confined into narrow limits a life which should be limitless in its outlook. (40)

“[Y]ou are the temple of God... let no one boast in men. For all things are yours... all are yours. And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

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Biographical Sketch

Van Sprague is a 2006 graduate of the West Virginia School of preaching. In July of 2002 he married his bride, Jennifer (Noland), through whom he previously came in contact with the Gospel message. In August of 2007 they brought their first daughter, Victoria, into the world. Their youngest child, Isabella,

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Revelation and Inspiration

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

D. Gene West

Introduction

When as a boy preacher of some nineteen or twenty years of age I had the great honor of sitting at the feet of Foy E. Wallace Jr. during an eight day meeting at Hundred, WV, I was overwhelmed by the knowledge of the Word of God which resided under that full head of snow white hair. On Tuesday evening he preached on the theme which is the title of this effort and used as his text the very passage of Scripture assigned to me in this lectureship. Consequently, the reader will find a great deal of the thinking of Foy E. Wallace Jr. in this lesson. After studying this passage under brother Wallace that night revelation and inspiration became facts to be dealt with and not just some high-toned theological talk.

As brother Wallace introduced his lesson that night he said he wanted to suggest a book well worth reading to the “preacher boys” who were there that evening. He said the book had been written by Dr. Harry Rimmer and was the best brief explanation of the concepts of revelation and inspiration that he had seen. He said that he had found only one thing wrong with the book and that was in the title. He said Rimmer had gotten it backwards in titling his book *Inspiration Plus Revelation Equals the Bible* for revelation came before inspiration as Paul plainly declared in this passage of Scripture. Then he proceeded to demonstrate that truth in a two hour and forty-five minute lecture on this golden passage.

That the Bible is the most unique book in the world cannot be doubted by anyone who has ever read even portions of it. It is a book whose narrations thrill the hearts of little children when read to them as their “bed-time stories.” They dream of the greatness of such men as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The narration of Moses and the Red Sea overwhelms them to the point that they never forget it. The narration of the precious little

baby who was born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger is one that holds them as if mesmerized. Oh, how we pray that the respect that they hold for those narrations will never fade and help guide their lives until they end.

As older men and women they will discuss the various doctrines of the Bible and drink from the depths of the fountain of life, yet the thrill they experienced when the narrations were first read to them will still flood their souls, even in maturity. One old man told a friend, “My soul yearns to hear the Gospel preached; I just live from Sunday to Sunday.” Here is one who has come to experience the truths concerning the Gospel which Paul preached here in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 in that he recognizes that these truths came from God and were faithfully recorded by men to be handed down in the Incomparable Volume through all the generations.

There is no way to explain the Bible’s uniqueness except to say that it is a Heaven revealed God-breathed Book; the Book of books. One could spend almost endless pages listing quotations from what we consider to be great men on the uniqueness of the Holy Volume. It is purported, for example, that Theodore Roosevelt once said that you can take a man who steals from boxcars and give him the finest education known to man, but if you do not include the Bible in that education, you have only taught him to steal the whole train. Men have neither the mental power nor the power of speech to praise the Bible as it deserves. One favorite effort is found in the words on a plaque given to me by a dear friend many years ago.

The Bible

“This book contains the mind of God, the state of men, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s charter. Here

Paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the ways of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the redemption of man its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened in the judgment, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibilities, will reward the greatest labor, and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.”

Author Unknown

Text

With these feeble words before us, let us turn to that great text under consideration today:

However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For

who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:6-16)

This is, in reality, the second half of a contrast being made by the Apostle Paul regarding the kinds of speech spoken to the Corinthians. The first kind they were very familiar with for most had heard it all their lives. Paul describes it as, “persuasive words of human wisdom.” The people of Corinth were not strangers to the orations delivered, sometimes on the street corners, in the great theaters, temples and other places that were important to them. These human philosophers could with great and swelling words hold their listeners spellbound for long periods of time as they spoke on such subjects as the world soul, life after death, the worth of man as compared to animals and many other subjects of that time. In the 17th chapter of Acts when Paul was preaching to the people of Athens, he quoted some of their philosophers as he attempted to bring the Gospel to them. Paul did not engage in that kind of oratory, but in another very special kind altogether, one that the Corinthians never heard before. They were used to hearing orations like those that came from such men as Apollos. Paul’s delivery and his message were not like this, for he had a special kind of wisdom to impart to them; wisdom whose headwaters were found in Heaven. His wisdom was from God.

It was not and is not possible for man’s faith to stand in such things as were spoken by the ancient philosophers. No matter what they believed and how well they argued their beliefs they did not have a message of salvation, because until the time that Paul arrived in Corinth and spoke the Gospel of Christ to them all knowledge concerning salvation through Jesus Christ had been a mystery hidden in the mind of God since “before the ages.” That mystery was being revealed to them as Paul, and other Christians, spoke the revelation of God. This is all something very new and very different from anything they had ever heard before. Because it was so new and so different the scholarship of the world often mocked Paul, especially when he spoke of the resurrection and life beyond the one that ended with

the body going into the grave. As a result of such preaching Paul was called a babbler—seed picker, he was laughed to scorn, and brutally persecuted, but in reality it was Paul who enjoyed “the last laugh” because what he taught was a message from heaven and not from the muddled minds of the philosophers. That is the reason he urged the Colossian Christians not to allow anyone to spoil their thinking with vain philosophy when he wrote: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col. 2:8 NKJV). The wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God do not harmonize. James spoke of the kind of wisdom set forth by the heathen philosophers that was “self-seeking” and full of “bitter envy” as “earthly, sensual and demonic.” Then he pointed out that the wisdom that comes from God is: “pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:13-18 NJKV). Paul had something to say to these people that no philosopher had never dreamed of nor thought of much less plumbed the depths of. So, we have the sharp contrast drawn between mere human wisdom and heavenly wisdom.

Important Words

Wisdom This word is *sophia* and according to Thayer’s Lexicon means, “wisdom, broad and full of intelligence; used of the knowledge of very diverse matters” (581). Thayer also said the word can and does refer to, “*Supreme intelligence*, such as belongs to God . . . also to Christ . . .” (582). There are only two kinds of wisdom in this world—that which belongs to God and that which belongs to man. The very best that man has appears to be very foolish in the sight of God (1 Cor. 1:18). Though the most foolish thought or action of God could have (not that God is capable of such) had is wiser than the greatest wisdom of man (1 Cor. 1:25). Since this is true Paul declared that the wisdom that he spoke was spoken to those who were *mature*; which is to say to those whose minds allowed them to accept the teaching of God which Paul preached; the spiritually minded. Those with immature minds and pure worldly thinking were unable to accept

the teaching of the Word of God, develop faith in Christ and accept Him as Lord and Master. Their minds preferred to dwell on such august themes as the number of angels that can dance on the head of a pin. This *mature wisdom* did not belong to the age in which Paul lived since it had been hidden in the mind of God since before He ordained the ages. It could not be grasped by the minds of men; they were incapable of knowing it. It was a hidden mystery known to *Elohim* alone. Furthermore, it could not be grasped by the minds of men until they were ready to lay aside their own foolish thinking and accept the evidence that God had developed for them since before the ages began. Sidebar: this is precisely the problem with atheists both ancient and modern. They have been unable to lay aside their own foolish thinking and accept the revealed truth of the Word of God. Neither were the great minds of that age—here called “rulers of this age” whose wisdom was coming to nothing. Had they known the thinking of God they could have thwarted it by refusing to crucify “the Lord of Glory” (v. 8). Just try to imagine what the world would be like had Jesus not died at the hands of the bloodthirsty mob who demanded His crucifixion! Consider the state of our (Gentile) souls had Paul and his aides never carried Heaven’s wisdom to the Gentile world! Reese gave some appropriate comments on these verses in his Commentary on First Corinthians when he wrote:

This verse adds information about the “rulers of this age”—namely that, while they were acting as human wisdom prompted, they were involved in the crucifixion of the Messiah. A contrary-to-fact condition is given as proof that the rulers did not know, did not apprehend, did not understand the wise plan of God. That Jesus should die—was planned by God as essential to redemption from the creation of the world. So what the “rulers of this age” did to Jesus was not something contrary to what God planned. But had those men been acting as human wisdom might dictate, they would have welcomed Him and made Him an earthly king—anything but kill Him. Is human wisdom (such as motivated the Corinthians to

split up into competing factions) so contrary to God's wisdom that men (motivated by it) would act in direct opposition to what God has planned from eternity? What an indictment of human wisdom and behavior. (75)

Mystery The word *mystery* seems to throw some people. They want to involve themselves in what they call the *mysterious* and *mystical* of the Gospel. The Roman Church is very good at creating mysteries from the Word of God. However, this is not what Paul meant when he spoke of the Gospel as the mystery that had been hidden with God since before the beginning of time. In our context the word "mystery" and the word "wisdom" are being used synonymously. Applebury, in his commentary on First Corinthians had some pertinent remarks on this word writing:

"Mystery" in the New Testament refers to that which would have remained unknowable if God had not revealed it through the inspired apostles and prophets. But since it has been revealed, we are not to assume that it takes additional illumination or miraculous effort of the Spirit to enable us to understand it. Paul clearly showed the Ephesians that God had made mystery known through him, and that the Ephesians could know of his understanding when they read what he had written. (36)

So, that which had not formerly been known because God had not revealed it was until the time of revelation a mystery. It was a mystery to the Prophets who wrote a great deal of it as Peter noted when he wrote:

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. (1 Pet. 1:10-11)

However, it is no mystery to the one who reads with understanding the thing most surely believed among us from his Bible (Eph. 3:1-7).

The Nature of Heaven's Wisdom

It must be emphasized that the *wisdom* of which Paul spoke is absolutely heavenly. Salvation from sin through the Gospel of Christ is something that up until the Day of Pentecost had never been seen by any human eye; nor had any human ear ever heard of it. Furthermore, the possibility of being cleansed of sin by the blood of a crucified and resurrected Savior had never so much as entered the hearts of sinful men! When one looks at the glorious Gospel through the eyes of a sin-encrusted world; it does seem fantastic, even too good to be real! These eternal truths of salvation through Christ even today, seem too much to be believed by many; even those of a religious inclination. If one is prone to discount heavenly wisdom and depend on his own—he will never be a child of God with a hope beyond the grave. The quote found in the 9th verse—to which we are making reference is from Isaiah 64:4 and 65:17. It is paramount that we understand what Paul is saying here or we will miss the point of the whole paragraph. Of this quotation Butler wrote in his commentary on this book:

Verse 9 does *not* refer to man's future state in heaven. It refers to the apostolic message of redemption through the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. That divine program was not conceived by man. It never occurred to man that God would save him by grace. That is evidenced by all of the religions of the world, except Christianity, attempting to attain reconciliation with God through works. Man, in his pride and arrogance, refuses to acknowledge he must be saved by grace. He could never even imagine the way God would accomplish salvation. If God had chosen to keep his redemptive plan privately hidden in his own mind forever, man would never have discovered it with his own finite and limited human knowledge. (39)

With Butler's comments one cannot help but agree, especially since the words were quoted in the context of how the wisdom of Heaven came to the earth, or—indeed why there is need for the Bible at all!

Men have often been dissatisfied with Heaven's wisdom as is evidenced by the fact that they have never ceased in their efforts to "improve" it. This is done in numerous ways such as paying little attention to it and reveling in a better felt than told religion, or in emphasizing one biblical truth far above all the others and making this paramount on the scale of their beliefs. They have even named their churches for what they consider to be the most important doctrine in the Bible. Brethren sometimes follow this lead by finding and emphasizing one biblical teaching over all others. They have ridden various hobbies to the point of dividing the Body of Christ. The great need among those who claim to be "Christians" is to accept Heaven's wisdom—all of Heaven's wisdom, not reinterpreting heaven came to the earth or emphasizing one truth above another.

Hence, the wisdom that Paul spoke was to the mature of heart, ready to receive God's truth. It was not the wisdom to which they were accustomed and which belonged to that age, nor to the worldly princes of that age. This wisdom, as well as the princes themselves was coming to nothing even as the "wisdom" of Caiaphas and other Jewish leaders who brought about the death of Jesus without ever realizing that they were playing right into hands of God and advancing His plan to bring salvation to the world.

The Process which brought God's Wisdom to Men

Paul pointed out in the passage under consideration the process *Elohim* used to bring the wisdom that brings salvation to the world. It was a message filled with good news, a Gospel that was God's own power to save from (Rom. 1:16-17).

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to know that the Holy Spirit, whose power they had witnessed in the signs and miracles

done by Him at the hands of the Apostles and those upon whom they had laid holy hands, was a major player in bringing the wisdom of God to the world. Those things eye had not seen, ear had not heard, and had never entered into the heart of man God had given to the Apostles, and other inspired persons through, or by the medium of the Holy Spirit. This wisdom did not originate in the mind of the Spirit alone, but in the mind of the Godhead, *i.e. Elohim*. In the 10th verse, Paul informs that “the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” This statement can be easily misunderstood for one get the idea that the Holy Spirit searched the mind of God in order to learn what God was thinking—in order to obtain that divine wisdom of which He was still ignorant. Such is not the case. As Edwards pointed out the Holy Spirit does not search the deep things of God in order to *discover* what they are, but “the argument is that the Spirit is ever *active* in fathoming the depths of God.” Regarding this statement by Paul, Edwards went on to state, “He proves by analogy that we cannot know the things of God without the revelation of the Spirit of God. No man knows another’s thoughts; so none can know God’s thoughts until He utters them” (58-59). This He can reasonably do because He is one of the persons who make up God. In this respect Elohim is not all that different from man. As one man cannot know the thoughts and motives of another until they are revealed to him by the possessor, so it is with God. No one knew the wisdom of God until God, through the Spirit revealed it.

The apostolic preachers and teachers received the Holy Spirit, either by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as in the case of the Apostles of Christ, or by the laying on of the Apostles’ hands (Acts 19:1-7). The Holy Spirit knew the wisdom of God, because He, being a member of the Godhead, was privy to all that *Elohim* planned and executed. The Holy Spirit did not need a revelation from God the Father because He, as a member of the Godhead, revealed the mind of God to the minds of men, in this case Paul the Apostle. The Divine Spirit knew and understood even the minutia of Divine wisdom, if, indeed Divine wisdom has minutia! Nothing was hidden from the Holy Spirit by either the Father or the Son for the three were partners in man’s

redemption. By way of illustration: If the Father, the Son and Spirit sat down in heaven before the creation of man and carefully worked out all the details of the redemption of the creature they were about to create, then the Holy Spirit who was involved in making the plan knew what it was. Being *active* in that, He was able to reveal that wisdom to men when the time came for it to be a mystery no longer, but a revelation to the minds of men. To the blessed Holy Spirit man should be eternally grateful, for without His doing His work there would be no Bible and mankind would still grope in spiritual darkness with no hope of salvation—we would live in the kingdom of darkness rather than in the Kingdom of the Son of God’s love.

Man’s Work in the Divine Process

He began this phase of his explanation of the process of Divine Wisdom coming to the mature by pointing out that in preaching the glorious Gospel he, the other Apostles, Prophets and inspired Evangelists such as John Mark, had *not* received the spirit—teaching or wisdom of the world. Worldly learning and teaching can never reveal heavenly wisdom; the two are totally incompatible! Like oil and water, they cannot be mixed! The wisdom Paul preached was far beyond the wisdom of the worldly teachers, for their eyes had never seen, their ears had never heard, they had no comprehension of “the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, *i.e.*, those who received His wisdom and were obedient to Him. You see, the world in its wisdom did not know God, but had turned from Him to the foolishness of idolatry. This is the substance of what Paul had already spoken to them in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. It is impossible that such wisdom should come as a result of the worldly wisdom of man. No, it had to be *revealed*—uncovered, disclosed, made known by the Spirit of God! Leon Morris in his commentary on 1 Corinthians put the matter this way:

Unto us comes first in the Greek with emphasis. Paul is in no doubt as to who has the truth, the learned philosophers or the humble Christians. *Unto us*, believers, great things have been revealed. But the emphatic *unto us* is

immediately followed by *hath revealed*, as though to remove any suggestion of superiority. There can be no feelings of pride where it is recognized that all is of God. Believers know what they know, not because of any skill or wisdom of their own, but because it has pleased God to reveal it to them. (57)

It appears that Morris gave an application to the pronoun *us* beyond what Paul intended. In this context the pronoun refers primarily, if not exclusively to Paul and his fellow workers in Corinth. If he used the pronoun in a broader sense it could still only apply to the Spirit baptized Apostles, to the Prophets of his day who had received the gift of prophecy and spoke those things not yet written in the Word. It would also include inspired Evangelists such as John Mark, author of the Book of Mark who preached and wrote under the power of the Holy Spirit. However, it does not refer to all believers at that time for the wisdom of God was not revealed to **all** believers; only to those qualified to receive it. An example would be the “housetop vision” that Peter received at Joppa regarding his preaching to the Gentiles at Caesarea Maritima in the case of the conversion of Cornelius and his family (See: Acts 10).

Morris continued his remarks on vv. ten through thirteen writing:

Paul speaks of the revelation as having been accomplished by the Holy Spirit. This is a kind of turning point, for while he previously mentioned the Spirit occasionally in his argument, he now begins to dwell on His activities. *Searcheth* does not mean that the Spirit searches with a view to obtaining information. Rather it is a way of saying that He penetrates into *all things*. There is nothing beyond His knowledge. In particular Paul specifies *the deep things of God*. *Deep* is often used of the mighty depths of the sea, and thus comes to signify ‘unfathomable.’ It points us to the impossibility of any creature knowing the innermost recesses of the divine counsel, ‘the depths of God’. But they are known to the

Spirit, and it is this Spirit who has revealed the truths of which Paul speaks. (57)

Hence, it is seen that revelation is a major part in “funneling” Divine Wisdom from God to men; a function in which the Holy Spirit acted in such a way as to make sure that the wisdom of *Elohim* was put in the right “earthen vessel” (2 Cor. 4:7) to be delivered to mankind.

Since God decreed that men were to deliver the message of salvation—the Gospel, to men (Mat. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47) it was those men entrusted with this task who received revelation from God of His Divine Wisdom. Men then, became the “receptors” of the wisdom and were responsible to pass it on to the world. This is implicit in the Great Commission of Jesus.

The second part of the process was God’s *safeguarding* His revelation by inspiring men to write and preach it. Of the wisdom eye had not seen, ear had not heard, which had never entered the heart of any man until God put it thereby revelation, Paul said: “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13). God did not just give the revelation to man and trust him to express it in human words using the wisdom and art of man, for the possibilities of expression are legion and the words of man’s own invention could have ended hurting more than helping. So, Paul boldly asserts here that heavenly wisdom must be expressed in heavenly words when He said: “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13). The safeguarding of the message and the delivering it, whether written or spoken, in the exact words to convey the truth God wanted men to learn is also inspiration. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul wrote: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The phrase “given by inspiration of God,” comes from one compound

word in the original. It is *theopneustos* and refers to the breathing of God. It is used only here in the New Testament and nowhere in classic Greek. Paul is telling Timothy that the Scriptures are God-breathed and this God-breathing is what Paul refers to in the words “not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches but by which the Holy Spirit teaches.” The Holy Spirit being God (Acts 5:3-4) breathed out into the minds of the Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists those words that would convey the wisdom accurately. When the speakers and writers used their own words to convey the wisdom God wanted man to know—God approved them, and this is also a part of inspiration. When they did not have the right words to express the mind of God, the Spirit breathed those words out to them, giving them the completed message which brings salvation to men. Urquhart in his work *Inspiration and Accuracy of the Holy Scripture* put the matter forcefully, but not too forcefully when he wrote:

If the apostles were with us now, and above all, if the Lord were still bodily present with us, how many there are who would hasten to carry all their questionings to them, and who would esteem one word from *their* lips weightier than all that the press has poured forth upon the question! But here we have this very answer. The unquestioned words of the Lord and of His apostles have already decided the matter for all believing men. (50)

In other words, nothing would change if we could ask the Lord and His Holy Apostles questions, for God has already *breathed out* the answer for us on the pages of Holy Writ.

Warfield in his classic work *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, gave what has become an accepted definition of Inspiration in most, if not all, conservative Protestant Churches. He defined inspiration in this way:

The Biblical books are called inspired as the Divinely determined products of inspired men; the Biblical writers are called inspired as breathed into by the Holy Spirit, so that the product of their activities transcends human

powers and becomes Divinely authoritative. Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness. (131)

Paul said that special revelation was spoken in special words. The words He needed to speak spiritual things were breathed into his mind by the Holy Spirit—God. But, as James Orr pointed out in his work *Revelation and Inspiration*, inspiration goes further than mere “giving of the right words to express a spiritual thought. He wrote: “...[I]f a revelation has been given by God, it is reasonable to expect that provision will be made for *the preservation* of the knowledge of the revelation *in some permanent and authoritative form*. Otherwise the object in giving the revelation would be frustrated” (155).

The permanent and authoritative form in which God’s revelation has been preserved is called, “The Holy Bible.”

Haldane added a vital aspect to this thought when he wrote *Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*. Paraphrasing: Inspiration kept the Bible from being corrupted in later centuries for there were so many ancient copies in existence which were perfectly uniform that any alteration would have been immediately noted and attacked. He said the fact that copyists took little or no liberties when they worked indicated both respect for the Holy Scriptures and the fact that they knew any changes would be immediately noted by their editors and overseers. (*Cf.* 65 – 108). Spiritual revelation required spiritual words which were supplied by the Holy Spirit.

There was a reason for that. The natural man—the one whose eyes had not seen, whose ears had not heard, into whose heart such things as those revealed had never entered was unable to receive such teachings, for to him they were foolishness. He considered them foolishness—absurdities to him because he lacked spiritual discernment, and in reality he had/has no interest in the spiritual, only the physical. Consequently, he pronounces them as silly or absurd.

However, Paul pointed out in the 15th verse that they are

those who recognize and apprehend the spiritual when they hear it and discern it as the truth of God and will accept and obey it. The Spiritual man investigates, examines and questions what he has heard, like the noble Bereans in Acts 17:10-12. The spiritual man such as Paul and other Christians of the time were not investigated, interrogated nor scrutinized spiritually by anyone for the spiritually minded agreed and the worldly-minded had no interest.

Conclusion

Paul concluded his magnificent essay on the character of the wisdom of God by asking a rhetorical question—“Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” No one has the right to instruct God for humans do not think on God’s plain, however, the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and other inspired persons had the mind of Christ, *i.e.*, these had received and accepted God’s wisdom—Christ’s revelation.

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Biographical Sketch

D. Gene West, a native of Hancock County, WV, was baptized into Christ by the late Jess W. Nutter, April 11, 1950 and began preaching in February, 1953. He currently serves the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ in Moundsville, WV, and serves as a teacher of Acts and Revelation at the West Virginia School of Preaching. He and his wife, the former Shirley Bissett are the parents of three children, Kandi Davis, Mary Amy Kessinger, and Todd C. West. They are the grandparents of seven grandchildren. He graduated Freed-Hardeman University, West Liberty University, Fairmont State University, and has done graduate work at Southern Christian University and West Virginia University. After more than ten years of intense study, he authored a moderate preterist commentary on Revelation entitled: *Avenging His Holy Saints, Apostles and Prophets*. This is a hardbound work of some 847 pages, including the indices. He has also written: *A Student's Commentary on the Book of Acts* and *A Student's Commentary on the Treatise to the Hebrews*, the Books of *Philippians*, *Philemon*, *Romans*, *Galatians* as well as *Messianic Prophecy Outlined* and some tracts on Islam, the Names of God, Homosexuality and some others.

He holds Gospel meetings each year, speaks on various brotherhood lecture programs and makes frequent mission trips to the British Isles where he helps brethren in Scotland and England. He gave minimal assistance to British brethren in the publication of a wonderful anthology edited by brother Joe Nisbet of Aberdeen, Scotland entitled *Historical Survey of the Churches of Christ in the British Isles*, and serves as the

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With the exception of seven years, he has lived and worked with
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Maintain Sexual Purity

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Eddie Cooper

I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this great lectureship. To be asked to speak is truly an honor.

The theme is certainly a timely one. The world needs it as well as those in the church. It is almost impossible to preach on the subject of morality anymore. And, if one does, there are a lot of repercussions that follow. But, we must be true to God's Word and never waver.

We believe that Biblical standards of morality are universal and timeless. They are applicable to all generations, all societies, and all subcultures.

God's standard of morality has not changed and God blesses those who obey His will. This standard has been set up for our preservation and welfare. Sexual purity **before** and **throughout** marriage is God's plan for mankind. As always, God's way pays great dividends, often in the form of successful, lifelong marriage unions.

In our day, such statements as: "It's my body, I have the right to do with it what I want," or "no one can tell me what to do," are common even among Christians. This sounds a lot like the philosophy that was in vogue when I was a teen. As long as "love" is served, you can do what you want. It was called the Playboy Philosophy. In later years it became known as the "New Morality." In other words, you could do just about whatever you wanted to do whether it conformed to God's law or not. We are still living in a world with that philosophy or mindset.

In order to understand our lesson, let's define our terms. By **maintain**, is meant: "to continue, carry on, to persevere or retain" ("Maintain"). The word **sexual**: "of or involving sex, the sexes, or the sex organs and their functions; implying or symbolizing erotic desires and activity" ("Sexual"). **Purity** is defined as "free from adulterants or; not tainted; free from contaminants; clean" ("Purity," American Heritage). Thus we

are discussing, based on the Scriptures, assigned ways of maintaining sexual purity. **Purity**, according to Webster's 7th Collegiate Dictionary means "the quality or state of being pure" ("Purity," Webster). What does **pure** mean? "a) Unmixed with any other matter; b) spotless, stainless; c) free from harshness or roughness; d) free from what weakens or pollutes; e) not containing something which does not properly belong; f) marked by being chaste" ("Pure," Webster).

We will never reach a place in our lives when we are 100% pure. Maybe we can reach the status of Ivory soap, but not the 100% level in this life. We must continually, however, strive for purity because it is an ongoing process.

Sexual purity begins in the mind, not the body. Proverbs 23:7 states: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Matthew 15:19, 20 reads: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man...." You will inevitably adopt the morality of what goes into the mind. These sources include TV programs, books, movies, magazines, music, internet sites, and conversations that you might participate in.

One of the great lessons of life is found in Galatians 6:7-9: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." The application is this: we must learn to think long term—not short term. Good or bad, you will always reap what you sow—you will always harvest the consequences of your choices.

Moral purity is not a devious plan to eliminate enjoyment from the Christian's life, even though Satan tries to convince us otherwise. Purity is God's infinitely wise foundation for true happiness and long-lasting family relationships.

In this lesson we shall look at five great principles involved in the text. They are: 1. A Great Principle (12), 2. A Great Honor (13-15, 17, 19) (15, 18), 3. A Great Sin (15-18), 4. A

Great Ransom (20), and 5. A Great Obligation (20).

Before we do that, let us look at the background of the city of Corinth. Brother Drew Kizer gives this information.

The city of Corinth had a temple of its own, dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty. One thousand priestesses who were nothing more than prostitutes descended from this place every evening to seduce men in the city. A saying developed: 'It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth.' Corinth's reputation for sexual immorality was so bad that its name evolved into a byword for debauchery. (146)

As described by Paul Butler in his commentary on 1 Corinthians:

Corinth was a city of "wealth, luxury and immorality" in Paul's time. To "live like a Corinthian" meant to live a life completely given over to dissipation, licentiousness, debauchery, and extravagance in every evil way. The reason is that in the temple of Aphrodite on the Acropolis there were 1,000 "Corinthian girls" employed as "temple maiden servants" who were actually prostitutes. Worship in the temple involved sexual intercourse with one of the so-called "priestesses." This attracted "worshippers" from all over the Roman world. (4)

Notice from the following references the environment in which one found himself at Corinth: 1 Corinthians 5:1: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles..." 1 Corinthians 6:9: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites..." 1 Corinthians 6:13: "Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." 1 Cor. 6:18: "Flee sexual immorality." 1 Corinthians 7:2: "Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let

each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” 1 Corinthians 10:8: “Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.”

After the abominations in the first letter were not heeded, Paul said in his second Corinthian letter, “lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced” (2 Cor. 12:21).

A Great Principle (1 Cor. 6:12)

Perhaps they were like the brethren in Galatia, who wanted to interpret Christian freedom with license. The Corinthians, like many in our day, wanted to excuse their behavior.

The principle is this: “All things are lawful unto me” (v. 12). One of the arguments used in our day is: “but I can do what I want, it is lawful for me.” In other words, everything I want to do is permissible. In this text, they were putting sexual desire in the same category as food. Both are natural; both deserve to be satisfied. Notice the word “deserve.” Whenever the urge is felt, one must move to satisfy it.

It is true that when God made everything in the beginning, He created it good (right, lawful) for the purpose for which He made it. Everything is lawful when it is in its proper place and being used properly. We know that God made sex for at least two reasons: enjoyment and intimacy (in the marriage bond) of the opposite sex, and procreation. When it is used as God designed and ordained it, there is nothing more satisfying, beautiful or meaningful. Heb. 13:4 reads: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” Outside of marriage, it is immoral—fornication. Brother Wendell Winkler writes:

The Corinthians under the influence of false teachers, had apparently confused what was morally right (such as the eating of meat, that which was permissible and indifferent-in the sense that such could be engaged in if

one so desired without sin) and that which was morally wrong (fornication). Apparently they were reasoning on this basis: since meats and fornication were attached to pagan idolatrous worship, they then deduced that if one could eat meat, he could also commit fornication. In response and reply, Paul made a distinction between the body and the stomach. He observed that the stomach fulfilled a purpose when it uses meat to sustain life. But, when does the body fulfill its purpose? Paul answers by stating that such obtains when the body is used to glorify God. He affirms this by stating: “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” In other words, Paul is saying that eating meat is not a perversion of the stomach’s intended use; however, fornication would be a gross perversion of the body’s use and purpose. (95)

Paul does not conclude with that statement, but says, “but all things are not expedient.” The word here is translated “*expedient*” or “*helpful*,” which means “worthwhile, helpful, advisable and profitable.” In other words, all that is good for you is not always good for you. God gave you a desire for food, but we are to eat in a healthy manner. Food taken into the stomach does not defile our personhood. In Matthew 15:11, we read: “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man: but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” If we use our body to enter a God-forbidden relationship, it would violate one’s personality and likeness to God. Brother Wayne Jackson gives a good explanation of this phrase.

The phrase “all things are lawful for me” is grossly misunderstood. Paul is affirming that all human actions are subject to his control (“lawful” literally means “subject to my power”), yet even things subject to one’s control must at times be reigned by expediency, so as to profit not only himself, but others as well. Further, the apostle would not abuse his liberty (in things permissible), he would bring himself under control in the

use of optional items. Even right things can be wrong things.” “Meats” is a generic term; it can be food generally or meat in particular, depending upon the context. The proper use-or **non**-use of such also depends upon respective persons and circumstances. God designed food for the stomach, and vice versa; eventually, this relationship will cease with the decomposition of the body. The Christian, however, must use spiritually seasoned common sense in the use of things lawful, e.g., food. On the other hand, the human body is **never** to be used for fornication (illicit sexual indulgence). (312-13)

Even though we would admit that there are certain things within themselves that are right, Paul has as his purpose, “**not to be brought under the power of any.**” Albert Barnes gives these points:

We may observe: 1] That this is a good rule to act on. It was Paul’s rule. 2] It is the true rule of an independent and noble mind. It requires a high order of virtue; and is the only way in which a man may be useful and active. 3] It may be applied to many things now. Many a Christian **is a slave**; and is completely under the power of some habit that destroys his usefulness and happiness. (104)

We, like Paul, need to recognize the freedoms we have as Christians, but not to become a slave to freedom. Not to even become a slave to things that are lawful. Certain desires are lawful, but we cannot be so enslaved to them that we satisfy them in an unlawful way.

A Great Honor (1 Cor. 6:13-15, 17, 19)

A significant question is asked by Paul three times in this text. Three times he asks: “do you not know” to remind his readers of important godly realities. 1) Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?

Certainly not! (1 Cor. 6:15) We must recognize that when we become Christians, we belong to God. We presented our bodies as living sacrifices. (Rom. 12:1)

Giving your body to a harlot is unacceptable. Why would one join himself to a harlot since he has been joined to Christ? **RECOGNIZE THAT YOU BELONG TO GOD.** When will Christians come to understand that they belong to God, both body and spirit (1 Cor. 6:20)?

Albert Barnes writes: “The union with Christ is more intimate, entire, and pure than that can be between a man and woman; and that union should be regarded as sacred and inviolable” (106).

A Great Sin (1 Cor. 6:15-18)

The next question that is asked is this: 2) “Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two, he says, “shall become one flesh” (1 Cor. 6:16). When one becomes a Christian he is united, both body and spirit. Uniting oneself with a harlot would be an unthinkable act. Having sexual relations with prostitutes violates one’s union with Christ. Thus, we are to “flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18). Brother David Lipscomb made a wonderful statement on this section of Scripture:

That these words refer originally to marriage does not lessen their appropriateness here. For they teach that the union of the sexes in marriage relation was divinely ordained at the Creation of the race, on order to unite husband and wife so closely that in them even personal distinction should in some respects cease. Intercourse with harlots desecrates this divine relation to a means of sin. Therefore, in a Christian, it robs Christ of a member of his body in order to place it in union with one utterly opposed to him, a union so close that they are one flesh.
(92)

It is impossible to be one with the Lord and one with a harlot at the same time. If you decide to choose the harlot, then you

become separated from the Lord. When one decides to follow the Lord, he flees fornication. **WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE WHAT WE ARE DOING.**

By way of addressing this issue, Paul gives nine reasons why fornication is wrong: 1) the body is not for fornication (6:13), 2) the body is for the Lord (6:13), 3) the Lord is for the body, (6:13), 4) the body will be raised (6:14), 5) our bodies are members of Christ (6:15), 6) fornication is a sin against the body (6:15), 7) our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (6:19), 8) our bodies have been bought with a price and belong to God (6:20), and 9) our bodies are to be used to glorify God (6:20).

If you remember, Paul “buffeted” or “disciplined” his body (1 Cor. 9:27). The verse reads this way: “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” The word “buffet” means to “strike as with the hand, to strike repeatedly, to batter or contend against.” Paul was determined to strike down every unholy inclination of the body. He was set on bringing all of the desires of the body in subjection to the rule of the Spirit. To bring his body under complete subjection required that he strike down any craving of his body for unlawful sex or any other thing that would make him disqualified.

Albert Barnes writes: “Man should *escape* from it; he should not stay to *reason* about it; to *debate* the matter; or even *contend* with its propensities, and to try the strength of virtue” (106).

A Great Ransom (1 Cor. 6:20)

The third question is this: “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.”

We are bought with a price. Christians are purchased, and since that is the case, we must do what Christ directs. Christians have been redeemed, and so they must devote themselves to God only and flee the licentious life. 1 Peter 1:18-19 reads: “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, from your aimless conduct received by

tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (cf. Acts 20:28).

When the Lord purchased (redeemed) us, he bought us body, soul, and spirit. This purchase price is so great that we would not want to do anything to contaminate the body with sexual sins.

Not only that, but the Christian’s body is the temple for the Holy Spirit which is in the Christian. (Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6) Since we have been purchased, we do not belong to ourselves. We are now slaves, or servants of Christ. Romans 6:22 reads: “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.”

A Great Obligation (1 Cor. 6:20)

We are to “glorify” God in our body and spirit. The word “glorify” means “to shed radiance and splendor upon, to make glorious by presentation in a favorable aspect, to give glory in worship.” The thought is that the Christian should use and discipline his body so as to give honor and respect to God. This he cannot do if he gives his body over to fornication.

David Lipscomb comments: “We should use the body as to please and do service to God. To glorify God is to exalt and honor him as worthy of the highest praise and most faithful service. Our only and supreme desire should be to know the will of God that we may do it” (95).

Christians must keep the world out of the church. Brethren must be an example of a loving fellowship, but not willing to tolerate sin in the body. As a beacon of light, we show the world moral uprightness. We cannot adopt its lifestyle and seek to justify our actions because we have liberties in Christ. Sexual sins must be resisted because, according to this text, they are against both deity and human personality.

Let me close with some practical ways to maintain sexual purity: 1) Maintain sexual purity through the power of Christ (Eph. 5:3). This will mean exercising self-restraint by bringing my body, mind, will, and emotions under complete control through Christ (Gal. 5:16). 2) Hate evil and put to death earthly desires at work in me for sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil

passions, and greed. Flee sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18). 3) Fill the mind with things that are pure (Philip. 4:8). 4) Use the body to serve the Lord and keep it clean and pure as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:18). 5) Quickly and fully repent of any moral failure and trust the Lord for forgiveness (1 John 1:9). 6) Respect God and yourself. 7) Know your self-worth (Mark 12:31). 8) Don't give in to social myths. 9) Be willing to battle when tempted. 10) Be accountable (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10)

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Biographical Sketch

Eddie Cooper was born April 23, 1946, to Denver and Florence Cooper. He married the former Barbara Buckley of Parkersburg, WV, on September 2, 1966, and they have two sons, Jason and Scott. Jason's family currently lives in Florida and Scott's family resides in Tennessee.

Eddie graduated from St. Marys High School in St. Marys, WV in 1964. He is also a 1966 graduate of Ohio Valley University with an Associate of Science Degree in Bible and a 1969 graduate of Abilene Christian University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Bible

In View of Present Distress

1 Corinthians 7:17-38

Gary Hampton

Choosing to follow Christ would have resulted in dramatic differences in the life of a Christian in Corinth. “The city had developed an unapologetic love of things and a love of pleasure. It was full of people who wanted to make money and have fun....On the hill overlooking Corinth was the temple to the goddess Aphrodite. Its male and female prostitutes made sexual intercourse a part of the religion” (Chafin 19). A newborn babe in Christ would, in most cases, have given up selfish and sinful actions and replaced them with an other-loving attitude of service.

Christianity and Social Relations

Those coming up out of the waters of baptism may have wondered if all of the social relationships of their lives had to be changed. Paul wanted them to realize that some things would remain the same. One’s employer would have still been the same, as would his address. Those who were baptized while single would have still been single and those who were married when immersed would still be married. Paul explained, “But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches” (1 Cor. 7:17). Lenski says, “The Greek places the emphasis on ‘each’ and on ‘the Lord’: *he* in his right as the Lord gives to *each* under his gracious jurisdiction a special assignment in keeping with the course of his providence” (299).

J. W. Shepherd commented, “Paul endeavored to convince his readers that their relation to Christ was comparable with any social relation or position not sinful in itself. Their conversion to Christ involved, therefore, no necessity of breaking asunder their social ties” (Lipscomb 104). Becoming a Christian should not be used as an excuse for disrupting normal social relations. Christianity is only disruptive to that which is evil. It encourages

us in all the good relationships we have in life. The apostle also stated the rule applied to all the churches, not just Corinth. “The apostles in virtue of their plenary inspiration, were authorized not only to teach the doctrines of the gospel but also to regulate all matters relating to practice” (Hodge 121). “As the summary rule for all things of a smaller nature, the apostle says that each must rest content to walk in the lot which God has apportioned to him, not making his new religion an excuse for unwarranted changes” (McGarvey 81).

The Illustration of Circumcision

To illustrate his point that radical changes in social relationships are unnecessary unless sin is involved, Paul mentioned circumcision. “Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters” (1 Cor. 7:18-19). “The Jews were wont, when they abandoned their religion, to endeavour to obliterate the mark of circumcision. The Judaizers were disposed to insist on the circumcision of the Gentile converts. Both were wrong” (Hodge 121-122). Paul told them to remain as they were when called by the Gospel. Obedience to the Law of Christ is what counts once one becomes a Christian. “If called a Jew, then by race and in body remain a Jew. If called a Gentile (and against the insistence of the Judaizers, who were trying to bind circumcision and other matters of the law of Moses upon Gentiles), then remain in terms of race and body a Gentile. Both of you, Paul is saying, serve God!” (Jackson 65). “In itself, the presence or absence of this mark is religiously indifferent. What does matter supremely is keeping the commandments of God, or as Paul says in similar contexts in Gal. 5:6 and 6:15, ‘faith working through love’, the token of ‘a new creation’” (Bruce 71). Paul explained it in simple, but powerful terms in Galatians 3:26-29, when he wrote,

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put

on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Paul understood the desire to defend Moses' law against what he thought was a terrible attack. The change wrought in his life when his sins were washed away through his calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16) had caused him to see the great mystery of God's plan to save all men, both Jew and Gentile, in the one body of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. (Eph. 2:14-16)

The Illustration of Slavery

“Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it” (1 Cor. 7:20-21). Lipscomb saw three basic distinctions that "divide and unite" mankind. They are: national, social, and physical (Gal. 3:28). Becoming a Christian does not require a change in those distinctions. Anyone can be a Christian if he is willing to obey the Gospel. Slaves did not have to escape slavery to be Christians. “Paul says...that while a Christian is a slave he is not to worry about his status; if it changes to one of freedom, so much the better” (Lenski 303). “Paul's object is not to exhort men not to improve their condition, but simply not to allow their social relations to disturb them; or imagine that their becoming Christians rendered it necessary to change those relations” (Hodge 123). If freedom was offered, it was to be

preferred since more time would have been available for the Lord's service.

“For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave” (1 Cor. 7:22). “We may put it abstractly: slavery in Christ is true freedom; freedom in Christ is true slavery” (Lenski 305). Even in slavery, Christianity frees man from sin, as Paul explains, “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22). Upon becoming a Christian, those who were free become slaves to Christ because He purchased them. The apostle had already told the Corinthian church, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

He similarly expressed the truth in his charge to the Ephesian elders, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Peter said much the same thing when he wrote to “the pilgrims of the Dispersion” and told them, “you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Since Christ bought Christians, they are His servants no matter what state they may be in (Eph. 6:5-8).

The Lord described how each of His followers must be a servant of others if they really wanted to be great in his kingdom.

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave--just

as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:25-28)

In his first epistle to the church at Corinth, Paul continued by saying, “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called” (7:23-24). Any work a Christian does should be done to the glory of God. So, each was admonished by Paul to remain in the basic social relationships they were in at the time they obeyed Christ, unless the association involved sin.

Is Virginitly Preferable to Marriage?

McGarvey believed Paul was answering a series of questions the Corinthian brethren had asked. He thought this section dealt with the question of whether being a virgin was to be preferred above marriage (82). The apostle wrote, “Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy” (1 Cor. 7:25). Paul was inspired in his judgment (7:40; 14:37), so his answer is one upon which we can rely. “*Judgment (gnome)* is related to a Greek word for knowledge (*gnosis*) and describes Paul’s judgment based on experience and observation (i.e. the conclusion was not based on his personal likes and dislikes)” (Price 251). Hodge says, “He was inspired...in this matter, not to command, but to advise. His advice, however, was worthy of great deference. It was not merely the counsel of a wise and experienced man; but of one who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be *faithful*, i. e. worthy of confidence, one who could be trusted” (126). The apostle’s trustworthiness, or faithfulness, “is expressed with a present tense verb....He had been faithful, was continuing to stay faithful, and intended to stay faithful until the end (2 Tim. 4:7)....If God regarded Paul as faithful and reliable, the Corinthians could and should have accepted his personal judgment on this and other matters related to marriage” (Price 251).

Paul went on to say, “I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress--that it is good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife” (1 Cor. 7:26-27). “The **impending distress** makes the advice already given on remaining in one’s existing state of life doubly advantageous. It gives no occasion to a married man to **seek to be free** but it does show reason why an unmarried man should remain so” (Bruce 74). The apostle “referred to the then and coming persecution of the saints, with the physical pain and hardship, disruption of family life, separation of family members from one another, etc.” (Jackson 68). It is important to note that “under normal circumstances, marriage is encouraged (Gen. 2:18). Under normal conditions Paul commended marriage (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-21; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:14; Tit. 1:6; 2:3-5). Corinth had a special set of circumstances and these circumstances affected these church members, especially those who were contemplating marriage” (Price 252).

Remember, the statements above were statements of inspired judgment, not commands. If one could not control himself, marriage was not a sin. It would simply increase the number of problems to be handled and Paul would have liked to help them avoid those intensified difficulties. Thus, he continued with, “But even if you do marry you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you” (1 Cor. 7:28).

The Shortness of Life

Paul digressed into a discussion of the shortness of our time upon the earth, noting that the suffering of this life is limited. “But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:29-31).

Marriage, tears, joys, purchases, the whole world of

earthly things--we Christians may have all of them, use all of them, experience all of them--how? for what they are, as belonging to the...form of this present world. What Paul says is true: as soon as we go beyond this limit and permit any or all of these to interfere with our spiritual life and our relation to the life to come, a false...power reaches into our lives and begins to ruin them. (Lenski 319)

Children of God should recognize the brevity of this earthly existence. James said, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (2:13-14). Job also observed, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And are spent without hope. Oh, remember that my life is a breath! My eye will never again see good" (7:6-7). Even if one used life's pleasures to the fullest, when this life is over, it is going to seem as if he had not used life's pleasures fully. Moses recognized this important truth and chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25). Jesus gave a warning when a man came to him and asked the Lord to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him.

And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then

whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:15-21)

The Reason for Paul’s Instruction

Paul went on to explain the reason underlying his instructions.

But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord--how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world--how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world--how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction. (1 Cor. 7:32-35)

Their father in the faith wanted the Corinthian brethren to be free of the extra cares of marriage when the distress came. The unmarried can center their whole attention on the Lord's work, because “in all this thinking and his doing he has only the Lord to consider and no other person” (Lenski 321). In contrast, the married man has to watch for the needs of his family and divide his attention. “He has cares about the things of the world that are necessary for his family life; and again the indirect question helps to make the matter clear: ‘how he may please his wife,’ succeed in pleasing her, for he and she are one flesh....Hence ‘he is divided’ in the matter of cares, some call him in one direction, and some in the other direction” (321-322). Lenski went on to say, “What being thus divided means we can see from the case of Martha: ‘Thou art anxious (literally, divided) and troubled about many things,’ trying to do a number of things at the same time, Luke 10:41.”

“Paul’s words are dictated solely by a concern for the spiritual interest of the Corinthians, to further them in the Christian life as much as possible....Paul’s purpose...is not to cast

a noose upon the Corinthians; he is not like a hunter who ropes a wild animal in order to render it helpless.” (Lenski 324). All of this was stressed because of the pressures (distress) they were to face and all of his advice was for their good at that time. He did not mean to place them in the path of undue temptation, only to help them avoid an extra load of cares. This, then, should not be used to substantiate a marital prohibition.

Giving a Daughter in Marriage

“In that age and country the father disposed of his daughters in marriage without consulting them, and his will was the law in the matter” (Lipscomb 113). So, Paul wrote, “But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry” (1 Cor. 7:36). Paul said that fathers might feel they wronged their daughters by keeping them from marrying, even after the normal age for marrying. Such fathers, when they saw their daughters were not able to withstand the temptations of the unmarried state, were urged by the apostle to go ahead and let them marry. There was no sin in being married. “That is, if she cannot live satisfied in the unmarried state, let him give her in marriage, and he need not fear that in doing so he does wrong” (Ibid).

“Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well. So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better” (1 Cor. 7:37-38). Lenski saw four factors which might guide a father in his choice of not giving his daughter’s hand in marriage. “The first stand of this father, however, to keep the daughter at home is one which he makes ‘in his heart,’ of his own accord, following Paul’s advice” (327-328). The father is able to do this because there is “no necessity,” or “this daughter has no especial sexual urge to marry, and her father has no special obligation toward her due to this circumstance....‘but (who) has power regarding his own will,’ i.e., is able to decide the matter entirely according to his own will” (Ibid 328).

Conclusion

Paul had a very special relationship with the spiritual family at Corinth, as is seen when he says, “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). That relationship may have been the reason they so readily asked him questions about the exercise of their Christian life, particularly how becoming a Christian should impact them in reference to marriage. The general principle the apostle set down was, “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called” (1 Cor. 7:20). Normal social relations, like those between an employer and employee, would continue as they always had. The only difference might be that a follower of Christ would be more dedicated in service to his employer.

Those who were Jews, in the physical sense, when baptized would remain Jews. Those who were Gentiles would similarly remain Gentiles in the flesh. Slaves would not be set free from physical bondage, though they would overcome sin through being buried with their Lord in baptism. Masters would still be masters, though they would submit themselves as slaves in service to Christ (Rom. 6:16-18).

Some sort of distress, perhaps persecution, did mean that it would be less troubling to remain single. The apostle made it clear, however, that marrying, or giving one’s daughter in marriage, would not be sinful. Concern for those they loved would add several layers of stress to the lives of those who had dedicated themselves in service to Jesus as King. Each of His subjects were expected to make service to Him the first priority in their lives.

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Matters of Opinion

1 Corinthians 8:1-9:27

Glenn Hawkins

I appreciate the opportunity extended to me to be a part of the WVSOP Lectureship this year. My hope and prayer is that this school will continue its mission of training and teaching men to be preachers of the Gospel.

The topic assigned to me is 1 Corinthians 8-9, Matters of Opinion. In the Restoration Movement in this country, a slogan was often heard, “In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, charity or love.” It certainly is a Biblical slogan and the slogan fits well 1 Corinthians 8 and 9.

The question, “What are matters of opinion?” is related directly to the larger question of how God authorizes. How does a Christian know what he is to believe and how he is to act? How is Bible authority established with reference to what our obligations are and how is authority established with reference to how we are to meet these obligations?

A careful study of the New Testament will reveal the following ways Biblical authority is established.

First, authority is established by direct statement – not just commands. Direct statements may be declarative, such as Mark 16:16. They may be interrogative, as in Romans 6:1. They may be horatory, as in Hebrews 6:1. They may be conditional, as in Colossians 3:1. Direct statements may be in the form of a command, such as Acts 2:38 and other such passages. Context, both immediate and remote, will determine whether a direct statement is relative to establish Biblical authority in relation to our obligations.

Second, authority is established by example. An example is a pattern, something to be imitated or followed. The question often asked is, “When is an example binding?” Perhaps the question ought to be, “When does the Bible account of an action constitute an example?” Roy Deaver commented: “Right at this point I shall explain the sense in which I am using the word ‘binding’ in

relationship to examples. I have in mind the thought that (1) some things are binding (and are thus examples) in the sense that they must be done (these are demanded; there is nothing optional – these facts being made clear by due consideration of the totality of the Bible teachings on the subject at hand), and (2) some things are binding (and are thus examples) in the sense that they may be done (these are authorized; they may be done, but they may be left undone) (13).

We are commanded to observe the Lord's Supper as per 1 Corinthians 11:24-25. We are instructed by precept and by example to observe it on the first day of the week, per Acts 20:7. There is no option here. I can observe the Lord's Supper in an upper room with many lights, but I am not obligated to do so.

In Thomas B. Warren's book, *When Is An Example Binding?*, he lists the kinds of actions mentioned in the New Testament.

- A. Action which was permanently sinful – that is, action which was sinful to New Testament characters and which is sinful for men living today.
- B. Action which was optional and temporary – that is, action which was optional to New Testament characters but which is not optional for men living today
- C. Action which was optional and permanent – that is, action which was optional for New Testament characters and which is optional for men living today.
- D. Action which was obligatory and temporary – that is, action which was obligatory upon New Testament characters but which is not obligatory for men living today.
- E. Action which was obligatory and permanent – that is, action which was obligatory upon New Testament characters and which is obligatory upon men living today. (124)

Looking at each of these “actions” individually, we surely understand that actions which were permanently sinful - like lying, murder, blasphemy – are still sinful today. Actions which

were optional and temporary can be seen in the fact that Gentiles did not have the Gospel preached to them for about ten years because the early Jewish Christians did not fully grasp the scope of the Great Commission. Such would not be acceptable today. Actions which were optional and permanent would include the means by which the Gospel is preached to the whole world. The early disciples travelled by ship, by horseback, or walked. These are options, though not the only options available to us today to preach the Gospel. For a discussion of other matters in this category, such as church cooperation and benevolence, Thomas Warren's book, *Lectures on Church Cooperation*, is recommended. In my opinion, the arguments advanced by brother Warren in this book have not been answered. Actions which were obligatory and permanent would include Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12:30, "but covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I you a more excellent way." Miraculous spiritual gifts were available in the first century to Christians living then, but these were only temporary and designed to be removed, as Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. The final category of actions is those which were obligatory and permanent. An example of this kind of action would be the partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week, as found in Acts 20:7. When you put this passage along with 1 Corinthians 11:20 and 16:2, it becomes clear that Christians today are obligated to partake of the Lord's Supper each first day of the week.

Third, Biblical authority is established by implication. God implies some things; we draw the inference from it. There is a big difference between 'assumption' and 'inference.' In the case of the baptism of the Philippian jailer and his household in Acts 16, it is an assumption that there were children and infants in his household who were baptized; therefore it is scriptural to baptize infants. There is a lot of assumption here, but no inference.

On the other hand, we teach that Saul of Tarsus had to repent of his sins in order to be saved, even though there is no explicit statement that he did so. But repentance is demanded (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 17:30). No one can be saved without it.

Roy Deaver wrote, "When an action, fact, or teaching is

absolutely demanded by the Biblical information at hand – without being specifically stated – then that action, fact, or teaching is inference... Everything the Bible teaches, it teaches either (1) explicitly or (2) implicitly. And whatever it teaches implicitly is just as true, factual and binding, authoritative as is that which is taught explicitly” (17-18). For further study on the matter of implication or inference, see Thomas B. Warren’s book, *When Is An Example Binding?*

Fourth, Biblical authority is established by expediency. It is in this area that our subject, Matters of Opinion, fall. In carrying out God’s commands, there is an area of expediency. Expedience involves human judgment. This is the area where elders of the church function. An expedient is something which helps carry out a matter for which there is a direct statement, example or inference. Roy Deaver wrote “an expedient is that which is in harmony with the Scriptures, in which there is an inherent advantage, and which may be selected by the elders in carrying out our obligations of the church...” (20). For there to be an expedient, there must be an obligation. No obligation means no expedient.

At this point, I feel I need to say something about expedients and options. The New Testament commands Christians not to forsake the assembling of themselves (Heb. 10:25). But the command to assemble implies a place to assemble. With regard to finding a place to assemble, there are at least four options: buy a building, rent a building, build a building, or meet in a private home. The elders of the congregation would have to make a choice as to which option is the most expedient. Not all options are expedient, but all expedients are options.

Now, I may have an opinion as to which expedient is the best, but I have no right to bind my opinion on anyone. The fact that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night is a matter of revelation (faith). My opinion as to why Nicodemus came by night is just that – an opinion. We are not told why he came by night.

In 1 Corinthians 8, the main question or subject Paul deals with is meat (food) that had been sacrificed to idols. It was a major problem in New Testament times. Banquets were held in the temple of an idol and meat sacrificed to that idol was eaten.

What was a Christian to do if invited to participate in such a meal?

In Acts 15:28-29, the apostles met in Jerusalem and wrote a letter to Gentile Christians that dealt in part with this issue. “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”

Since this passage is clear about the matter of fornication and meat offered to idols, which were problems in the Corinthian church, I submit that any interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8 will be wrong if it is made to contradict what the apostles wrote in Acts 15:28-29.

Clearly, some of the Corinthian brethren were going into the idol’s temple and eating meat that was offered in sacrifice to that idol. Their excuse seemed to be that they knew that an idol is nothing. To some, all food was clean. They also objected that Paul really had no authority to tell them what to do. Why? Because he didn’t accept any support from them while he was there. Paul dealt with this in 1 Corinthians chapter 9.

It was a matter of faith (revelation) that Gentile Christians should not eat meat sacrificed to idols. On that there should have been total agreement. Christians can have nothing to do with idols or idol worship. Some of the Corinthians who were going to the idol’s temple and eating meat were in danger of causing some other Christians to violate their conscience (1 Corinthians 8:10-13).

With regard to 1 Corinthians 9, the main issue is Paul’s authority being questioned. In particular, Paul dealt with the charge that he was not a real apostle because he refused to accept support from the Corinthian church while at Corinth.

In the first part of 1 Corinthians 9, Paul defends his right to be supported (1-14). But Paul goes on to say that he chose not to use this right. It was his choice not to take support from the Corinthians while he was there. The Corinthians should have respected that choice rather than use it as a charge that he was not a real apostle.

It seems to me that some of the Corinthians had made a matter of faith (revelation) into a matter of opinion regarding the eating of meat sacrificed to an idol. Also, it seems – to me – that they had made a matter of liberty (opinion) concerning Paul’s refusal to take their support into a matter of faith, that he was not a real apostle.

It is a tragedy, that in our brotherhood over the last 100 years or so, that matters of opinion have become matters of faith, which has led to division in the church. The use of one cup versus many cups at the Lord’s table; the use or non-use of Bible classes; the controversy over whether a church can have a located preacher or not – all of these are matters of opinion.

If an eldership chooses not to have Bible classes for all ages, but have everyone together that is their choice. But they do not have the right to bind that on other congregations. If an eldership wants to have one container of juice at the Lord’s table, that is their choice, but they don’t have the right to bind that on other congregations. If an eldership of a congregation decides not to employ a full-time preacher for the congregation, that is their choice, but they don’t have the right to bind that on other congregations. How congregations choose to evangelize and do benevolence is a matter of choosing from different expedients – as long as these do not violate the New Testament teaching on the matter. But matters of expediency must never be made into matters of faith (revelation). Let us again heed the Biblical principle: In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things love.

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Biographical Sketch

Glenn E. Hawkins was born October 16, 1943 in Dexter, Missouri to Jack & Frona Hawkins (both deceased). He is a graduate of Newark [Ohio] High School, Ohio Valley University, Harding University [B.A. in Bible], and Harding Graduate School [M.A. in Apologetics]. He married the former Hope Shutts of Parkersburg, WV on June 27, 1965. They have two sons – Kenneth [wife Susan, daughter Addison] of Canton, GA; and Adam of Massillon, OH. He has been in full time work since 1965 and is in his 38th year with the church at Massillon, OH.

Idolatry and Ethics

1 Corinthians 10:1-11:1

Dan Kessinger

It could be stated that every doctrine, belief, every individual and even simple affirmations and propositions have the potential to be the source of an ethical dilemma to the child of God. Likewise, the specter of overreacting to such dilemmas is an ever present danger. In this light, it has been often observed that God's law served both to punish offenders and to limit that punishment. For instance, the Law of Moses demanded that murderers be executed, but explicitly forbade vendetta style justice, executing families for the sin of the individual (Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:5-6).

In 1 Corinthians 10, idolatry presented its own set of ethical questions. One may confidently proclaim that idolatry is both sinful and foolish, but what of the approach toward the idolater? As we say today, "How far do we take this?" Those who have had to ask such questions recognize the thorny difficulty of finding specific answers in which we can be confident.

The chapter seems to be a lengthy discussion of the topic that has been broached earlier in chapter eight. There Paul affirmed that an idol is a "nothing," spiritual purity trumps personal liberty, and one's personal liberty may be the undoing of another. Thus the sin of idolatry presents ethical difficulties beyond the simple "thou shalt not." The principles found in these ethical questions provide further guideline for addressing other similar topics that commonly trouble Christians as well.

A Perspective on Idolatry

The first half or so of 1 Corinthians 10 seems devoted to verifying idolatry as an ever present danger. Perhaps 21st Century Americans would do well to heed such warnings. In recent generations, congregations of our Lord tended to effectively dismiss warnings against literal idolatry; sermons on the topic seemed to focus only on particulars such as is found in

Col. 3:5; “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” This is certainly a valid principle, and those who emphasized this were emphasizing a valid concern: that ordinary people who would never dream of bowing to an idol were effectively doing the same thing by the sin of worldliness. To preach against the kind of idolatry known among the Corinthians might have been seen as preaching against “them heathen witch doctors.”

The warnings of the New Testament against a more literal, more virulent form of idolatry were, if not dismissed, de-emphasized. Perhaps it was thought that America would never be a haven for the pagan idolatry thought to have been relegated to the world’s pagan religions in remote regions. Any of those idolaters immigrated to America, and idolatry continues to emerge in more traditionally American demographics. The “heathen witch doctors” now reside in America, even in remote locations like Moundsville WV.

The apostle wishes to give the reader a perspective on the nature of idolatry by exploring how it had plagued God’s people in the past. In so doing, he also broadens the discussion to include a number of other sins indulged by Israel, particularly in the wilderness.

What was the significance of Israel’s “baptism” in the cloud and in the sea? Occasionally one hears this metaphor offered as an objection to the Bible doctrine of immersion for the remission of sins, supposing that this example demonstrates New Testament baptism to be not particularly significant (Cervinka). To argue thus requires ignoring the purpose of metaphors in general, and this one in particular. Far from demonstrating that baptism is a vague concept that might be honored in a number of different modes (sprinkling, pouring, walking through water on dry land) or that its purpose is vague, the text presumes that both the writer and the reader have experienced immersion for remission of sins. One could just as easily argue that since Moses was a type of the Christ, we are not amenable to New Testament law, or that his doctrine may be changed to suit us personally, or that following another Christ is acceptable to God.

What was the purpose of citing wilderness baptism? Evidently the Corinthians were under the misconception that baptism and the Lord's Supper provided a mystic shield against sin and its consequences. This appears to be the philosophy of 1st Century Gnosticism, and many have supposed that early forms of it were already being accepted at Corinth. To these self-proclaimed "enlightened," their own actions, though objectively sinful, were not so because of their unique standing in God's eyes. They were quite mistaken according to John's epistles. Interestingly, this philosophy seems unwittingly accepted by some who believe that their baptism and weekly communion serve to guarantee salvation despite general unfaithful living. As Paul demonstrates, it was also an attitude that defined Israel's sin, particularly those in the wilderness. Since the opening section of 1 Corinthians 10 emphasizes the word "all" (all baptized in the cloud and sea; all consumed the same divinely procured food and drink) it may be tempting to expect that this is done to emphasize the common salvation experience as cited in Ephesians 4. However, such is not the case here. While "all" had this same invaluable spiritual experience, the greater point is that most of them had failed.

Why does he choose to cite these four examples in particular? While one must exercise caution in assigning lasting spiritual significance to Old Testament events, these are evidently significant beyond the Old Testament narrative. For instance, Jesus Himself claimed that He was bread from heaven (John 6) and spiritual water (John 7:37 et. al.). Evidently, all of these events did typify spiritual events that would follow. In fact, verse 4 states "...For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." The claim that the rock of Rephidim "followed them" is a spiritual one standing in stark defiance of the mystic Jewish tradition (Winters 127). The rock of Rephidim certainly did not follow them about the wilderness, occasionally spouting water like some ancient fire hydrant. Rather the concept is one similar to 1 Peter 3:19, where Christ is said to have "preached to the spirits in prison." He did not do this in person, but did it through Noah's preaching. In the same sense, Christ supplied water that flowed from the rock

(presumably in concert with the Father and Spirit). Those who drank did so at the mercy of the Christ and unwittingly proclaimed the coming of the rock of ages.

But what of those who had witnessed all of these marvelous events? Believers sometimes wonder at those who witnessed great Bible events, but who quickly depart from such a mighty God. We seem able to ignore the fact that even those miraculous events pale when compared to the sure knowledge that when we were sinners our God cleansed us. In spite of this, we do the unthinkable (Romans 6:1-2); we return to the mire (2 Pet. 2:22); we forget that we were cleansed (2 Pet. 1:9). Israel also forgot that they had been freed, fed, and watered. According to verse 5, “most” (ASV; NKJV; ESV) had fallen in the wilderness.

How did they fall? The answer is the crux of Paul’s warnings regarding idolatry in particular, and unfaithfulness in general. It was because of their lack of self-control, particularly in that they lusted after the idols. As one considers the lure of idolatry as presented here, he is forced to contemplate that which is shockingly wicked. We typically think of idolatry as only the bowing down to an idol, and crediting it with characteristics belonging to Jehovah. That view of idolatry is most incomplete to the point of naivety. Israel (and the nations) chose gods over Jehovah because those gods invite debauchery. In verse 6 the idea of lust is introduced; in verse 7 it is further explained. “And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’”

Here, Paul quotes from Exodus 32:6, the golden calf incident. What is delicately called “play” here is as far from innocent fun as one could possibly conceive. While the specifics of idolatry are appropriately left vague in our children’s classes, what happened at Sinai’s base camp was almost certainly a nauseating series of sexual acts. Further evidence of their complete descent into perversion is seen in other descriptions of the incident in Exodus 32.

And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." But he said: "It is not the noise of the shout of

victory, Nor the noise of the cry of defeat, But the sound of singing I hear." So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing... (17-19a)

Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies)... (25)

The singing of the people provides an important part of the setting. Group singing is relatively rare, except in solemn worship or national anthems. But one category of people is quite fond of singing together with little inhibition: drunks. In harmony with the fertility cults of the ancient Middle East, the Israelites were worshipping the golden calf by imbibing.

They were also dancing. Though it is difficult to successfully describe the difference between non-sensual dancing and that which is intended to promote sin, most honest people recognize the latter immediately, as evidently did Moses given his reaction to the scene. Suffice it to say that they were not having a square dance!

Exodus 32:25 has been translated in several ways. The NKJV reads "unrestrained," the ASV and ESV read "broken loose;" the KJV reads "naked." While we would not argue that the people had become unrestrained, the 1611 reading is probably best here. In fact, it could be argued that a colloquialism from the American South captures the situation best. A comedian once remarked that some Southerners use two pronunciations: "Naked" and "Nekkid." "Naked" means "having no clothing." "Nekkid" means "having no clothes, and up to something"! The Israelites were probably "nekkid."

Given what is known concerning the perversions associated with idolatry, it comes as no surprise that Paul immediately begins a discussion of the sin of fornication; the two are inexorably linked. As we contemplate the application of these principles for modern life, that connection between paganism and sensuality must be emphasized. While it cannot be charged that fornication is a staple of all modern idolatry, various kinds of sensuality always seem to be a part of the appeal. And in

many cases, Bible standards of morality are subjected to contempt by the arrogance of the idolater.

The false humility associated with paganism may explain why so many high profile entertainers gravitate toward it. Recently, such luminaries as Madonna and Brittany Spears publicly embraced Cabbala while John “Revolta” and Tom Cruise espouse Scientology. These four examples have demonstrated a remarkable lack of moral standards, not to mention brain cells, and the list of other celebrities engaged in these corrupt forms of spirituality goes on “ad nauseating.” Their religious choice allows them to behave like animals while claiming not just “spirituality,” but moral superiority in their immorality. Their pagan brand of spirituality is a self-congratulating, self-deceptive, and self-destructive variety, as was the case in the particular cited by Paul.

Israel’s fornication with the women of Moab and Midian, is the source of Paul’s citation. Recorded in Numbers 25, it follows the the famed Balaam’s failed curses, but his story does not end with that narrative. Joshua recorded the killing of Balaam, though he had returned to his homeland after these events. Evidently, he returned to his alliance with Israel’s enemies. But even before he left for his homeland, he evidently gave advice to Balak. Revelation explains that what happened in 2:14 reads "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality." Evidently, Balaam was clever enough to realize that though the people of God cannot be cursed or defeated by their enemies, they can be tempted into doing the cursing themselves!

This lesson can scarcely be overstated as a principle today. The enemies of the Lord’s church will not destroy us, but if they are patient, we’ll do it ourselves. Despite its best efforts, the emperors of Rome could not wipe out the church; instead the church itself committed suicide by digression. Similarly one may recall Edward Gibbon’s oft cited fourth reason for Rome’s decline and fall: fear of an external enemy while rotting within. (Migchels). While we may face persecution that will test us and

perhaps destroy individuals, the greater problem is our own sin and compromise, particularly among leadership.

Some critics seize on the discrepancy of between the 23,000 killed according to Paul, while Numbers records it as 24,000. These are both rounded off figures, and Paul specifies the number killed on one day as opposed to the number who died during the entire affair.

The incident contains information that is useful to understanding the arrogant brazenness of paganism. The reader should keep in mind that though all of us are subject to sexual temptation, and though many of us fail, these remarks are not directed to one who sins out of weakness. A careful reading of the chapter in question reveals a phenomenon beyond temptation and sin, a phenomenon that is alive and well today. Some who thus sin are plagued with feelings of shame regarding sin. Pagan sensibilities teach that sexual sin makes one not only equal to those who practice virtue, but actually vastly superior. Today's self-appointed elite class is far removed from moral standards, so much so that they regularly practice what Isaiah called "woe." Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa. 5:20). To them, it is perfectly reasonable to not only call sin goodness, but to call humility arrogance!

In the world of the pagan, those who stand for morality are guilty of oppressing the poor libertines. Do they really believe this tale? Would they have us believe that America's high school locker rooms are full of virgins mocking the sexually active? What color is the sky in this world in which they claim to live? No, today's pagans march to the same cadence as their ancient brethren. We WILL do as we wish. You WILL not object. We WILL do these things publicly. You WILL surrender your children to us. We ARE morally superior.

Further study of the original incident cited in verse 8 illustrates the brazen arrogance of this kind of sin. It is a record of one particularly loathsome act of sexual sin by an Israelite tribal leader in Numbers 25.

And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. (Num. 25:6-8)

At the very least this nobleman Zimri was guilty of a callous disregard for those who were weeping before the tabernacle. Perhaps something even more perverted was about to take place, something in harmony with the extraordinary selfishness associated with pagans. Zimri brought the harlot princess Cozbi into God's building for a reason. Many suggest that he was presenting her for marriage. Perhaps his intent was not even that palatable. He may have only wanted to engage in fornication, and chose that location to insure that good people would witness his superior "morality." This writer wonders if the two were killed in flagrante delicto, that is, a "two birds with one javelin" execution. Pagans often think it cute to engage in public sin.

This opening section then lists warnings that will bring the total number to five (Coffman 153): lust, idolatry, fornication, testing God, and complaining. None of these sins are to be taken lightly, though idolatry and its accompanying sins remain the central theme. Perhaps it could be said that all of these things are symptomatic of an idolatrous (worldly and sensual) attitude. These things serve as examples for those "upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (v 11). Coffman suggests that this phrase is a reference to the end of the Jewish state from which these examples originate (Coffman 154-55).

The section is completed with words of warning regarding of one's attitude toward these topics. Taking heed of falling and God's faithfulness in temptation are first applied to the topic at hand. However, as admonishing words, they may be applied

widely; they often are so used for hortatory purposes, and it seems valid to do so.

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:12-13)

An Ethical Reaction to Idolatry

Verses 14-33 include Paul's discussion of the ethical problems encountered by those who oppose idolatry. Verses 14-22 is a stern denunciation of any direct participation in idolatrous feasts. Although an idol is nothing (1 Cor. 8:4) service to such an entity severs one's relationship with God; no rationalization can overcome this kind of divided service. This is especially so since Paul seems to hint that at least some of the idols had been constructed in honor of various demons, rather than being purely the fruit of human imagination (20-21). Even if this were not so, the following reasons are offered to dissuade men from participating in idolatry.

First, there is the communion principle (16-17). Even as the Lord had emphasized "this is my body; this is my blood" (Luke 22:19-20) the use of the word "communion" suggests joint participation with the Lord himself in His supper. Second is the sacrifice principle. It included joint participation with the altar, and by extension, to the Lord of the altar. Third, there is the general principle of the fellowship of believers with God Himself. This fellowship is of necessity an exclusive fellowship that denies fellowship with any rivals. As Coffman reminds us, the use of "cannot" in verse 21 has the intent of stating that which is forbidden (Coffman 159). We may add to this explanation, "It is unthinkable."

The final section of 1 Corinthians 10 is an exploration of the ethics of indirect participation in idolatry. The implicit principles found there may be applied to a variety of similar ethical questions that arise today. As such, we find them invaluable, but

somewhat frustrating.

While life would be easier if every ethical decision were spelled out by a “thou shall” or a “thou shalt not” in the Bible, we wonder if it would really be simpler. The size of such a book that would specifically cover every moral decision one would make in a lifetime is staggering, much less one that would address every ethical decision of every individual for now over 2,000 years. This is not to say that the Bible fails to provide us with sensible and trustworthy answers for such questions, but it often does so utilizing principles rather than explicit laws. Though Paul may have been using sarcasm in verse 15 when he calls his readers “wise men,” his exhortation to use proper judgment ought to be heeded.

Clearly, the specifics that Paul reveals in this section require thought and judgment. Although one must be careful to preserve the integrity and conscience of another, and although all things must be done to the honor of God (29-33), these matters may be resolved in different ways at different times, depending on the individuals involved.

What Paul is teaching here must not be confused with so-called “situation ethics” although the words may be similar. The issue begins with a question that is of itself morally neutral- the eating of a meal tainted by its history. As has often been noted, leftover meat from idolatrous feasts was routinely resold on the common market. Was that meat then off limits for the Christian? Paul vehemently denies that it is, his proof being that God is sovereign (evidently over the food). Verse 26 reads “for ‘the earth is the LORD’S, and all its fullness.’”

But another principle must be considered if the situation arises. Even though Paul has encouraged the brethren to not ask questions regarding the meat, for instance when eating with an unbeliever (v. 27), sometimes the food becomes an issue. In verse 28, the host pointedly observes that the meat was offered to idols, thus one ought to forbear eating.

Did the meat change with that information? Did the eater’s intent change? The difference is only in the mind of the theoretical host who perhaps finds a residual religious significance attached to the meal. Perhaps it is a moral

challenge. In any case, what was not an issue now has become one. The truth remains unchanged, that an idol is nothing and that the meat offered in its honor was just meat. However, the principles of regard for others and honoring God trump personal liberty at that point.

The conscience is a powerful ally in our battle for right, not a trifling matter; thus it ought to be protected. But we also notice that the proclaimed truth is not compromised in honor of an overacting conscience. For instance, though many of us avoid harming the conscience of those who say “it is sinful to eat the building,” this false position ought not to be tolerated by way of teaching.

Having introduced the application of these principles in such a volatile way, let us consider a few pertinent examples of these ethics in action. Bible classes have often included heated discussions on the topic of eating a meal where alcohol is served. Principles in 1 Corinthians may exist that will help us navigate this landscape. There is probably a subtle but important distinction between eating in a bar that serves food, and frequenting a restaurant serves alcohol: the primary stated purpose of each establishment verifies it. Incidentally, the persons who voice this point of view buy groceries and gasoline from stores that also sell alcohol, so consistency is a problem. But it cannot be argued that at some point, the real moral problem becomes inexorably linked with that which is morally neutral. Thus we would dissuade a Christian from eating an otherwise morally upright cheeseburger in a bar!

Perhaps an even more direct application is seen in another issue. Ought we buy goods or services knowing that those funds are then used sinfully? The short answer is that the Christian has no responsibility over what happens to what belonged to him once upon a time. In Acts 5:4, Peter’s accusation was based on what Ananias had done while the money was in his control. “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?” One may reasonably conclude that what happens to funds after they are not in one’s hand are not one’s responsibility.

About 25 years ago, a local couple made the news by defying

this principle. They were professors at a local institution of higher learning who withheld their federal income tax on the grounds that the government used those funds in order to destroy unborn children. By so doing, they ignored the principle that Jesus taught while living under a brutal and immoral Roman government (Matt. 22:21). Since Google knows nothing of them, they may also have learned that those who take on the IRS are never heard from again.

But given the principles of 1 Corinthians 10, this rule is subject to reversal. We cannot guarantee that our money is used in a godly or a moral way, but what of businesses or individuals who frankly inform us that they intend to use profits to destroy morals? Though we care not to enforce this judgment, it would seem that Paul's admonition to refuse the meat is appropriate. Thus, many brethren participated in successful boycotts against companies that promote the homosexual agenda. Currently, Oreo is marketing a "rainbow" cookie for just that purpose. It may be concluded that though many companies and individuals misuse our business in similar ways, such a marketing strategy demands a response from moral people.

Can we enforce God's standards on the public? We cannot. Neither can we win or even wage every battle for morality. But our commitment to God compels us to live peaceably in an immoral world while clinging to God's standards.

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Biographical Sketch

Dan Kessinger is the son of Bob (deceased) and Doris Kessinger. Though he was born in Michigan, Dan grew up in Roane County, West Virginia. Kessinger received a B.A. in Bible from Ohio Valley College. There, he also met his wife, Mary Amy. They married in 1986, and have two sons DJ and Thomas. DJ was born in 1994, and Thomas in 1999.

He began preaching in 1982 and his first located work was at Belle, WV. He also served as a located preacher at Proctor, WV. Since 1994, Dan has preached for the Dewey Avenue church of Christ in St. Marys, WV. He conducts a weekly radio program in St. Marys and in Spencer, WV. He serves as the director of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp, and has been involved with the camp since 1984. Since 1995, he has enjoyed the distinct privilege of teaching Old Testament History at the WVSOP.

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The Resurrection and Evil Company

1 Corinthians 15:29-34

Denver E. Cooper

Christians believe in the bodily resurrection of all the dead at the end of time (John 5:28-29). Enemies of Christianity refuse to believe in a resurrection. However, it is no more difficult to believe in a resurrection than it is to believe that God created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:26-31).

It is a mystery when we take seeds of various kinds, though in appearance they are much alike, plant them in the earth and when they decay and raise to full fruition they are of various kinds and colors. The trees lose their leaves in the fall and revive with beautiful foliage in the spring. A mystery explained only by those who believe in God. Job said, “for there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again and that the tender branch thereof will not cease though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant” (Job 14:7-9).

The resurrection is a positive promise from prophecy in Dan. 12:1-3:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of the people; and there shall be a time of trouble as there never was since there was a nation even to that same time and at that time the people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

In Acts 24:14-15 the apostle Paul, answering the false charges of Tertullus, said,

But this I confess unto thee that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of our Fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets. And have hope toward God, which they also themselves allow that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

The positive matter of the resurrection is an historical fact.

1. Paul asserts,

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

2. In John 11: 1-15 we have the following record:

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the

Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

3. The apostle John, in Revelation 20:11-15 says,

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

4. Many hundreds were raised from the dead and saw Jesus after he rose from the dead (Matt. 27:51-53). Yet many did not believe in the resurrection.

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying

that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. (2 Tim. 2:16-18)

5. When the rich man died in Luke 16, he, in hell, lifted up his eyes being in torment. Being in such torment he pleaded with Abraham that he would send someone to his home where there were five brothers. He being in such agony wanted them to have testimony that they might avoid the torment in which he found himself.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (Luke 16: 29-31)

Such is certainly the case today. Christ arose from the dead on the third day and people don't believe in a resurrection of the body no more than he would have.

Indeed there are several accounts of a resurrection in the Bible. Among them is the child who was raised to the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:8-12; Jairus' daughter in Mark 5:35-41. Of course we mustn't forget Dorcas who was a seamstress, became sick and died. Paul laid her down and sent her friends out of the room. He then commanded her to rise, took her by the hand and presented her to her friends who were waiting in another room.

There have been many enemies of the Lord, His birth, life and especially His resurrection. Many more modern men have been as guilty as those of the first century. According to Terry Varner in his book on Eschatology, Max King and others

... (1) affirm that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead depends upon and is closely connected with the second coming of the Christ (2) affirm that the resurrection IS NOT a physical resurrection from the grave in the cemetery, (3) affirm that the second coming

of Christ is passed as an event which happened at the destruction of Jerusalem in A D. 70, and (4) deny a future bodily resurrection of men. (40)

Everyone must keep in mind that the message of the resurrection began to be proclaimed just 50 days after the event in the very city where it took place. The apostle Paul, talking to King Agrippa declared “For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26)

Among the enemies of Christ concerning the resurrection from the dead are those who believe in the swoon theory. They say Jesus did not die, that He merely swooned, and they thought He was dead, but that He revived and came out of the tomb on the third day. I heard three preachers on the TV discussing the matter. Some believed the truth about the resurrection, but the Catholic Priest did not. He said that Jesus did not really die, but just swooned and those around Him just thought He was dead. The facts are against this wild speculation. He has been pronounced dead by the Roman soldiers. Finding Him dead they did not break His legs to see if there were any signs of life, but a Roman soldier took a spear and reaching up put it against His side and thrust it up and into the middle of His body, and there came out blood and water, but no sign of life. No move did He make. This fulfilled a prophecy that said, “They shall look on him whom they pierced” (John 19:32-37).

Some unbelievers admit that Jesus really died, but they guess that He did not rise, that the apostles only imagined they saw Him, went out and preached the resurrection Gospel thinking it was true. It is impossible that all, on the various occasions on which they saw Him, together with the 500 other witnesses-that all of them by coincidence imagined they saw Jesus alive; imagined they ate with Him, talked with Him, handled Him, thought they saw Him ascend, but nothing really happened. All of this is a thousand fold more difficult to believe than the miracle of the resurrection.

Several years ago I was preaching in Fairmont, WV when a young man came forward, seeking to be baptized. In talking with him prior to his confession, he revealed to me that he did not believe in the resurrection of the Christ. He wanted to know if I would baptize him. Of course, I told him I could not do that because the resurrection is the foundation upon which Christianity is founded. It will be holding it up when Jesus comes! It put new life in the disciples of Christ on the day of Pentecost! It turned the world upside down! It converted about 3000 to Christ right there in Jerusalem only a few days after He rose from the dead. The place was not a long way off, nor years later. It was in the very city where He was crucified; where He rose from the dead only a few days before. From that city forward the number of disciples grew and multiplied by the thousands during the first few days of the preaching of the Gospel of Christ (Acts 2-6). As a matter of fact, it was not long when the preaching of the “good news” had spread and was preached to “every creature under heaven” (Col. 1:23).

Celsus, a second century philosopher, was one of the first to argue that the resurrection story was a fraud. He bases his argument on the assumption that when Jesus arose He only appeared to believers. Modern skeptics who make this argument overlook several important points of interest. First of all, had Jesus appeared to His enemies, we would still be dependent on the same sort of evidence we already have. The written evidence would still be viable.

If Jesus had appeared to His enemies and they refused to come to faith Celsus and those like Him would have argued that his appearances were untrustworthy. Then too, how do we explain the conversion of James, the Lord’s brother and Saul of Tarsus?

As I have previously indicated, they would not believe if one were to rise from the dead (Luke 16:31). This was proven when Jesus brought a different man named Lazarus back from the grave. Rather than believe that Jesus was the Messiah the religious leaders sought to kill Jesus (John 11:38-44; 12:9-11).

In addition to this, before His death Jesus told Jewish leaders that they would see Him no more until He came in judgment

(Matt. 23:39). Had Jesus appeared to the religious leaders immediately after His resurrection and not rendered some form of discernible punishment He would have been labeled as a false prophet (Deut. 18:22).

Now we must remember that the siblings rejected His claims; even His brothers did not believe Him (John 7:5). However, after Jesus' resurrection his brother James became a leader in the Jerusalem church and was martyred for his faith (Gal. 2:9; Acts 15:21-28).

Most everybody who is a Bible student knows of the troubles the church of our Lord had in Corinth. Not the least of their problems was their questioning concerning the resurrection. The apostle Paul walked into a "hornets' nest" when he came to Achaia. As you may well remember he preached exactly what they needed, without fear or favor, and was apparently successful.

The section of 1 Cor. 15 at issue in this lecture shows how the resurrection doctrine affects righteous living. This section is developed around three topics addressed by Paul in reference to the practical application of the doctrine of the resurrection and righteous living. The topics are: (1) baptism and the dead, (2) battling the devil, and (3) belief of bad doctrine. First, Paul asked, "Else what will they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? why then are they baptized for the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:29). Ferguson, in his definitive volume of almost 1000 pages on baptism, says Paul's reference to baptism shows "how intimately he connected baptism with resurrection" and notes that "any basis for a reference to vicarious...baptism" here has been effectively removed by Hull whose interpretation of this is "baptized on account of (resurrection)...the dead" (154). Why then are they baptized for the dead? McGarvey's explanation concurs with this.

If the resurrection is not a part of God's plan...if affairs are otherwise , and there is really no resurrection-then what are converts to do, who, under the mistaken notion that there is a resurrection, and now constantly presenting themselves to be buried in baptism on account of the

dead? If the dead are not raised, why then are these converts buried in baptism on their account, or with a view to them? Rom. 6:11 makes Paul's meaning in this passage very plain. The dead are a class of whom Christ is the head and firstfruits unto resurrection. By baptism we symbolically unite ourselves with that class through the power of Christ (Rom. 6:5). But if the dead are not raised at all, then why on their account, or with reference to them? If there is no resurrection, baptism which symbolizes it, is meaningless. (152-53)

Paul also shows the implications of the resurrection concerning his (our) daily battle with the devil. He affirmed he was willing to "stand in jeopardy every hour" (30). He was never out of danger from Damascus to the last visit to Rome.

Other than those mentioned by Paul who did not believe in the resurrection and those whom they had caused to also deny the resurrection, many others have denied the resurrection either by direct or indirect denial.

Many modern historians accept the actual existence of Jesus, but feel that the miraculous event which the Gospel records are beyond the possibility of human accomplishment. H. G. Wells, mostly known for his science fiction writings, was an enemy of Christianity. He did grant Jesus had influence on history. But he believed as others, as Buddha, Mohammad, even the leaders of the local Palace of Gold. One of them told me that Jesus was a great man but that He was not Deity. He was a great teacher and a man who set a good example. H. G. Wells says the miraculous circumstances associated with the life of Christ in the Gospels were "incredible additions" which are "unnecessary to the teaching and they rob it of much of the strength and power it possesses" (420-21).

Please compare what H. G Wells says to that spoken by inspiration of God through John. John 20:30-31 says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that

believing ye might have life through his name.” He speaks of the stories of the resurrection as “discrepant.”

Humanist historian Will Durant also acknowledges the existence of Jesus. In a volume, *History of Civilization*, he devotes over 150 pages to Jesus and His influence upon human history. Yet, while accepting His influence on history he does not accept His claims and His miraculous attributes.

Another enemy of the resurrection is an attempt to discredit the claim, called “Legendary Embellishment.” An example of this type of writing is the Gospel of Peter.

And early in the morning as the Sabbath was drawing, there came a multitude from Jerusalem and the region round about, that they might see that the tomb was sealed. And in the night in which the Lord’s Day was drawing on, as the soldiers kept guard two by two in a watch, there was a great voice in the heaven: and they saw the heavens opened, and two men from thence with great light and approach the tomb. And that stone which was put at the door rolled of itself and made way in part; and the tomb was opened, and both the young men entered in, When therefore those soldiers saw it, they awakened the centurion and the elders, - for they too were hard by keeping guard: and, as they declared what things they had seen, again they see three men coming forth from the tomb, and two of them supporting the one, and a cross following them. And of the two the head reached unto heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens saying, Hast thou preached to them that sleep? And a response was heard from the cross, Yea. (Schaff 27)

You can see how fully adorned in the embellishments of theological development men have taken it. This is what we find in second century forgeries like *The Gospel of Peter*.

Some critics make Christianity and early paganism parallel. One historian describes the sacrifice of a bull wherein the person being initiated—or “reborn”—stands under the risen altar and is

literally washed in the animal's blood. To compare this to the New Testament doctrine of being washed in the blood of Christ is ridiculous! Furthermore, these pagan religions don't depict a physical resurrection of their 'god-man,' but rather a rising from the Hadean realm to heaven. Furthermore, when Paul preached in Athens the philosophers described his message as foreign because he preached to them "Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18).

Still other evil ones declare that because women were the first to appear at the tomb it should be called "the criterion of embarrassment." In the first century women were considered second-class citizens. In fact, a woman could not even give testimony in a court of law. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote: "From women let no evidence be accepted because of the levity and temerity of their sex" (Antiquities, iv: 8:15).

On Pentecost as Peter preached the first sermon to the Jews, he made a direct reference to the empty tomb of Christ by comparing it to the tomb of David. He said,

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. (Acts 2:29-31)

The location of the tomb of Jesus would have been well known due to the fact that it was owned by Joseph of Arimathea. If the tomb had not been empty, the growth of the Christian movement would have been defeated. An atheist tried to lessen the power of this argument by insisting that after 50 days Jesus' body would have been decomposed to the point that it would have been unidentifiable. Even though there were no tools of forensic sciences in that day, remember that the body of Jesus still sealed in the tomb would have been devastating evidence

against the church. Hence, there would have been no need to exhume the corpse and investigate its identity. Matthew provides us testimony for the Jewish leaders that the tomb of Jesus was indeed empty:

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. (28:11-15)

Skeptics argue that the account was only given by Matthew exclusively; Matthew wrote to the Jews, hence there was no need for the Romans or the Greeks to hear about it.

A slab of marble has been discovered which included a proclamation ordered by Caesar which made it unlawful to disturb the tomb of the dead and it included a capital punishment for those who violated the sepulcher.

The evil company which men keep in regard to the resurrection involves critics who promote theological embellishment regarding Paul's position on the resurrection. Critics argue that Paul knew nothing of the empty tomb, but that he preached a non-physical resurrection.

When we read the three Damascus road incidents of Paul's conversion in the Acts, there is no mention of Jesus appearing to Paul in a physical body. We do find that Paul "heard a voice" and those that were with Paul heard a voice, but they didn't comprehend what they heard (Acts 9:7; 22:9). Skeptics frequently assume that early Christians filled the Gospels and Acts with embellishments, of which one is the empty tomb.

If Acts was written after 1 Corinthians, why didn't Luke embellish the nature of Jesus' appearances on the road to Damascus? The account of Jesus' post mortem appearances is

given by Luke and includes Jesus affirming that He is not a ghost, or spirit because His body consists of “flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39). He also ate in front of the disciples to show that He was not an apparition (Luke 24:41-42). If He were eating it shows that He had blood, because the body must have blood in order to digest the food.

That there is a difference in between the so called “historical Jesus” and the Christ “of faith” is also argued by the skeptics. They argue that Paul used so few of the incidents found in the Gospels when writing his epistles. Skeptics fail to take into consideration that Paul had established the congregations and the epistles were written later to correct certain problems that came up or to refute false doctrine. A perfect example of this is the church at Corinth who had a problem by abusing the Lord’s Supper. Paul addressed this in 1 Corinthians 11:17-29:

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s

death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Now what was the purpose of such an in depth treatment of the resurrection? If the "brethren" at Corinth already believed in the living Christ, what danger was lurking that could possibly make their faith "vain" (1 Cor. 15:26)? He seems to have been combating the false doctrine of those who held to the doctrine of the Platonist regarding the immortality of the soul. Greek philosophy viewed the body as a prison and death was viewed subsequently as something to be looked forward to with anticipation. Such a false view would naturally cause one to shrink back at the concept of resurrection. Who would want to be stuck in our present bodies subject to illness and fatigue for all eternity?

There are many questions regarding the resurrection which we can't answer any better than the Corinthians could, but unlike the Athenians at Mars Hill we don't need to be continually looking for something new. It most certainly is a wonderful blessing to have the assurance of that one day we shall be raised from the grave and given a body that cannot be touched by the ravishes of disease or accidents or death. Thanks be to God for such hope.

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Biographical Sketch

Denver was born in Cairo, WV April 2, 1923 to parents Jesse R. and Sarah B. Cooper. He graduated from Parkersburg High School June 1941. He finished Freed-Hardeman preacher training classes in 1943. Denver married Florence Smith March 25, 1945 and located in Harrisville, WV till October when they moved to Chester, WV for located work. To this union were born 5 sons and 3 daughters plus an adopted daughter. One of his sons, Edward, is a located preacher. Two of his son in-laws are also Gospel preachers.

Understanding Apostolic Ministry

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Dale Parsley

The tragedy of a divided church? Sadly, Christians who have experienced this understand how great of a tragedy it is. There are a variety of reasons why congregations split or become divided. Some congregations may not split, but are divided in cliques based on economic, social, cultural, age prejudices (Jas. 2:1-4). Other congregations divide and even split over personality conflicts and petty issues (Philip. 4:2). The church at Corinth was divided over preachers (1 Cor. 1:10-17). However in this instance, as occasionally today, “it isn’t always the preacher who is to blame if he finds himself at the head or some cause or other. ‘Our preacher’ can easily be carried by the pride of self-centered people to places he has no wish to go” (McGuiggan 57). At the core of all congregational problems is carnality (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Pride, selfishness, and the desire to be superior are all characteristics of worldliness in the church (Jas. 4:1-4) which some Christians refuse to eliminate from their former life. In particular, “Corinth was...a proud, philosophical city, with many itinerant teachers promoting their speculations. Unfortunately, this philosophical approach was applied to the gospel by some members of the church, and this fostered division. The congregation was made up of different ‘school of thought’ instead of being united behind the gospel message” (MacArthur 454).

Paul deals with this problem of division in 1 Corinthians chapters 1-3 and continues in chapter 4 by teaching the role of the minister (1-2), the right evaluation of a minister (3-5), the right view of a minister (6-13), and the relationship between minister and members (14-21).

The Role of the Minister (1 Cor. 4:1-2)

Preachers, teachers, and even Apostles were to be regarded as *servants* and *stewards*. McGarvey wrote “they are not to be magnified, for they are servants, nor are they to be deprecated

because of the value and importance of that which is entrusted to them as stewards” (67).

Servant (1): The word here “might have referred to an ‘under-rower’ in a war galley, it came to mean an assistant, one who received orders or directions” (Garland 125). Preachers have been bought with the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 6:17). In the eyes of the world today, there is nothing prestigious about being a servant/slave. However, the Corinthians had a different attitude toward popular philosophers of their day and considered some preachers as “heroes” to the point of dividing the body of Christ.

Steward (2-3): This was a person who was “entrusted with and responsible for his master’s entire household: e.g., buildings, fields, finances, goods, other servants and sometimes even children of the owner” (MacArthur 481). He was “a servant who manages everything for his master, but who himself owns nothing” (Wiersbe 465). The objective or goal of stewards was to be faithful to their Master.

Specifically, Paul was a steward in revealing the “mysteries of God” which is the revelation of God given to him (Eph. 3:1-5). “Paul was merely to distribute that which was provided by the master. The apostles were not philosophers burdened with the discovery and invention of truth, but were mere dispensers of truth revealed because it cannot be discovered by a process of ratiocination” (McGarvey 67). Although preachers today do not receive revelation as the apostles did in the first century before the Scriptures were complete (John 16:13; Jude 3), they still have the responsibility to be a student of God’s Word, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15), seeking to “speak as the Oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11), and not being afraid to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). A steward’s objective was to use his talents and abilities God has entrusted in him for His glory (Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 10:31).

The Right Evaluation of a Minister (1 Cor. 10:3-5)

Since preachers are servants and stewards with the role of doing what they are told and being faithful with what God has entrusted them, Paul notes that even though he was judged by

men, it mattered little to him. In fact he didn't even use the worldly standards or personal prejudices they used to evaluate him. What really mattered was God's judgment. Consider the three judgments in the text:

Public Judgment (1 Cor. 4:3): Regardless if the judgment was positive or negative, Paul was not seeking the approval of man; for if he were trying to please man, he would not have been a servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10). Wiersbe notes that a "steward may not please the members of the household; he may not even please some of the other servants; but if he pleases his own master, he is a good steward" (465). One of the errors with this public judgment that the Corinthians had was due to the worldly standards that they appealed to. Even today it seems the importance or value of a minister among some depends upon the size of the congregation he preaches for, his amount of education, how many people he has baptized, how many books he has written, how many Gospel meetings and lectureships he speaks on, etc. While none of these are wrong in and of themselves, a preacher who preaches for a small church, lacks a superior education, and who gets little or no opportunity for additional speaking engagements is no less valuable, important, and faithful in God's eyes than a man who is deemed as one of the "best" preachers in the brotherhood.

Personal Judgment (3-4): Paul is not saying that he does not examine himself (2 Cor. 13:5) or that he is without sin (1 Tim. 1:15). Paul was a man who appeared to live his life in not violating his conscience (Acts 23:10); this does not mean he is acquitted, for it is possible a man can sin and not know it. His concern for being judged was not according to the opinions of men, the standards of success according to the world, because he believed "it is the Lord who judges me" (4).

Perfect Judgment (4-5): The words that every servant of God desires to hear is "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:23). God's judgment is perfect because it is *the right standard*. The words that Jesus speaks to us will be our standard of judgment (John 12:47-48). God's judgment is perfect because it will be at *the right time*.

The pronouncement of final judgment (2 Cor. 5:10) will be at a time when man does not know (Matt. 24:36), but because it is on God's time table, it will be at the best time. God's judgment is perfect because *the right information* will be used. The secret sins that others may not know, God does. The heart or motives of man that man mistakenly tries to know, God does know (John 2:25; Mark 3:5). God's judgment is perfect because He is *the right Judge*. God is the authoritative One who has the right to pronounce final judgment on man. Even the judgment that man makes today is based upon God's standard of judgment (John 7:28; Matt. 7:1-5, 15).

The Right View of a Minister (1 Cor. 4:6-13)

Since God's judgment is what really matters to Paul and the other involuntary party leaders, Paul now proceeds to teach them the right way to view a minister. There are two different views many commentators have in regard to the phrase "these things...I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes" (6). Some believe the names of the party divisions used in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 are actually not the real party leaders but have been used in place of the real names. Others believe the phrase here is "referring to the analogies he used to depict those who minister for the Lord, including himself and Apollos: farmers (3:6-9), builders (3:10-15), and servant-stewards (vv. 1-5)" (MacArthur 481).

In teaching the right view of a minister Paul first *Appeals to the Scriptures* (1 Cor. 4:6). The reason why Paul uses him and Apollos is for the Corinthians not to think of preachers beyond "what is written." This sentiment is consistent with the other writings of Paul and the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). A reason why one should think of a preacher according to the Scriptures is because of the danger of allowing a man to become the source of authority and not the Scriptures (Acts 20:28-32; Matt. 7:15-16). "Whatever he says, whatever he believes is what I believe" are the words of someone who can be lead away into damnable error.

Another reason to not think of preachers beyond what is written is to *Avoid Rivalry* (6). Morris notes,

The Corinthians emphasis on the person of teachers meant that they were thinking too highly of men. Paul wants none of them to be puffed up for one...that they have no feelings of pride as they contemplate the particular teacher to whom they have attached themselves. Being puffed up in this way in favour of one of them meant that they were against another...there is a sense in which Christians may rejoice in the leadership given by their eminent men. But when they find themselves so much in favour of one leader that they are against another they have overstepped the bounds...they, more than others, were addicted to the sin of pride. (78)

Acknowledging the Source and Originator of Your Gifts

(7): “What is so special about you? What do you have that you were not given? And if it was given to you, how can you brag?” (C.E.V.) The Corinthians’ origin, spiritual gifts, talents, abilities, and even opportunities in life can all be accredited to God. Therefore this gives no one right to boast, since his superiority was due to the grace of God in bestowing it, and not to himself in acquiring it? (McGarvey 69). If one preacher is more gifted than another in debating, education, speaking, writing, it gives neither him, nor his “followers” to look down on another preacher, since God is the One Christians are seeking to glorify and since He is the giver of every good and perfect gift (Jas 1:17).

Paul now seeks to expose the foolishness of their view of preachers and contrast their worldly pride with humble life of the apostles by using ***Admonishing Sarcasm (8-10)***. First, *Paul contrasts the Corinthians and the apostles by using a figurative standing in the world*: The Corinthians were: “full.” The word here is used literally in Acts 27:38 as “eaten enough.” It seems to be used here in reference to being satisfied with themselves (though not in the good sense of being content – Philip. 4:11). They were “rich” or self-sufficient just like the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:17. They were “Kings” which revealed “a sense of spiritual triumph with no more conflict” (Gromacki 55). Yet

Paul and the apostles were “Last, men condemned to death,” and “a spectacle to the world” (1 Cor. 4:9). In regard to the picture Paul is drawing, Barclay writes:

He compares their pride, their self-satisfaction their feeling of superiority with the life that an apostle lives... when a Roman general won a great victory he was allowed to parade his victorious army through the streets of the city with all the trophies that he had won; the procession was called a Triumph. But at the end there came a little group of captives who were doomed to death; they were being taken to the arena to fight to die. The Corinthians in their blatant pride were like the conquering general displaying the trophies of his prowess; the apostles were like the little group of captives doomed to die. To the Corinthians the Christian life meant flaunting their privileges and reckoning up their achievement; to Paul it meant humble service and a readiness to die for Christ. (39)

Second, *Paul contrasts him and the Corinthians mentally, physically and socially* (10): “we are fools...but you are wise. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute” (E.S.V.). Paul has just previously written in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 and teaches that “the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.... But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” (1:25, 27-29, E.S.V.)

Paul further expounds upon the humble service of preachers as demonstrated in his *Arduous Suffering and Hardships (11-13)*. This is seen in their *lack of physical necessities* of food, drink, clothing shelter (1 Cor. 4:11, Philip. 4:11). It is also demonstrated in *laboring with their own hands* (12). When Paul went to Corinth he supported himself by tent making (Acts 18:1-3). Manual labor “was something the Greeks looked down upon.

They did not value manual labor but considered it to be the work of slaves” (Barton 61). In addition it was seen in their *continual mistreatment and their response to it*. When they was beaten (1 Cor. 4:11), reviled, and slandered they responded with blessing (Matt. 5:44; 1 Pet. 3:16) and when persecuted they endured and did not retaliate (1 Pet. 1:21-23). The apostles had a peculiar attitude about persecution in that they rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

The Relationship between Ministers and Members (1 Cor. 4:14-21)

Paul explains the reasoning for his sarcasm. It was not with the intent to shame them but admonish them as a father would his child.

Exclusive Relationship with the Members (1 Cor. 4:14-15):

Paul notes that even though they may have numerous teachers or even guides in Christ, they only have one father. By doing this he identifies himself as a spiritual father to the Corinthians. Given Paul’s position and authority as an apostle and the fact that he was the one who begot the Corinthians through the Gospel indicates that not every preacher-member relationship should be viewed as a father-child relationship. For instance, it would not make sense for a young preacher to consider himself as a spiritual father to those who have been in Christ longer than he has been alive. The family pattern Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:1-2 would make for an awkward situation for Timothy to exhort the older men as fathers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, yet consider himself as a father to them? Yet, the love, care and concern that a father would have for his children is certainly an attitude that a preacher should have toward any brother or sister in Christ. The word “admonish” (1 Cor. 4:14) is the same word used in Ephesians 6:4 in regard to fathers raising their children in the nurture and “admonition” of the Lord.

Example to the Members (16): As a father leads and teaches his children through his example, a preacher should seek to be an example whether he regards himself as a spiritual father to someone or not (1 Tim. 4:12), but he must admonish those to

whom he is an example to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

Expounds upon Scripture (17): Paul sent Timothy to the Corinthians to remind them of Paul's ways that he teaches everywhere in every church (17).

This writer recently encountered a "new" view on Bible authority in which the New Testament letters are said to only apply to the individuals in the congregations to whom they were written. Today, only the words of Jesus are authoritative. This doctrine is false because what Paul wrote were the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37), Paul's writings were inspired (2 Tim. 3:16) therefore Paul's words are the words of Jesus (John 14:26; 16:13), and this verse demonstrates that what Paul taught at Corinth applies to every church.

Enemies of Christ (18-20): "Within the church was an emerging group which resisted Paul's apostolic authority (9:1-3; 2 Cor. 1:17; 10:10; 12:12). The fact that Paul chose not to come personally just caused their egos to be puffed up" (Gromacki 58). Given Paul's exclusive position of authority as an apostle, when one rejected Paul they rebelled against the authority of God.

Exercise Discipline (21): How does a preacher respond to un-repentant enemies of Christ? "Their response to the letter and to Timothy's ministry would determine whether he would come in full demonstration of his apostolic authority in correction and discipline, or in the tender expression of a loving father. Disobedience would bring the rod of chastisement, but submission and repentance would produce warm embraces" (Gromacki 58).

What exactly does Paul mean by potentially coming with a rod? There seem to be at least three possibilities. First, since earthly fathers are permitted to use an actual rod on their children (Prov. 13:24) Paul was actually coming with a rod to physically discipline the unruly members. Second, in Acts 13:8-11 the apostle Paul struck a man blind for essentially being a false teacher. Third, Paul in the next chapter (1 Cor. 5) gives the example of the withdrawal of fellowship from specific persons (5, 9-11). Even though it may be possible that Paul may have had the ability to physically punish those who rebelled, today,

miraculous spiritual gifts have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Therefore, no one today has the ability to miraculously strike a false teacher blind. Furthermore, in the text, Paul is not talking about a literal rod. Therefore, the best explanation of Paul's rod of discipline is the practice of church discipline in the withdrawal of fellowship toward those who refuse to repent in their rebellion against God.

To prevent division, rivalry, and other errors members and preachers should keep in mind that preachers are to be humble servants of Christ with the responsibility to be faithful stewards in proclaiming the Gospel.

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Biographical Sketch

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The Complete Revelation

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Gregory Tidwell

I appreciate the opportunity to address the sufficiency of Scripture as God's authoritative Word. This point of doctrine has many implications for churches of Christ in the twenty-first century.

The church in Corinth faced many problems, among which was an inappropriate use of miraculous gifts, especially the gift of "tongues," the ability to speak in a foreign language without the normal process of acquisition through study. Countering the error of the Corinthians, Paul reminds his readers of the transient nature of miraculous gifts, in contrast to the abiding importance of faith and hope and, especially, the eternal importance of love. Paul drives this point home in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13:

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (ESV)

Throughout the course of biblical history, God provided miracles on rare occasions, usually to mark a pivotal moment in God's working of salvation. The everyday wonders punctuating the Exodus from Egypt, for example, were exceptional. Most of God's people living in biblical days never saw a miraculous sign. For this reason, the signs and wonders performed by Christ and by the apostles had the effect, as Hebrews 2:4 tells us, of

confirming the message they brought. The miracles were “wonders” because of their exceptional rarity.

Beyond our Lord and His authoritative spokesmen, the apostles, relatively few Christians possessed miraculous gifts. As Philip’s work among the Samaritans in Acts 8 indicates, the ability to work wonders was only conferred on Christians through the laying on of an apostle’s hands. The work of confirming the New Testament as God’s Word would be completed in the first century. With the passing of the apostles and those on whom the apostles laid their hands, the miraculous gifts ceased. The confirmed Word of God, however, remains.

While the lofty language Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13 leads many scholars to look at different explanations for the meaning of the “perfect” thing that renders miraculous gifts obsolete, David Lipscomb writes in his commentary on this passage:

These gifts were to continue in the church to guide and instruct it until the completed will of God was made known. They were to serve a temporary purpose; then when their office was fulfilled, they were to pass away and give place to the revealed will of God. (200)

Many outstanding scholars, including J. W. McGarvey and Foy E. Wallace, Jr., followed this same line of interpretation. Regardless of the specific interpretation of this passage, however, Scripture is clear in teaching the temporary nature of miraculous gifts as they were used to confirm God’s eternal Word.

How Christ and the Apostle’s Viewed Scripture

The Bible and the church have a common origin and a common history. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the teachings of Jesus and of His apostles concerning the nature of Scripture.

The apostles clearly believed Scripture to be the Word of God, accurate and authoritative in all it says. As Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent,

equipped for every good work.”

The process of inspiration, which the English Standard Version renders as “breathed out by God,” is described vividly in 2 Peter 1:20-21, “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

The authors of Scripture were not putting forward their own opinions but were “carried along by the Holy Spirit.” What they wrote was the Word of God. The Lord spoke through the Hebrew prophets, but also through the authors of the New Testament, as Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

The apostles understood their ministry to be a continuation of the Revelation provided by the prophets of the Old Testament. They knew that they were delivering the Word of God to God's people.

Faithful Christians must follow the lead of the apostles on this point. Even more, they must follow the lead of the Savior, Himself. Submitting to Jesus as Christ means submitting to God's written Word. “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me,” Jesus says in John 5:46, 47, “But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?” Rejecting Scripture inevitably involves rejecting Christ.

Moses predicted that one day God would send a great prophet, a prediction clearly about Christ (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:19-26). Jesus spoke of Himself as a prophet (Luke 13:33). Jesus is not, however, merely a messenger of Revelation from God (like all the other prophets), but is Himself the foundation of Revelation from God. Rather than saying, as all the Old Testament prophets did, “Thus says the Lord,” Jesus could begin His teaching with the wonderful announcement, “But I say unto you” (Matt. 5:22).

Beyond His personal teachings, Jesus is the foundation of all Revelation. As the angel told the apostle John in Revelation

19:10, "...the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." All the prophets of the Old Testament were guided by Christ (1 Pet. 1:11). Jesus continued His prophetic work through the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the New Testament (John 14:26).

Our commitment to Jesus Christ, God's Incarnate Word requires a commitment to God's Written Word. One cannot legitimately accept Jesus as Christ while disparaging Scripture, for the message of Christ is the subject of the Bible.

Revelation and Reformation

In the centuries following the days of Christ and His apostles, however, the Bible's role in religion was eclipsed by the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was an attempt to bring the church back into alignment with the teachings of Scripture.

"Sola Scriptura," the Bible alone, enjoined the Reformers against any claim of authority resting in the Catholic Church. Protestantism asserted the Bible, being the Word of God, is perfect in every way, sufficient to equip Christians in serving God in their lives and in His church.

Almost immediately, however, leading Protestants began pulling away from following the Bible alone. Lutherans and Anglicans limited the authority of Scripture by making its authority "normative" rather than "regulative." These technical terms mark a watershed difference in how the Bible functions in the church.

A strict understanding of *Sola Scriptura* leads to the Regulative Principle. God has spoken through His Word and nothing which is unauthorized may be included in Christian faith and practice. The Normative Principle follows a looser approach to Scripture. Anything not specifically forbidden may be added.

Following the Normative Principle, Anglicans and Lutherans maintained denominational structures beyond local congregations and included instruments in worship, among other unauthorized additions. The decision to include things not authorized in Scripture, of necessity, empowered some person or some group to have authority in the church. If unauthorized additions are brought into the church, someone must have the authority to

decide which things to bring in and which to keep out.

Originally, in both the Anglican and Lutheran churches the government was empowered with the authority to manage the church. This state-church approach facilitated Hitler's takeover of the Lutheran establishment in Germany when the Nazis ran the government. In the United Kingdom, Elizabeth the Second is still head of the state church and her government has the final say in the affairs of the Church of England.

The regulative principle, following the Bible alone, in contrast, leaves God as the only authority in His church. God governs His church through His Word. All unauthorized additions to God's plan are excluded by God's silence. There can be no structure beyond the local congregation, for example, because God has not authorized it.

Devolving from Lutheranism and Anglicanism, various Pietistic sects sought to find authority in the "inner light" of personal experience. The most prominent proponent of this approach was John Wesley, the founder of the Methodists. Wesley turned his back on the notion of *Sola Scriptura*.

To Wesley, and to the Wesleyans who followed him, the Bible is an authority, but not the only authority for the church. In addition to Scripture, Wesleyans look to reason, tradition, and personal experience for authority. This fourfold approach is often called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. While lip-service is given to the authority of Scripture, this method always places a priority on experiential religion. From this movement directly sprang the Holiness and Pentecostal churches, but further, virtually all American Protestantism has been affected by this line of thought.

Revelation and Restoration

The American Restoration Movement proposed Christian unity based on the Bible alone. While Barton Stone was influenced by the experiential approach of Wesleyan revivalism, the Campbells, Walter Scott, Tolbert Fanning and other early leaders put forward an approach to Christian faith that was squarely set on the Regulative Principle: "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

When this sound view of Scripture has been consistently followed, the church has enjoyed tremendous success – notably in the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When the authority of Scripture is de-emphasized or denied, however, the church has stagnated and divided. This process occurred at the turn of the last century and is occurring in our own time.

Often, even before complete disbelief appears, the Bible will be marginalized by leaders wanting to introduce non-biblical elements into the church. Undercutting confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture, and in the accessibility of Scripture, the road to apostasy places a separation between God’s Word and God’s people.

Remaining faithful to the Lord requires following the Bible as the only authority for God’s people. Drawing from a wide range of secular disciplines, alien ideas continually enter the Lord’s church. Rather than following the New Testament pattern for the church, these secular ideas fit the church to the pattern of the world. This dilution of biblical authority with secular additions often produces an apostasy of attrition.

In a similar vein, church leaders who want to change the fundamental nature of our faith try to limit the accessibility of Scripture. They cut the Bible’s authority in the church by undermining confidence that most Christians can read and understand the Bible. David Lipscomb described the threat of academicians in the late 1800s, writing in the *Gospel Advocate*:

Nothing indicates the wide departure from the landmarks of truth more clearly, that is taking place among those who started out to restore the ancient order, than the loose views put forth by some of the accredited teachers among them in reference to the authority of God. These show that the old standards have been set aside and new ones adopted. (January 23, 1884, p. 49)

What happened among Christian schools in the 1800s is happening again in colleges affiliated with churches of Christ. This change is a crisis, because once we change our view of Scripture, we change the very essence of Christian faith.

What is taught in colleges is entering congregations. Many church leaders, sadly, have changed their convictions about the truthfulness of Scripture, the authority of Scripture, and the importance of the Bible for the church.

If reading and interpreting Scripture is reserved for an academic elite, members of this elite are allowed to make over the church of Christ into a religion that suits their fancy. We must guard God's authority over His people from the encroachment of any human group, however learned and well-meaning they may be. God speaks to all of His people through His written Word; the Bible is the common heritage of all God's people.

The doctrine of Scripture must always maintain the distinction between the human and the divine. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD" (Isa. 55:8). Humility should be the hallmark of our faith. "Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few" (Eccles. 5:2).

While God's Revelation is perfect and complete. All human knowledge is limited and piecemeal. We never stop needing to study Scripture. We all have more to learn, to bring into our lives, and to share with others. The Bible provides God's message that brings us to faith, and the Bible provides the ongoing training we need to remain faithful.

God, in His grace, has reached out to us through the Gospel of His Son. This word of grace is recorded in the pages of Scripture. Apart from Scripture, we can know nothing of God's love, mercy and forgiveness. It is only through God's written Word we can come to know God's Incarnate Word.

All spiritual blessings rest on a faith in God who speaks to us through Scripture. If we lose this conviction, we will have lost everything. Without confidence in the truth and authority of the Bible, our faith will collapse into a false and self-serving religion of our own creation.

The Bible, completed in the first century, is sufficient and complete to guide the Lord's church until the Lord shall come again. And when He comes, the words recorded in the pages of

Scripture will form the standard of His eternal judgment. Following God's perfect Word, we will be ready to meet the Lord when He comes on that Day.

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Hating Sin—Loving the Sinner

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Gary Hampton

God Hates Sin

People who say God hates sin but loves the sinner are setting forth an idea that repels many. The word “hate” is so strong in the minds of some that they have placed it on their list of words their children are forbidden to say. It comes as a shock to hear God’s spokesman, Moses, tell the children of Israel that God hates. The prophet warned them,

When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.” You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. (Deut. 12:29-31)

Moses used a word that “expresses an emotional attitude toward persons and things which are opposed, detested, despised and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship” (Van Groeningen 880). The spokesman of God made it clear that the Almighty hates idolatrous service. The Creator also is described as directing His hatred against people. The inspired song writer declared, “The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity” (Psalm 5:5). He later wrote, “The Lord tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates” (Psalm 5:5). “In each case the character and/or activities of the hated ones are expressed; thus God is opposed to, separates himself from, and

brings the consequences of his hatred upon people not as mere people, but as sinful people” (880).

This is precisely what led the Spirit to inspire Isaiah to write, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear” (59:1-2). “The reason why redemption is delayed, is not that the power of Jehovah has not been sufficient for it (cf. 1 Cor. 1-2), or that He has not been aware of their desire for it, but that their iniquities...have become dividers..., have grown into a party-wall between them and their God” (Keil and Delitzsch 395).

God’s message to Eli, as delivered through Samuel, puts to rest one of the great charges thrown against any who would try to help another see his sin and the danger it presents. Young Samuel heard God say, “Behold I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them” (1 Sam. 3:11-13). Keil and Delitzsch have, “he knew his sons were preparing a curse for themselves and did not prevent them.” Then, Keil and Delitzsch write, “To judge on account of a crime, is the same as to punish it” (50). The one who warns of the danger of a sin is not judging, but is pointing to the action that will result in God’s judgment.

A Warning Regarding Inheriting the Kingdom of God

It seems highly likely that Paul, a pupil of Gamaliel, well acquainted with the Old Testament, was thinking about God’s words through the prophets when he penned,

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit

the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

Those who have violated God's law, "the unrighteous," were warned by the apostle to the Gentiles that they would not "inherit the kingdom of God." The word translated "inherit" is *klēronomeō*, which is universally understood to mean, "to receive the portion assigned to one, receive an allotted portion, receive as one's own or as a possession; to become partaker of, to obtain...so very freq. in the O. T. ...of the occupation of the land of Canaan by the Israelites, as Lev. xx. 24; Deut. iv. 22, 26; vi. 1, etc." He then went on to note that once Israel took possession of the land of Canaan they were constantly harassed by surrounding nations, even being taken away from the land for a lengthy period. "It came to pass that the phrase was transferred to denote the tranquil and stable possession of the holy land crowned with all divine blessings, an experience which pious Israelites were to expect under the Messiah: Ps. xxiv. (xxv.) 13; xxxvi. (xxxvii.) 9, 11, 22, 29, 34" (Thayer 348-349).

McGarvey defined the "kingdom of God" as, "That glorious celestial kingdom of which the church is the earthly type" (76). Concerning "be not deceived," Matthew Henry wrote, "Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves that *God is such a one as themselves*, and that they may live in sin and yet die in Christ, may lead the life of the devil's child and yet go to heaven with the children of God" (533). Paul wanted Christians in the Corinthian church to remember that those wronging others would not receive heaven, which fully agrees with his warning to the churches of Galatia. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (6:7-8). Simply put, sin will be punished, which, as has already been seen, is a direct result of God's hatred of sinful actions arising out of a heart that is far from submissive to the will of our heavenly Father.

Sins that Will Prevent One from Inheriting

Paul then went on to list some of the sins he had in mind. A fornicator is one who indulges in illicit sex and is involved in one of the sins that Paul said would keep one out of heaven. Idolators worship false gods. An adulterer is one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another. Perhaps adultery is specified because it breaks up families and hurts a third party. The word translated "homosexuals" literally means "soft to touch." Vine says, "metaphorically, in a bad sense,....persons in general, who are guilty of addiction to sins of the flesh" (19). The apostle described the sin of sodomy when he wrote, "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (Rom. 1:26-27).

A thief takes what belongs to someone else, while those who are covetous desire "to have more....,i.e., to have what belongs to others; hence, greedy of gain," according to Vine (253). Those who become intoxicated are drunkards. Revilers are those who "reproach, rail at, revile, heap abuse upon" (Thayer 382). "Extortioners" are like ravenous animals who will plunder others to satisfy their greed.

God's unchanging nature can be seen when one notices that several of the sins listed are also found in the Ten Commandments. Matthew Henry observed,

He specifies several sorts of sins: against the first and second commandments, as idolaters; against the seventh, as adulterers, fornicators, effeminate, and Sodomites; against the eighth, as thieves and extortioners, that by force or fraud wrong their neighbours; against the ninth, as revilers; and against the tenth, as covetous and drunkards, as those who are in a fair way to break all the rest. (533)

“While the requirements for inheriting God’s kingdom go much further than the avoidance of such open sins, the presence of any one of them in a man is evidence that he is debarred from heaven, and this plain negative fact Paul re-emphasizes” (Lenski 249).

The apostle was very careful in choosing his words, so he says “some” of them had been involved in the various sins he had listed. “Only some, not all, for there were not a few persons among Jews and pagans who hated these vices and lived respectably, the Jews did not practice idolatry; and some of these were among the number that had been brought to Christ--sinners all but not stooping to the grossest forms of sin” (Lenski 247-48).

God Loves the Sinner

God’s hatred of sin is only surpassed by His love for the sinner, which required Him to find a means of helping man overcome sin. Significantly, this was achieved in the mind of God before He even formed the world, as Paul explained when he wrote, “according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him (Eph. 3:11-12). The apostle’s statement serves to help explain what happened in the Garden of Eden. Adam had been told, “Of every tree in the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17). Yet, when Eve and Adam ate of the fruit, they did not die. This was explained by the Creator in His words to the serpent. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel” (3:15). Simply put, God the Father interposed the violent death of His Son on the cross of Calvary to pay man’s sin debt, which was explained by Christ in His words to Nicodemus. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16; Rom. 3:21-26).

Sending His Son to die shows the depths to which the Father was willing to go to save sinful man. Paul described the breadth of that love when he told Timothy, “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). The word translated “men” is “*anthropos*,” which is all mankind. The mystery of God’s plan to save sinful man through the means of the death of His Son was revealed to the apostles and prophets of the first century, though it had not been made known in previous generations. It was “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Eph. 3:1-6). The Almighty had arranged to reconcile Jews and Greeks to one another and Himself through the sacrificial death of His Son (2:14-16).

Those who would follow the Lord need to remember His instruction to love all men, even those who are their enemies. He told them,

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5:43-48)

After all, the Master came to call sinners, rather than the righteous, to repentance (Matt. 9:13). His final command to His apostles, before ascending into heaven, was, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47). Through this means, the Savior

insured that love for sinners would be proclaimed by His faithful disciples.

The Means of Freeing Men from Sin

Shepherd says, "The threefold 'but' in the clause which follows emphasizes strongly the contrast between their present state and their past, and the consequent demand which their changed position makes upon them" (87). The apostle said they had been washed, which likely reminded him of the message he heard from Ananias. The Lord, on the Damascus road, had responded to his question as to what he must do to be saved by telling him to "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:6). Ananias said, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (22:16). Any man who would be saved must also call on the name of the Lord, as Peter explained to those assembled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:21). That such calling is achieved in penitent baptism can be seen in his answer to their request to know what they must do to be saved (2:37-38), a fact confirmed by his own words to the "pilgrims of the Dispersion." "There is an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). Paul agrees in his statement to Titus that salvation is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (3:5).

In reference to "washed," "sanctified," and "justified," Lenski noted, "While all three verbs are aorists, only the last two are passives, and the first is most significantly a middle voice." The use of the middle means "you had yourselves washed" (250). "But the Corinthians could not also be sanctified and justified by God (passive) if they had not in their own hearts desired and accepted the true cleansing of baptism. The moment they accepted that in true faith they were also at that moment sanctified and justified" (251). Thus, Paul told the Ephesian Christians, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved

the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word” (5:25-26). “This is total sanctification, the removal of all sin and guilt” (Ibid). That is why he addressed them as “the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Cor. 1:2). The apostle also described them as “justified,” which Vincent says is “emphasizing the *actual* moral renewal, which is the true idea of justification” (215). In other words, they were considered righteous because their sins had been remitted.

Conclusion

Paul’s powerful words evoked the following response from Matthew Henry, “Note, The wickedness of men before conversion is no bar to their regeneration and reconciliation to God. The blood of Christ, and *the washing of regeneration*, can purge away all guilt and defilement” (533). God hates sin because it drives a wedge between Him and the crowning jewel of His creation. The Almighty Father also loves sinners and did everything necessary to make it possible for men to have the stain of sin removed and walk with Him in the heavenly paradise.

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When A Spouse Dies

1 Corinthians 7:39-40

Rick Tincher

From this text, it is clear that marriage has its restrictions. Let us break down the text and consider its implications.

First, this text teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman: “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth” (1 Cor. 7:39).

There was a time when this needed very little discussion. However, in recent years, homosexuality has invaded our culture, even to the point where, in May of this year, our President threw his support behind gay marriage. A recent Gallup Poll indicated that fifty one percent of Americans have no problem with the stance our President has taken on this issue (Madhani and Norman).

In spite of our culture, we must face this issue head-on and stand with the Scriptures. Matthew 19:4-5 says, “And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” The Apostle Paul also spoke against the homosexual lifestyle:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. (Rom. 1:26-28)

The message of the Bible is clear: the institution of marriage,

as set forth by God, involves man and woman.

Second, this text indicates that when a couple is married, they are “bound by the law.” It is interesting to note that the word translated “bound” in our text, is from the Greek word *deo*. Strong’s gives this definition: “bind, be in bonds, knit, tie, wind” (21). It is obvious that Paul is indicating a commitment to the marriage vows and that this bond is not easily broken. Jesus also spoke of the bond of marriage in the Sermon on the Mount. “It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her this is divorced committeth adultery” (Matt. 5:31-32).

Third, this text shows us that marriage is for life. “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth” (39). According to Scripture, there is but one exception to this statement. Jesus said in Matthew 19:9, “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” With the exception of fornication, death is the only thing that releases a spouse to remarry. Our text continues: “but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will” (39). Here Paul is expressing what the wife may do, but not what is necessarily best, given the persecution they were facing.

Fourth, our text indicates another stipulation: “only in the Lord.” Many have concluded that this expression must mean that if one is widowed, he or she must only marry a Christian. I believe that it is unwise for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. That being said, I do not believe that this passage teaches that a widow/widower must marry only a Christian, for the following reasons: 1. What would a Christian do who marries a non-Christian to correct this situation? I believe that if the marriage is unscriptural, then they must separate. I don't know of anyone who would advocate such a separation. 2. Paul told the children of the Church at Ephesus to “...obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (6:1). I believe the phrase “in the Lord” in 1 Corinthians 7:39 is used in the same way as in Ephesians 6:1:

“in accordance with God's Will.”

Fifth, Paul reflects upon the “present distress” (26) and advises widows/widowers to remain single because of the great persecution that had come upon the Church at Corinth. We must remember that without careful study of 1 Corinthians chapter seven, one might conclude that Paul was suggesting that celibacy is better than marriage. Leon Morris makes this comment: “Right to the end Paul refrains from saying anything to indicate that there is something morally higher about celibacy. He thinks that the widow will be happier if she refrains from remarriage. We must read this in light of the special circumstances mentioned in the earlier chapter” (123).

Paul's last comment in verse 40, I believe, is a subtle defense of his apostleship and his inspiration from God. The expression “I think,” in reference to his having the Spirit of God, does not indicate doubt of any kind.

Personal Observations about Losing a Spouse

One will find the best marriage counseling in the Bible. For example, Paul talks of marriage with terms like “love,” “submit,” and “two shall be one flesh.”

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his

father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (Ephesians 5:22-31)

If this pattern for marriage is followed, then the husband and wife relationship can truly be wonderful. I was fortunate enough to have had this experience with my wife, Cynthia, for about ten years. I have so many fond memories of our years together. I remember well the day we were married in 1984. We were married at the Camden Avenue Church of Christ. Charles Pugh performed our ceremony and the congregation was so kind in helping us with the reception. I remember thinking we had our whole lives ahead of us and that we would grow old together.

As time passed, we had our first child, Rachel, and three years later, Kyle came along. Cynthia was such a wonderful mom, and together we worked with the Church in Reader, West Virginia, Laings, Ohio and Hanoverton, Ohio. It was there, while we were in Hanoverton, that my wife was killed in a head-on collision on route 30, between Hanoverton and Lisbon.

Unfortunately, I remember the details of that day all too well. It was a Monday morning and Cynthia told me that she was going to the bank and that she would be back later. My son, Kyle, wanted to go with her, but she told him to stay with "Daddy". While in route to Lisbon, she hit a truck head-on and was killed instantly. I thank God that Kyle wasn't with her or he too would have likely been killed.

I received a call from one of the members of the church about the accident, but they knew no details. I rushed to a member's house and left Kyle with them and went to the scene of the accident. Cars were lined up for what seemed a mile. The policeman tried to stop me but I bypassed all the cars and went to the scene, where I saw a destroyed car. I knew as soon as I saw the car that she couldn't have survived but I prayed that she did.

I went to the hospital where they had taken her and was met by hospital officials who asked me to step into a room. It was a room I knew all too well as a preacher. It was the room where they take the family of a person who has died. When I entered the room, they had a priest waiting to talk with me. I remember

saying, "I don't need a priest. Leave me alone". Then I heard the words of the doctor: "Your wife passed away." It changed my life, as well as the lives of my children, forever.

We had such great support in the following days which meant so much to me. Christian friends came from far and near. My home was filled people for at least a week.

The experience of losing my dear wife, Cynthia, has taught me many things. First, I saw just how considerate and compassionate members of the Lord's Church can be. They brought food, they offered to help with the children, and several congregations sent money to help with the expenses. The church is truly a family. Second, I also saw just how inconsiderate people of the world can be. I was standing on my porch the morning of Cynthia's funeral and I remember, as the hearse pulled in to the church's driveway, my son started screaming and crying, and my father picked him up and quieted him down. As all of this commotion was going on, I was reading a letter that I had received that very morning, informing me that I was being sued for the cost of the truck that collided with my wife. They started seeking their money before I could even bury my wife!

If I am qualified to offer any advice to one who loses his or her spouse, it would be this: If you choose to remarry, find a partner who is a **faithful** member of the Church. As I stated before, I do not believe that 1 Corinthians 7:39 demands it, but I will say that I cannot think of a good reason to do otherwise. Also, I would advise one in this situation to marry a person who was reared in the Lord's Church. A person's upbringing is obviously important.

Anyone who has lost a spouse, whether young or old, can, with the Lord's help, continue on and have a good life in spite of the grief they experience.

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). My heart goes out to anyone who has lost their "help meet."

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Biographical Sketch

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Revelation about Miraculous Gifts

1 Corinthians 14:1-40

Andy Robison

“Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40) is an easily memorable and broadly applicable verse. The first century context of it was quite the disorderly affair.

The worship service at Corinth (addressed from 11:17 on—“when you come together as a church [11:18]) was floundering in a sea of doctrinal error (the resurrection [15]), worship abuse (11:17-34), and prideful practices (12-14). Those prideful practices were, ironically, over gifts—gifts given freely which no one had earned. Yet, the recipients argued and jostled for glory over them.

It is the teaching of Scripture that the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) and then had the ability to pass on those miraculous gifts by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17). This practice had a one generation life-span, for those who received such gifts could not pass them on to others. Philip had received such gifts (Acts 6:5-6; 8:9-13). But, to pass them on in Samaria, apostles were required (Acts 8:14-18). Elementary reasoning deduces that once the apostles had died, and all on whom they laid their hands died, miracles would cease, thus providing a Divinely-designed mechanism for the natural vanishing of the supernatural abilities—all in accord with the prediction of Paul (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

Yet, these temporary gifts were exercised, Paul seems to suggest, in ignorance (1 Cor. 12:1). The introductory verses of this section (12:1-3) make it clear that this had been a question posed by the Corinthians to Paul in their letter (the phrase “Now concerning” hearkens to 7:1’s “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me.” See also 7:25; 8:1). The issues were apparently the cause of division. Thus, Paul emphasizes “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all” (12:4-6).

These words hinting of the need for more unity precede the list of gifts in 12:7-10. Then, v. 11 admonishes, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

The point for these divisive, uninformed (don’t those two adjectives usually go together?) brethren was that one Spirit united them through His revelation and, in the first century case, the bestowing of gifts. Thus, verse thirteen speaks not of some sort of Holy Spirit baptism, but simple unity based on the revelation via the Spirit that causes people to know what to do to be saved: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” What follows then is the beautiful imagery of the body’s unity due to its coordinated use of varying parts of manifold purposes (12:12-27). This is how the body of Christ ought to function. While there was, indeed, an established order of primacy regarding the importance of gifts—apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, administrations, tongues (12:28)—these differences need not—must not—divide the body. There is “a more excellent way” (12:31).

The excellent way is love (13). Tongues-speaking seems to have been the most fantastic and showy of the gifts Paul had mentioned. Chapter fourteen’s context will bear out that immature souls sought this gift above others. It is significant, then, that the passage detailing the uselessness of spiritual gifts without love begins with the mention of tongues: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal” (13:1). Next in the love manifesto is listed the gift that, in chapter fourteen, is at issue with tongues—prophecy. “And though I have the gift of prophecy...but have not love, I am nothing” (13:2). It is these two gifts that become the focus of Paul’s argument in chapter fourteen.

“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy” (14:1). This instruction launches a suspicion—soon to be confirmed—that some were desiring a different gift. That gift was the gift of speaking in tongues. The

contrast, which sets up the flow of the chapter, is thus particularized:

For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit, he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. (14:2-5)

Some wanted to speak in tongues more than they wanted to prophesy. Paul said they had it backwards. Prophecy should be desired first. Lest one wonder for long as to why, Paul quickly delineates, and thus defines, that one (prophecy) is speech readily and naturally intelligible to the assembly, and one involves something other than the native language. Apparently, some thought it more of a blessing to speak in such a way that others could not easily comprehend.

The Gift of Speaking in Tongues

What was that way? 21st Century readers are aware of a denominational problem (which may creep into the Lord's church also now and then) of people speaking in unintelligible gibberish and claiming it as a sign that the Holy Spirit has come upon them. Believing that this is the gift of which Paul speaks requires ignoring the last phrase of verse five, for if it were unintelligible gibberish, why would Paul demand that it be interpreted? Such a belief requires a pattern of ignoring the plain import of several verses in 1 Corinthians 14, as well as a host of other Bible passages. Yet, it is a long-established practice.

Those who are convinced they speak in tongues today (though they do not do so after the Biblical manner) have merely given way to the phenomenon of ecstatic

utterances, which is neither new nor Christian. (Summers 362)

Indeed, the pagan world had its share of gibberish.

The Greek-Roman world furnishes many evident parallels. The Greek oracles were mediated through priests or priestesses who uttered what the divinity suggested to them while their consciousness was in complete abeyance. Another characteristic of the giving of oracles is the obscurity or unintelligibility of the oracle, which ever needs explication...Very illustrative of this class of phenomena is the description which Plato gives in the *Timaeus* of the mantis or prophet. He says that the inspired and true seer's art is not practiced under full consciousness, but that the vision comes when the understanding is under constraint, or in sleep, sickness, or ecstasy, and what he sees or says under such circumstances is to be interpreted by one who has his reason...In the post-Homeric times the cult of the Dionysiac orgies made their entrance into the Greek world. According to this, music, the whirling dance, and means of intoxication had power to make man "full of deity," to produce a condition in which the normal state was left behind and the inspired perceived what was external to himself and to sense. The soul was supposed to leave the body, hence the word "ecstasy," a being out of oneself, while other expressions used were "to rave" and "to be in the divinity," the latter expressing the thought that in its absence from the body the soul was united with deity, and so the deity spoke in and from the person in that condition. (Feine 37-38)

Ecstatic utterances among the pagan gods had their interpreters, but Christian times have seen the borrowing of the practice with the expunging of any desire for understanding. Among other early church heresies,

The claim of the “gift of tongues” was common among the Montanists. This heretical group was named for Montanus (c. A.D. 156), who was a priest of Cybele before his conversion. He would reach a state of ecstasy and gave forth utterances. These utterances were supposed to be oracles of God. Montanus claimed that the Holy Spirit spoke directly through him. (Jividen 63)

The Middle Ages, the Reformation, and modern times have their history peppered with some groups who accept this kind of tongue speaking (Jividen 68-74). Then,

In the early nineteenth century religious awakening in the United States numerous religious exercises—including glossolalia—were quite common. Particularly was this the case in camp meetings on the American frontier...The Pentecostal movement began in 1900 under the leadership of Charles Parham. The place of origin was a Bible college in Topeka, Kansas. Students of Parham began to “speak in tongues.” The movement spread rapidly through evangelistic efforts...In 1906 the headquarters of the movement was moved to Los Angeles under the leadership of Seymour. The location was an old livery stable on Azusa Street. Many Pentecostal groups look for their origin in this place. Aimee McPherson’s temple in Los Angeles helped to spread the movement throughout the western part of the United States. (Jividen 73)

Twentieth Century Pentecostalism focused on “silencing the intellect” in order to let God speak. James Bales tells how Pat Boone, in his departure from the church to Pentecostalism, “sent the author a poem...which he said spoke to him. It called on one to silence the intellect, and not to bind her (the author of the poem—AR) with words while she was bringing things from another world” (Bales 23). Such language is not even today peculiar to Christianity, but an import from the New Age religions which seek to bypass and demean all exercising of logic and rational thinking.

First, silence the intellect. Second, expel any need for understanding. This is the formula for that which passes as tongue-speaking in recent Pentecostalism. Bales quotes a “how to” article from *The Christian News*, Nov. 25, 1968:

In order to speak in tongues, you must cease speaking in English, for you cannot speak two languages at the same time. When you have been quiet before the Lord, and your thoughts are focused on Christ, you simply lift up your voice and speak out confidently. You take no thought for what you are saying: to the natural ear it is just a series of sounds. The first syllables may be halting and inarticulate, but as you continue to speak forth in faith, the Spirit will take the sounds of your voice and shape a beautiful language of prayer and praise.

The Devil will be right at hand to challenge your experience—telling you that you made it all up, or that it sounds foolish and crazy. (Everyone seems to experience this testing.) But if you continue in faith, the Lord will give you freedom and confidence in your new tongues. And as you use it daily in your private devotions, you will learn what a wonderful blessing the Lord has given you. (Bales 53)

Was this the gift of which Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14? Was the gift of speaking in tongues mentioned elsewhere in the Bible?

The Bible’s Definition of Speaking in Tongues

At Pentecost’s gathering, the apostles spoke in tongues and people from all over the Mediterranean world heard the message in their own languages (Acts 2:1-12). The gift was bestowed on Cornelius’ family in like manner (Acts 10:44-48; 11:17) in order to show the acceptability of Gentiles to God in His church. Apparently, after that, the gift of tongues was passed on via the laying on of the apostles’ hands, and had made its way to Corinth, likely imparted by Paul (cf. Acts 18:1-8; Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:7). Upon his departure from there, some began to think

its possession granted a position of primacy over other less spectacular gifts.

But Paul was quick to denounce such a notion. Perhaps that is why he lists it last among the gifts in chapter twelve's order of importance (12:27-28).

The context of chapter fourteen's totality leads to a proper understanding of this gift.

1 Corinthians 14 Duel of Tongues and Prophecy

While other miraculous gifts have been addressed in the larger setting (chapters 12-13), the scope narrows in chapter fourteen to the two gifts over which there were apparently the most problems—tongues and prophecy.

The Edification of Intelligibility (1 Cor. 14:1-5)

Prophecy was to be preferred over tongue-speaking, at least in the native assembly, because listeners needed to understand the Gospel in order to be built up in the faith. Even a language useful to those in other parts of the world is of no import to the one who knows not its employment. Of interest is the Greek text and Butler's application:

The Greek text of 14:1, like the Greek of 12:1, says, *zeloute de ta pneumatika, mallon de hina propheteuete*, literally, "be zealous for the spiritual things, and rather, in order that you may prophesy." Once again, as in 12:1, the word "gifts" (Gr. *charismata*) is omitted. The most spiritual thing to want is the desire to edify others—that is done by teaching. (304)

The edification of oneself in tongue-speaking (v. 4) and the speaking of mysteries (v. 2) do not indicate that the language is only a brand new invention between the speaker and God (despite such interpretations of verse two's "does not speak to men but to God"). Rather, it simply indicates the obvious—if no one is there to hear in the language spoken (cf. Acts 2:6, 11), then only God and the speaker understand it.

The apostle warns that speaking in a *tongue* (Gr. *glosse*, language) usually resulted in utterance of a non-understandable mystery. The Greek word *musterion*, mystery, means, “that which is unrevealed,” not that which is unknowable; it would be knowable if revealed, or interpreted. The word “unknown” (supplied in KJV) is not in any Greek text, and should not have been supplied since it is *not* stated anywhere in the New Testament that first century “tongues” were non-human, unknowable utterances. Of course, God knows all human languages, dialects, phonics or “tongues,” (see Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 9:11; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 16:16; 17:15 where “tongue,” *glosson*, is used clearly to mean, human languages). When one of the Corinthian Christians spoke with “other tongues” (Gr. *heteris glossaid*, Acts 2:4; and *heteroglossois*, I Cor. 14:21) he did not speak to his fellow Christians because he was speaking in a *foreign language*, but he did speak to God since God understands all languages. (304)

The Necessity of Intelligibility (1 Cor. 14:6-18)

Paul develops the thought as a master illustrator. Revelation from God (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-13) that provides necessary knowledge (cf. Psalm 119:11; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18), communicated by clear prophesying or teaching are necessary for the profit of the hearers (1 Cor. 14:6). “Even things without life” make this clear. A flute or a harp played without a rational distinction in the sounds forms no melody, creates no harmony. People cannot discern any music for the grooming of the soul (7). An uncertain trumpet call does not rouse the troops for battle, and disaster would thus loom (8). Possibly, a little sarcasm is involved in the word play of verse nine, in this vein: “Your pride in your tongues is misplaced. ‘Unless you utter by the tongue’ (*glossa*) ‘words easy to understand’ your tongue is used in vain.” “Speaking into the air” (9) builds up no one.

The languages of the world have their significance (10). Here is the implicit and obvious indication that these tongues were intelligible to people somewhere. The port city of Corinth

would have been naturally home to several languages, and this may have spurred the temptation to speak in the gifts God had given for the spreading of the Gospel. But if speakers of those languages were not present in the assembly, the exercise was in vain. “Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me” (11). Again, the chapter is punctuated with the recurring rejoinder that edification of others and not showiness of self was to be the aim (12).

While sometimes tongue-speaking and interpretation were separate gifts (1 Cor. 12:10), here the apostle indicates that the speaker may interpret for himself (14:13). Sorting out the division of gifts is of secondary consideration. The point is profound: Prayer indicates the desires of one’s heart (cf. James 4:1-4 where prayers were answered in the negative because desires were misplaced); praying that one may interpret would show he had the right attitude—a focus on others and not himself. Verse fourteen emphasizes the miraculous nature of the gift. With verse twenty-two, in conjunction with the example of Acts 2, the purpose of tongue-speaking is easily discerned.

Christ had predicted that the early church would sprout and grow quickly, as a tiny mustard seed grows into a large bush in an incredibly short time (Matt. 13:31-32). This would necessitate the miraculous breaking of the language barrier established by God at Babel (Gen. 11). Rather than requiring of disciples years of study to learn a language, as modern missionaries must do, the infancy stage of the church (1 Cor. 13:8-13) required a supernatural intervention. God gave it in the gift of tongue-speaking. Unbelievers were to be able to hear in their own languages (14:22). Once assimilated into a regular assembly, such exercises were unnecessary.

Being more spectacular, though, they seem to have taken over not only the preaching, but the praying and the singing of the local congregation at Corinth (14:15, Coffman 229). The authorized use of the agreement word “Amen” in the assembly is contingent upon one’s understanding of that to which he agrees (16). Thanks may be well and good, but services are about edifying the others (17).

Paul ends this section with the verbal slap in the face. “I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (18-19). Ouch.

The Maturity of Intelligibility (14:20-25)

Spiritual maturity focuses on the needs of others. While Christ had told kingdom seekers to be like children (Matt. 18:1-4), the object lesson on innocence did not extend to children’s manifest immaturity. In the exercise of abilities in the assembly of the church, maturity demands that focus not be on oneself, but on others. Again in the vein of a master preacher (what else would one expect from an inspired man?), Paul, after illustrating from contemporary thought (flute, harp, trumpet, vv. 7-8), applies an argument from the Old Testament an example (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-11).

Employment of a time when God used foreign languages (another evidence that intelligible languages are under consideration throughout the chapter) in ancient Israel’s history for a pedagogical purpose comes into view in verses 21-22.

In these two verses he *illustrates* how the gift of tongues is to function. The law (as in, say, 14:34) is the OT. The passage used is Isaiah 28:11. The setting is clear. The people won’t hear the words of the prophet (who speaks to them in their own language) so God will speak to them in the language of the Assyrians (if you think *Israel* is in view) or Babylonians (if you think *Judah*). Had they listened to the prophets they wouldn’t have needed foreign chastisement. But they wouldn’t listen so they will go into captivity. And in captivity they will be reminded of their *unbelief* by the daily “babbling” going on all around them. It was *unbelief* that necessitated the lesson of the foreign tongue. As it was with the OT illustration so it is with the present gift. Tongues were not designed for believers. Tongues were intended by God to get the attention of unbelievers. (McGuiggan 182)

The application of the inspired illustration is clear: In the New Testament church's congregational setting, the teaching is to be in a language understandable. These are generally believers. But what if an unbeliever comes in? In this setting, an unbeliever would likely be one, visiting the congregational worship, who still speaks the same language as the other natives of Corinth. If, however, this visitor hears foreign languages with no local applicability, he will only conclude the madness of the show-offs. If, however, he hears the convicting word of God (Heb. 4:12) in his own sphere of understanding, his opportunity for being pricked in the heart and thereby repenting (cf. Acts 2:37-38) is manifest (14:23-25).

Applicability to modern so-called tongue-speaking services is evident. While the "languages" spoken are no languages at all, and thus the scope is different from 1 Cor. 14, the application is the same. Those who hear a mass mesh of gibberish will only conclude the emotionalism of the pretend worshipers. Those who hear an orderly presentation of Scripture by a well-studied individual will have opportunity to learn, repent, convert, and grow.

The Regulation of Intelligibility (14:26-35)

The preacher Paul then progresses, after illustration and rhetoric, to specific calls to action. Each should not be jockeying for position in the worship service (26). Employment of this verse to warrant solo singing ignores the context completely. It was not an *authorization* that everyone came with a prayer, a psalm, a teaching; it was a *problem* to be corrected.

Specifically, tongue-speakers were to be two or three at the most in a service, each in turn, and each with interpretation (27-28). Following these two verses would collapse most modern Pentecostal services. Without interpretation, silence was enjoined. The Greek word here for silence, *sigao*, indicates "to hold one's peace" as in Luke 19:36; 18:39; 20:26; Acts 12:17; 15:13 (Vine 170). This simple instruction quickly does away with all modern claims that tongue-speaking is uncontrollable when one comes under the influence of the Spirit. "The

mandate...indicates that one who spoke in tongues retained some control, that it was not a question of being uncontrollably seized” (Holladay 186).

Likewise, “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (14:32). Only two or three were to speak, each in turn, and if one was revealed to another, the first could not claim uncontrollable ecstasy; he had to relent and be silent (*sigao*) (29-32). “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (33).

The silence enjoined upon women is likewise a “holding of one’s peace” (*sigao*) (34-35). This bolsters the argument of Paul in 1 Tim. 2:11-14 that male leadership in the public assembly was demanded by Creation’s initiative, not cultural considerations. There, her authority over a man is directly under consideration. She is to remain quiet (the word 1 Tim. 2:11 is *hesychia*, indicating a silence as the crowd was when Paul spoke, Acts 22:2, [Vine 242]). Complete vocal and verbal silence was not, of course, enjoined, or else she could not join in the reflexive singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Rather, the progressive argument is this: As tongue-speakers and prophets must hold their peace under certain circumstances in the regular assembly, so women must hold their peace until they have opportunity to ask their questions outside the assembly. The command to ask husbands is not a prohibition against single women ever asking questions. It seems, rather, a literary reminder of the natural course and glorious design of women (most women have husbands, though it is not wrong to not so do, 1 Cor. 7). Perhaps it is akin to the “childbearing” of 1 Tim. 2:15 possibly indicating the nurturing sensitivity of the female gender as opposed to the more aggressive leadership role of the male. While women would sometimes pray and prophesy (1 Cor. 11:2-16), it apparently was not in an assembly where men were present.

It is quite interesting that these controversial verses seem almost a parenthesis in the argument. Tongue-speakers and prophets are under consideration. If there be any women with these gifts, they were not to be speaking in services anyway. This simple instruction, too, would automatically cease most

modern day Pentecostal services.

Conclusion

Preacher Paul's conclusion is an appeal to his apostolic authority. An explanatory paraphrase might read, "You don't get to make up the rules. The word of God did not begin with you. You may have prophecy, and you may claim great spirituality (as modern tongue-speakers, who often see their supposed gift as a sign of more significant Christian living), but I, as an apostle (and, possibly) who imparted these gifts to you, am telling you that these are the commandments of God" (36-37). Some would choose to stay ignorant (38). This seems akin to Jesus' oft-recurring, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 13:9, 43; 11:15 et al.).

After all that, the admonition is to desire prophecy. Still, in the infant church age, the speaking of tongues was not to be completely forbidden. It was simply to be regulated for the edification of the church. It was to be so in order that "all things be done decently and in order" (40).

Addendum

Even without tongue-speaking, the temptation to showiness and emotionalism being mistaken for spirituality is a key application of this passage. Leaders in the public worship must constantly self-evaluate (2 Cor. 13:5) as to whether their motivation is for their own glory concerning eloquence and ability, or for the beautiful, simple, edifying instruction of others.

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Biographical Sketch

Andy Robison is a full-time faculty member at the West Virginia School of Preaching. Prior to that, he has worked with Hopewell church of Christ outside Parkersburg, WV, the Camden Avenue congregation in Parkersburg, the Oakhurst congregation in Farmington, WV, and the Pennsboro, WV church. He taught Bible and directed choruses at Jackson (TN) Christian School. Andy received his A.A. from Ohio Valley College (Parkersburg, WV) and his B.A. in Bible and Vocal Music from Harding University. He has received his teaching certification from Harding and done extensive graduate work with the Harding University Graduate School of Religion (Memphis, TN). Andy has written a number of songs and helped produce several CDs of a cappella singing to benefit West Virginia Christian Youth Camp, where he serves on the Board of Directors. He is the editor of the songbooks, *Teaching & Admonishing*, and *100 Songs to the Glory of God*. He and his wife Marsha have two children, Hannah and Andrew.

Generosity and Fraternity

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

Jeff Tucker

As we near the closing of a series of studies on Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, we address the 16th chapter of Paul's letter. Without rehashing material already covered from the previous chapters, we have seen that the overall theme of the letter is the relationships between the brethren. Whether it be dissention about followers or leaders, lifestyles, worship, or spiritual gifts the brethren just cannot find themselves in right relationships with one another, and hence in a right relationship with God. The theme for this year's lectureship is *1st Century Solutions for 21st Century Problems*, and it is my goal in this lecture to present a 1st century problem mimicked in the church today, how Paul instructed the brethren to fix it, and how the same solution applies today.

Before we get too deep into this lecture, it is necessary that we understand some basic definitions. As I have been assigned the topic "Generosity and Fraternity," what is it that we aim to understand from this chapter? While the term "fraternity" is not found within the Scriptures, the basic concept is, and it is summed up in a much more familiar word: fellowship! Webster defines fraternity as "a group of people associated or formally organized for a common purpose, interest, or pleasure" (Merriam-Webster 497). Rightly chosen, the word describes the basic idea behind the church, a word which in its original form refers to "the called out ones." Peter wrote, "that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). The common purpose of the church was the hope of eternal life, their interest was Christ-likeness, and their pleasure was godliness. But a more familiar word which summarizes both terms—generosity and fraternity—is fellowship. It is interesting to note, that W.E. Vine parallels fellowship to that of "communion" and reveals that the terms are often used interchangeably (233)! The implication is there is a

unity that is pure and unadulterated by the filth of the world, a reverent and intimate relationship that is likewise shared as we partake of the Lord's Supper. We also note the relational requirements of fellowship, "[it] is a fellowship of duties, of ordinances, of graces, love, joy, etc." (McClintock 527). Tying this all together, we will attempt to deal with the relational issues of both the 1st and 21st centuries and how Paul sought to correct them both in light of its direct audience (the church at Corinth) and in application to the church today.

As we walk through this 16th chapter of Corinthians, we will break the chapter up into four parts to more easily retain the basic points of the chapter: Fellowship (vs. 1-4), Future Plans (vs. 5-9), Fellow Workers (vs. 10-18), and Farewells (vs. 19-24). These four parts break down the central thoughts of the chapter and how they relate to one another and the rest of the letter.

Fellowship

The opening of the 16th chapter of Corinthians takes us directly to the main dilemma of the letter: generosity and fraternity, or as we will refer to it, fellowship. The Corinthians had a steady diet of selfishness and hierarchies throughout their membership, and Paul had tolerated enough of it. As he continues in his letter addressing solutions to their problems, he now begins to address another matter that had evidently been brought up by the church: the collection. Most noted for its first four verses, 1 Corinthians 16 entails so much more than just a command to give. In the opening four verses, Paul writes,

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

The occasion of the command seems vital in understanding the context of the chapter within the whole letter. Paul in writing, “upon the first day of the week” refers to a command or ordinance which had already been set in order. The purpose of the brethren coming together on the first day of the week was to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Paul, having already addressed their shortcomings on this, uses the opportunity of this occasion to accomplish even greater deeds. As the churches in other areas had been commanded, Paul also commands the church at Corinth. Henry Alford suggests that there was “a plain indication that the day was already considered as a special one, and one more than others fitting for the performance of this religious duty” (622).

I believe that it is interesting to note that Paul concludes his letter with this commandment. Up to this point, Paul had nurtured the church to that place where she should understand her role as far as love and unity. McClintock and Strong indicate that the “fellowship of the saints is two-fold: 1. With God; 2. With one another” (527). I truly believe that one of the hindrances to the growth of the church today is that brethren still do not get that! Fellowship is not just an after-worship meal, or simply their own relationship with God, and a hand shake with the brethren on the way out the door, it is a combined relational unity between the Christian and God, and the Christian and their fellow Christians. It forms a perfect triangle of unity, God at the top, I at one corner, the brethren at the other. Break ANY aspect of that triangle, and there is no fellowship! If a Christian believes himself to be in fellowship with God, while not in fellowship with another Christian who is in fellowship with God, then he fools himself! He cannot dis-fellowship the brethren if the brethren are in fellowship with God. There are no exceptions to this! Break one side of the triangle of fellowship and you have broken the whole. John wrote, “But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:9). A little later he wrote, “If a man say, ‘I love God’ and hateth his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20). There is much hatred, envy, jealousies and malice in the church today! Forgiveness is unheard

of, because grudges cannot be let go. Imagine the heinous offenses Christ endured, yet forgave them all, even while hanging on the cross. Yet today in the church, such petty little things divide her. Paul's challenge to the church at Corinth to solve this problem was pure fellowship, and the same is true today!

Paul now challenges the brethren to renew proper fellowship by commanding a sacrifice closest to the hearts of man: their money! While this seems to be a hang-up for many (both then and now), giving becomes one of the most intimate forms of fellowship. The idea that someone would give up something of their own, for the benefit of another is a perfect parallel to the sacrifice of Christ, and that is exactly what Paul desired of the brethren. The command would renew proper fellowship, for it would require a desire to give up something that they considered their own, to benefit another. But lest the brethren struggle with this command, Paul adds, "As God hath prospered him." Kistemaker suggests that the Greek verb "to prosper means 'to be led along a good road'" (595). It therefore becomes a stark reminder that they are merely stewards of the gifts that God has given, which may make it a little easier to part with. Again, another struggle for Christians still today is the mindset that we have worked hard and "earned" everything that we have, and that it is "all ours"! But again, we have forgotten that God has blessed us with these things and that we are merely stewards of them all. It may do us all well to be reminded every now and then that God can just as quickly take all of these "things" away! Too often, we are unwilling to part with anything that begins to "hurt" our way of life, social status or dip into our "surplus". Yet we are reminded of the words of Paul, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but **dung**, that I may win Christ" (Philip. 3:8). What a wonderful example of the true heart of fellowship that Paul had encouraged the brethren unto, and this is the heart of fellowship that EVERY Christian today should have.

Also, in encouraging the brethren to proper fellowship, Paul arranges for that fellowship to be extended world-wide. Paul's plea to the churches was always one of unity in Christ, and what better way to facilitate that unity than a Gentile church setting aside money for the prosperity of a prominently Jewish one. Fellowship of the brethren is of utmost importance to the church, and Paul further facilitates that through a contribution of the saints for the saints. We have opportunities to do likewise even today. Mission trips the world over are always in need of funds to help spread the Gospel. Schools of preaching are always in need of support, sister congregations, faithful ministers, worthy projects just to name a few. The ability to give with a joyful heart is a gift, a spiritual grace. It takes maturity, selflessness and a proper understanding of priorities. It would be a formidable task for a church that struggled with sharing food and prided itself in seizing goods from others through lawsuits; but with love, with proper fellowship, it could be done.

Future Plans

As we continue through this chapter, Paul directs his attention to his future plans of returning to Corinth. Paul has opportunity to pass through Corinth, but reveals plans for a later stop when he could tarry longer with them. Not considering it as profitable, Paul chooses to bypass them at this point and return at a later date when he can spend more time in instruction and encouragement. In the previous verses, Paul makes reference to the collection being set aside so "that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). Alford suggests that this "would avoid the unseemliness and the difficulty of raising the money suddenly, at the last moment; and he wishes when he comes to be free to devote himself to instruction" (945). When we consider the division, the lawsuits, the adultery, the issues with spiritual gifts, various doctrinal, social and traditional differences, the Lord's Supper, the resurrection and the second-coming of Christ Paul had his work cut out for him! Reading ahead, we could certainly see that Paul's instruction, whether by letter or by visit, was certainly profitable to the church there and that many good things would come out of Paul's foresight and judgment. The

spiritual maturity required of the Corinthian brethren would take time, and Paul would stay his journey till he could have it. We would do well today to understand that such spiritual growth takes time. All too often, we expect new converts to immediately understand all the rudiments of Christianity and have little patience for their stumbling. Even veteran Christians struggle from time to time, and need patience and longsuffering. No one is above reproach, and the courage to address these issues as Paul does but also display the love to deal with them patiently are much needed qualities of leadership within churches today.

But Paul also reveals another reason that he desires not to come to Corinth at this time. In the next few verses he writes, “But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:8-9). Opportunity for the Gospel to be spread in Ephesus at this time was evidently great for Paul. We can almost envision Paul sitting at a table, writing this letter, yet looking up into the heavens envisioning Christ on the hilltop speaking to His disciples when He revealed to them, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35). Yet with all good opportunity to win souls, comes also the heeding words of Christ again, “ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake” (Matthew 10:22a). Paul reveals that the adversaries are already lying in wait. Robertson translates it, “and many are lying opposed to me” (202). While certainly Paul was no stranger to persecution, he could already see it on the horizon. Yet his desire to fight in the face of danger was never wavering. Which brings us to another point of issue for today’s church. We have been so blessed to live in a country which provides for us religious freedom, yet we are so cursed for living in these spoiled conditions. We have so much adopted the ideal of religious freedom, that while we enjoy our own, it has dulled us to the fight. We have become the sluggard and complacent. Seldom do we ever stand up and voice the truth, and now our nation is dying as a result of the complacency. It seems that anymore, Christians weigh the risks before entering into any discussion of

Christianity. Not in the home (we would not want to force our religious beliefs upon our children), not at the work place (for fear we may lose our jobs), not in the family (lest we cause a rift at our reunions), not among our peers (lest we make them uncomfortable and lose a friend), certainly not in the schools (we may infringe upon another's rights) and anymore, not even with the brethren (conversing about the Pittsburgh Steeler's up and coming season makes more interesting talk). When then do we fight for Christ? I am reminded of Jesus teaching the Jewish leaders about who their neighbors are. The two most likely candidates for saving the Samaritan decided that after weighing the risks, the injured man was not worth saving. How I fear today, that Christians in this great country too often weigh out the risks of evangelism and tuck tail and hide! They decide that souls are just not worth the risk...they are not worth saving! What happened to the powerful proclamation, "For God hath not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"? (2 Tim. 1:7) Well, back to Paul, shortly we will find his encouraging solution to this problem for the 1st century Christians and for Christians today, "quit ye like men"!

Fellow Workers

In verses 10 and following, Paul again continues to give some great advice to the brethren concerning their fellow Christians. Respect your fellow workers, never give up, and acknowledge your indebtedness to those who refresh your spirits! In Pauline fashion, he continues to exhort the brethren and to encourage the work of the Christian. As he opens this next section, Paul encourages the brethren to be supportive of Timotheus. While we cannot know for certain what Paul's anticipation of trouble for Timothy was, Kistemaker has this to say about it.

[Paul] instructs them to receive Timothy courteously and respectfully. We assume that Timothy's age had something to do with his relation to the church in Corinth (see 1 Timothy 4:12)... His youth may have hindered him from exercising authority in the Corinthian community.

Moreover, the church in Corinth may have considered him to be not the chief spokesman but Paul's deputy, that is, a person who is second in command.... In (Paul's) Pastoral Epistles, Paul reveals that Timothy was not enjoying robust health (1 Timothy 5:3), was timid (2 Timothy 1:7), and had to be taught how to instruct groups of people and how to control his own inclinations (1 Timothy 5). (601-02)

Nicoll suggests that Corinth may have been in such disposition to have discouraged Apollos from returning at the time. He also adds that "...Christian love was a quality in which this church was lacking" (949). Certainly, the deck was stacked against Timothy and having a figure like Paul stand up for him I am sure was an encouragement. I am curious if Paul was reminded of the time Barnabas stood up for him early on in his ministry in Jerusalem? Regardless, Paul needed the Corinthian brethren to be supportive of Timothy, and reminds them that the reason for this is because he works for the Lord even as Paul himself does. Which again fast forwards us to today. This might sound prejudiced, being that I myself am a preacher, but it seems today that most preachers are considered second rate citizens. Oh, don't get me wrong, they are often held way too high upon that pedestal, expected to be super-human Christians, and spread thinner than any human being could be expected. But beyond all of this, preachers are generally expected to work for sub-standard salaries, expected to put in unlimited unpaid over-time to the service of the congregation, and their time devoted to study, reading and writing is far underrated. All of these things are detrimental to the longevity of a preacher not only in a local work, but in his ability to continue in located work. It is understandable as a preacher why Paul would have such a great concern for his son in the faith. Preachers need to be encouraged, as well as elders, deacons and all who faithfully work for the Lord. So again, our application finds Paul speaking to us, respect your fellow workers.

The next aspect of Paul's letter quickly moves itself to again, the typical Pauline character of battle-readiness: never give up! Paul adds, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Cor. 16:13-14). We all refer to, and consider John to be the apostle of love, but a close rival would certainly be Paul. Aside from always showing his unfeigned love for the brethren, Paul has continuously hammered into the souls of the brethren that ALL things must be done with love. Even in these few verses, Paul reiterates, love the brethren, love God, and love the brethren. Interesting how Paul continues to emphasize the true fellowship, or fraternity, of true believers! Paul, continuing to encourage the brethren incites them to readiness, endurance, strength, and love. The attitude is indeed an active one, one that is on the defense to protect itself, but also on the offensive to strengthen itself. Nicoll writes, "[it] exhorts in general to the courageous prosecution of the Christian life by the Corinthians, who were enfeebled by contact with heathen society" (949). We have already seen in previous chapters how easily influenced by the world the Corinthian brethren were, now Paul exhorts them to be different. Here again, we find a modern problem with an ancient answer. Too often today, the church tries to do all it can to blend in. The Christian does all he can to blend in. We don't want to look strange or different than anyone else, so we try to be Christians fitting in to a heathen society. "Come as you are" worship services sporting pajamas, "Biker Sundays," instrumental music, no worship during the Super Bowl, even this past year, signs all over the state celebrating the birth of Christ but not on Sunday morning, worship services cancelled so as not to interfere with "family traditions"! Seriously?!? The problem is that God's children were called to be different. Jesus commanded that we were to be "salt" in a "bland" world, "light" in a realm of "darkness", a city set upon a hill in a vast prairie. Brethren if we are "fitting in" with the world, we cannot be Christians! Paul warns to watch out, don't allow evil associations to corrupt you. He encourages standing fast, being ready always to give an answer. He admonishes to be strong, never allow the fiery darts of the wicked one to overcome you. He embraces us with love,

that we mimic the same and love the brethren with the same love with which Christ loved us.

Notice also, Paul's desire for the brethren to know his indebtedness toward those who have been an encouragement to him. Even though Paul has struggled with the brethren so much in this epistle, he continues to present his love toward the brethren. While Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have refreshed Paul's spirit, it reminded him of the love of the brethren and has equated their love as a provision of the church in Corinth. While the King James translates it "that which was lacking on your part" (1 Cor. 16:17), Vincent in his Word Studies suggests that it is more accurately translated, "my lack of you" (289). Paul was always thankful for the brethren and it seems that, while he desired to be with the brethren at Corinth, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus had supplied enough love in their stead. The idea of "refreshing the spirit" that Paul mentions is a vital aspect of the life of the Christian during spiritual warfare. Being that the war is always raging, there are times in which our souls must be refreshed. Interestingly enough, Robertson reveals that this is the same word that Jesus uses in Matthew 11:28 in which He offers to the people, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Whether through prayer, singing, teaching, or discussion our spirits need refreshed from time to time. While it may not seem like much of a solution, Paul addresses the problem of spiritual burnout! His recommendation is simply thus...to be refreshed by fellow brethren. But this refreshing cannot just happen automatically. Brethren have to know one another intimately to be aware of the signs of burnout. Again we run into the problem of the relational aspect of fellowship. It is an intimate relationship, a unity so pure that it recognizes the signs of spiritual burnout and offers the refreshment needed to continue. Often times, my mother and I have had opportunity to just sit and discuss Bible passages, interpretation and application. It is honest and open minded, there is no judgment, just consideration. Scriptures bounce from my mother to me and back. They are opportunities to see how the Scriptures change us and work within us from different perspectives. It is simply

refreshing to have these types of conversations. Dad and I have always shared a zeal for singing, instilled in me since I was a young boy, but as opportunities arise that we can travel to Friday night sings and participate together in those as father and son, but even more importantly as brothers in Christ, these too are times of refreshing. I have had elders who have endured with me through difficult times, and their words of wisdom and advice are times of refreshing. And I have had close companions simply offer words of encouragement for a lesson well-presented or their desire for me to simply persevere in the work of a minister. These all are times of refreshment to me. As Paul writes of those who have refreshed him, I pause and think of all of those who have refreshed me and have given me cause to continue fighting the good fight! Paul encourages the brethren, as I do of you today, to acknowledge them that are such refreshment to you in your spiritual walk.

Farewell

As we come to the close of this lecture, a few reminders that Paul gives his readers: treasure the brethren and carry the yoke of Christ. It seems that Paul is always carrying messages to and from brethren, and never forgetting to thank those who have been an encouragement to him. How wonderful means of communication is today for the brethren! I am able to keep in contact with brethren across country, even across the globe through email, texting, phone calls, and yes, even Facebook! It is always encouraging to hear from faithful Christians the world over and to express emotion to them instantaneously through these modes of communication. Here is a 21st century solution to a 1st century problem! But even the blessing with which we can have ease of communication can also be a curse. So, again, Paul reminds us, “greet one another with a holy kiss.” Let your communication and let your appearances be holy, reverent, sincere and with love. I remember when I was a child; we had just transferred from the church at Oakwood Road in Fairmont to the congregation at Bridgeport, WV. It had suffered a split, and Dad felt a sense of urgency to assist them through that struggle and transition. The split had left them with no song leaders, but a

few faithful men who had the courage and desire to serve God. I was a freshman in high school and I wasn't thrilled about the move; it separated me from several life-long friends. But I remember something VERY strange and uncomfortable for me when I first started going there that has become all too natural for me today. A wonderful and faithful elderly Christian man named Walter Putz stood at the door and gave everyone who walked through it a huge bear hug! As uncomfortable as it was at first, I realized that it was one of the greatest remedies to a beaten, battered Christian coming in from the spiritual battle and into a place of peace and rest! It wasn't a kiss, but you get the point.

Lastly, as Paul closes, bear the yoke of Christ! "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema" or accursed. Literally, dedicated for destruction, which is what any will be who confess not Christ! Maranatha! "Come, Lord Come" or possibly, "Our Lord Comes!" Whichever, we can envision Paul meaning either. Speed His return that the suffering of this life may be over, and the joy of the new life awaits. Or Paul's continual sense of urgency to prepare for Christ's return. Either way, fight the good fight, and rest the good rest! Which brings to this last point, bear the yoke of Christ. In Matthew 11:28, when Jesus offered His invitation to the crowds, He mentioned something of a contradictory sort. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29- 30). It would seem that the yoke of Christ and His burden would be great! The struggles, temptations, persecution...what greater weight could there be? Yet Paul once again answers that age old problem with a 1st century answer, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," for what more could we ask? An anonymous writer penned these appropriate words:

...“My yoke is easy and my burden is light”...
The prophet says this about the burden of sinners:
“Because my iniquities lie on top of my head, so
they have also placed a heavy burden on me”...

“Place my yoke upon you, and learn of me that I am gentle and humble of heart” Oh what a very pleasing weight that strengthens even more those who carry it! For the weight of earthly masters gradually destroys the strength of their servants, but the weight of Christ rather helps the one who bears it, because we do not bear grace; grace bears us. It is not for us to help grace, but rather grace has been given to aid us. (233)

In closing, we may often find ourselves so far removed by nearly two thousand years from the first century church at Corinth, but the infinite wisdom of God, seen through the hand of Paul, finds not only its own solution for its time, but purposeful solutions for the 21st century as well!

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Biographical Sketch

Jeff is a 2007 Graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. He is the son of Tommy and Karen Tucker, and the grandson of E Russel and Marion King. He has been working with the church in Reader since December of 2005. Jeff has three children: Taylor Jo, 15; Megan Rose, 7; and Maximus Michael, 6. Jeff is currently working on his Masters degree in Christian Counseling and Psychology.

The Resurrection and Expectation

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Frank Higginbotham

No event in human history is more important to the Christian than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us of many miracles that occurred in Old Testament time. The New Testament also reveals miracles related to the life and work of Jesus the Christ. We are amazed at the ability of Jesus to turn water to wine, to heal the blind and to raise the dead. These things could only occur by the intervention of God into the things of life. However, none of these miracles is of greater value in proving the divinity of Jesus than the resurrection.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Rom. 1:1-4)

If Jesus was raised from the dead, of course He could heal human illnesses and control the power of nature. God showed His great power in raising up Christ.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named,

not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:
And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be
the head over all things to the church, Which is his body,
the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:19-23)

Therefore, it is most important for the Christian to be able to sustain his belief in the resurrection of Christ. Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Christ. Jesus had very boldly proclaimed that He would raise from the dead. He reminded the Pharisees that even as Jonah had spent three days in the belly of the whale and then came forth, that He would also be raised on the third day (Matt.12:40). He either raised on the third day or He was proven to be a liar.

The resurrection of Jesus is the central theme of our faith. R.D. Johnston wrote concerning the resurrection, “if true, it is the invincible Gibraltar of our faith; if false, it becomes the ignoble waterloo of our hopes.” G.C. Brewer, in his last article said as he faced death, none of the poems or figures of speech which he had used comforted him. The only comfort, he said, was in the resurrection of Jesus. (Baker 18)

An event so important to Christianity surely must have had evidence that can be weighed in order to sustain such a claim. The evidence presented and witnessed before two or three witnesses was accepted by Old Testament standards. (Deut.17:6). The New Testament affirms that every word is established by two or three witnesses. (2 Cor.13:1). Do we have two or three witnesses to present? The proof is abundant.

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to

the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3)

Our list of witnesses begins with the women at the tomb as we read in Matt. 28:1-10. Next we note Mary Magdalene in Mark 16:9-11. Peter saw Jesus in Luke 24:34. Two disciples talked with the risen Christ (Mark 16:12-13). Jesus appeared to the ten apostles (John 20:19-25). Later He appeared to them with Thomas present (John 20:26-29). Jesus ate fish with the disciples (John 21:1-23). He appeared to over 500 brethren (1 Cor.15:6). James was an eye witness (1 Cor.15:7). In Acts 1:3-10 He again appeared to the apostles. Then He was seen by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-9). While two or three witness is the required number, this number is topped many times. Jesus is risen from the dead and there is an abundance of evidence!

This leaves the doubter and the scoffer with a problem that he cannot handle. The tomb was empty. Where is His body? What explanation can be offered for the empty tomb other than the resurrection? Some have tried to meet this problem by claiming that Jesus just passed out from exhaustion but later revived and left the tomb. What a weak attempt to meet the abundance of evidence!

Some skeptics deny that Jesus really died. Their claim is that Jesus came so near death that he appeared to be dead, but when he was placed in the cool rock-hewn tomb, he revived, left the tomb under his own power, and presented himself to his disciples who naturally assumed he had died and had been resurrected. However, it is unthinkable that Jesus was so near death that he was mistakenly thought to be dead, that he had a spear cast into his side from which flowed blood and water, that he had been beaten, crucified, left in the tomb without nourishment for three days, struggled with an “exceedingly great” stone that sealed his tomb, and then was able to appear so healthy and strong that his disciples mistakenly thought him to be victor over death. (Murray 255)

Remember that Jesus had gone through hours of persecution

and trial and had hanged on the cross for hours and was later proclaimed dead by the soldiers. It is totally unreasonable to assume that He could have revived and rolled away the great stone that blocked His exit and then go past guards who were assigned to make sure that His body remained in the tomb. There would have to be a better explanation for the empty tomb. Some then try to explain His absence by claiming that the disciples took Him away. Remember that at this point, the disciples had doubts about the claim for the resurrection. They could not have gotten past the guards to remove His body. Every precaution had been taken to make it impossible for His disciples to remove His body and to claim that He had risen from the dead. This explanation for the empty tomb falls far short of what it is intended to do. Another attempted answer for the empty tomb is to explain that the enemies of Jesus just removed His body. The problem with this is that it runs exactly contrary to the wishes of the Lord's enemies. They wanted to keep His body in the tomb at all cost. If the tomb were empty, this would give the disciples reason to claim Him to be the Son of God. Thus, they did all that was humanly possible to see to it that the disciples could not take His body and make such a claim. If the enemies of Christ had taken His body from the tomb, they could have destroyed Christianity by showing His body when Peter on Pentecost boldly proclaimed His resurrection. The events on Pentecost would have stopped abruptly if anyone could have produced His body.

Others have concluded that the body of Jesus was stolen. However, it is extremely difficult to believe that the disciples would steal the body, concoct the resurrection story, and then be willing to die for a story they knew was a lie. Neither is it likely the enemies of Jesus would steal the body; they wanted it to remain there (Mt. 27:62-66). And if they had stolen the body, they would have produced the body later to disprove the teachings of the disciples. (Murray 255)

Those who deny the resurrection today are too late. Many

opportunities to have removed the very basis of Christianity occurred in the first century but no evidence was submitted that could give an adequate explanation for the empty tomb. This is the reason that the disciples of Christ still speak with confidence about the resurrection. It stands as irrefutable evidence that Christ is God's Son.

How does the resurrection affect me? There are two events that face each of us. Our acceptance of the resurrection will determine how we will face these events. First, each of us will face death. Death and the judgment are ahead for all. These are appointments made for us by God (Heb. 9:27). David discussed death in this manner.

Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. (Psalms 90:5-10)

James describes our life as a vapor that appears for a little time and then is gone (Jas. 4:13-15). Any preparation for the time of our death must take place during the time we live. This makes clear just how important it is to believe and accept the Bible teaching about the resurrection. In discussing this matter with the brethren at Corinth Paul makes clear the connection between the resurrection and our salvation.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have

believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

Note that verse two states that it is by the Gospel that we are saved. The Gospel involves the death, burial and the resurrection of Christ. It is logical to conclude then that our acceptance of the fact that Christ came forth from the grave is necessary for our salvation and our being ready to face the reality of death. The second event ahead is the return of the Lord. Sure promises are given in the Bible that confirm our faith in His return. At the ascension of Christ after His resurrection the disciples were assured that Jesus would return in like manner as they had seen Him go (Acts 1:11). Jesus gave this assurance to His disciples.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:1-6)

When the Lord returns He will judge two different groups of people (Matt. 25:31-46). One group will be those who accepted Him during life and the other group will be those who did not obey the Gospel.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord

Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. (2 Thess. 1:7-9)

Those who have obeyed the Gospel will be rewarded and those who refused to obey it will have vengeance taken upon them. Remember that the Gospel includes the resurrection of Christ. Thus, our future life after this life is over depends on our reaction to the resurrection of Christ. In discussing this, Paul makes clear to the brethren at Rome that we obey a form of what Christ did for us when we obey the doctrine of Christ. Christ died for us and was then buried and rose from the dead the third day as He had promised. Read carefully what Paul said about this.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3-4)

When we are baptized we are obeying the form of doctrine that involves the death, burial and the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:17). It is very clear that our salvation depends on the acceptance of the resurrection of Christ.

What can we expect to take place with our physical bodies when Jesus returns? Will the body be raised? Paul discusses this in his letter to the church at Corinth.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. (1 Cor. 15:35-38)

Exactly what that body will be like, we do not know. We only

have the assurance that we will be like the Lord.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:1)

Our bodies here are subject to death but we will be given a body that is not mortal.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. (1 Cor. 15:50-53)

The resurrection of Christ also provides confidence for us in our victory through Christ. We can expect to win the victory over the world. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4). The Christian faces a battle each day of his life. Satan's desire is to have him sin and be lost.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

The Christian lives in a world that is set to act as a stumbling block in his way. Jesus explained to His disciples that the world

hated Him and they also could expect to be hated (John 17:14). Jesus did not ask the Father to take them out of the world but that they should have help in overcoming the world. In Romans chapter eight we have two very important and encouraging statements made by Paul that help us to understand our victory in Christ.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (31-32)

Paul described the Christian as being more than a conqueror through Christ (Rom. 8:37). This is a way of saying that we have abundant victory with the help of Christ. We must use the help that God has provided in winning this great victory.

A passage of great help to the Christian is found in the writings of Paul to the church in Corinth.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:12)

Never did God promise that the Christian will be without temptations. He is promised to have help in overcoming these temptations. We can confidently expect to win this battle through Christ. When the Devil tried to get our Master to sin, he used three different avenues of temptation. He tried through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. These same three avenues of temptation were used by the Devil when he successfully enticed Adam and Eve to sin. Knowing that Jesus had been without food, the Devil used the temptation of satisfying His hunger by violating the Word of God. The means of help Jesus used was to appeal to God's Word. With this and the next two temptations that the Devil presented, Christ

responded by saying “It is written.” He dealt with the temptation of the eye, the flesh and the pride of life by using the Word of God. He won the victory by properly handling God’s Word. This avenue is also available for us today. Understanding this truth convinces the child of God that he can win the victory. Does it not seem clear that there is real logic in the child of God spending time regularly in studying the Bible? The better he knows the Book, the greater ability he has in standing strong against Satan. God placed the answers we need in His Book. No wonder we are urged to study the Word of God. This is one of the helps God has given to His children to help them in having victory over Satan.

Another help that assures the victory that we can expect over Satan, is the proper use of prayer. Notice the connection between praying and not fainting. This is explained in this statement. “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Prayer is the means of calling on God to help us deal with the problems of life. We are urged to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17).

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philip. 4:6-7)

It is very hard to learn that we need to pray rather than worry over matters in life that we cannot handle. God has promised to help. John wrote,

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1 John 5:13-15)

The Christian is not on his own, he has help from God. We can expect to win when we rely on the help God gives. Our prayers draw the notice of Heaven in our regard. We can expect victory because we are on God's side.

A third help in obtaining victory and having confidence in overcoming Satan is the hope the Christian gets in his efforts. It is by our hope of Heaven that we are saved (Rom. 8:24). Our hope is described as an anchor for the soul (Heb. 6:19). Our hope for Heaven is not an unreasonable expectation. People frequently express unreasonable hopes that they hold. Our hope of Heaven is reasonable, reachable and real. All men have access to the hope of Heaven but not all men take advantage of this access. God wants all man to be saved but not all will submit to the conditions of salvation (1 Tim.3:4). Note the condition explained by Jesus in the following passage.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matt. 7:21-23)

Our receiving the reward of Heaven is based on our doing the will of the Father. The will of God is made known to us in the Bible. Many people who want to go to Heaven are doing nothing to make this possible. The hope of eternity in Heaven in the presence of God and all of the redeemed of all time is possible because we believe and accept the risen Savior of the world. Again, the resurrection of Christ is essential to receiving a home in Heaven.

The duration of Heaven is exactly the same as the duration of Hell. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46). Heaven is a very strong incentive for people to live in a way that pleases God and helps prepare a person for a glorious hope for eternal life.

The expectation that is associated with the fact of the resurrection of Christ is made possible because people use the help God gave. Three of those helps have been studied in this article. Through the Word of God, the help of prayer and the hope of a home in Heaven, we show that our belief in the resurrection is the guiding force behind the Christian life. If there was no resurrection of Christ, think what a terrible condition we would be in. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:19-20).

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

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Biographical Sketch

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV, February 21, 1933. He is the son of Mr. & Mrs. A. G. (Bus) Higginbotham. He graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville and from Florida Christian College in Tampa, FL. His first located work was with the Columbia Street Church of Christ in Fairmont, WV. From there he worked with the church in Wellsburg and the West Street church in Weirton, WV. In 1964 he moved to the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ in Chester, WV and is currently in his 48th year with this congregation. Frank has done radio and TV preaching and has been preaching for 60 years. He preaches on various lecture

programs and conducts 8 to 10 meetings a year. Frank is married to Rose Marie (King) Higginbotham and they are the parents of three children. Donna (passed away in 1965), Janie Gallagher who is married to Brent Gallagher (the preacher for the Oakwood Road Church of Christ in Fairmont) and Steve, who is the preacher for the Karns Church Of Christ, Knoxville, TN. The Higginbotham's have seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Scripture Index

GEN.		20:10	78
1	50	20:10-21	63
1:4	75	20:11	63
1:10	75	20:24	338
1:12	75	22:31-32	46
1:18	75	23:9-14	217
1:22	75		
1:25	75	NUM.	
1:26	50	6	96
1:26-27	50, 51-52	23:19	54
1:27	76	25	295, 296
1:31	75	25:6-8	298
2:15	50		
2:16-17	50	DEUT.	
2:18	76	4:22	338
2:18-25	50	4:26	338
2:24	76	6:1	338
3	50, 55	6:6-7	79
3:15	46	7:2-3	79
12:1-3	52	7:4	79
35:22	63	7:6	46
		12:29-31	336
EXOD.		14:2	46
3:19	16	17:6	381
9:16	16	18:15-18	330
12:15	68	18:22	310
12:20	68	19:15	18
13:6-7	68	21:23	47
17:3	46	22:5	101
18:1	46	23:30	63
20:14	78	24	77
29:46	46	24:16	290
32	293	27:20	63
32:6	293		
32:25	294	JUDG.	
		2:7	80
LEV.			
18:8	63	RUTH	

3:15	97	38-41	22
1 SAM.		PSALMS	
3:11-13	337	5:5	336
15:29	54	6:5	126
1 KINGS		13:3	123
11:4	80	16:9-10	19
18:19	83	17:5	52
2 KINGS		19:1	142, 149
4:8-12	307	19:1-6	51
14:5-6	290	23	203
1 CHRON.		25:13	338
3:16	222	37:9	338
3:19	222	37:11	338
2 CHRON.		37:22	338
21:13	83	37:29	338
21:19-20	83	37:34	338
22:3-4	84	88:10-12	126
NEH.		90:5-10	384
13:26	80	94:4	208
ESTH.		94:11	235
4:16	22	104:13	51
5:1	22	110:1	223
JOB		115:17	126
5:13	234	119:11	359
7:6-7	276	119:105	54
14:1	126	133:1	106
14:7-9	304	138:1	99
14:10	126	142:4	155
14:14	126	145:8-9	207
31:1	85	PROV.	
		1:7	3, 234
		5:18-20	78, 85
		6:16-19	114
		9:10	3
		11:2	209
		13:24	325

13:34	82	JER.	
14:12	147	7:9	78
14:30	207	10:23	142, 147
16:18	209	22:28-30	221-222
16:25	142, 147	31:31-34	195
18:22	78		
23:7	259	DAN.	
27:4	207	2:44	224
29:18	146	12:1-3	304
29:23	209		
		HOS.	
ECCLES.		4:2	78
1:9-10	xvii	4:9-13	78
3:2	218		
5:2	334	MAL.	
5:6	99	2:15	78
ISA.		MATT.	
5:20	65, 296	1:11	222
6:1-2	100	1:12	222
6:2	99	1:18-25	144
6:3	51	1:23	55
14:18	123	4:4	54
23:9	48	4:17	40
28:11	361	4:21	32
28:13	52	5:13	223
29:12	45	5:13-16	57
29:14	45	5:22	330
33:18	45	5:31-32	347
38:18	126	5:32	175, 185, 187, 188
52:13-53:12	46		
53:1	144	5:43-48	341
53:11	154	5:44	324
55:8	334	5:45	51
55:8-11	45	6:33	132
59:1-2	337	7:1-5	321
64:4	247	7:15	321
65:17	247	7:15-16	321

7:21-23	390	19:9	77, 175, 180,
7:29	45		181, 182, 185,
9:13	341		187, 347
9:16	31	20:19	22
10:8	17	20:28	55
10:22	371	21:21	21, 301
11:15	364	21:42	134
11:28	118, 375, 377	22:30	100
11:28-30	207	22:28	63
11:29-30	377	22:29	54
12:25	31	22:29-30	100
12:39	45	22:31-32	54
12:39-40	22	22:37-40	50
12:40	381	22:41-45	144
13:9	364	23:24	65
13:43	364	23:29	310
13:31-32	360	23:39	310
13:36-43	218	24:1-3	220
13:49	98	24:15	220
14:4	63	24:19	220
15:11	262	24:22	220
15:19-20	259	24:29	220
16:4	46	24:35	54
16:16	23	24:36	220
16:16-18	134	25:14-30	319
16:18	34	24:36	321
17:23	22	25:13	221
18:1-4	361	25:23	320
18:10-31	99	25:31	98
20:25-28	273-274	25:31-46	385
18:15-18	18	25:46	390
18:15-20	66	26:26-29	55, 190
18:18	53	26:29	190
18:20	126	26:56	24
18:27	67	26:59-60	18
19:4-5	346	27:51-53	306
19:6	76, 78	27:52	123
19:8	77	27:52-53	17

28:1-10	382	16:31	309
28:11-15	26, 314	18:1	389
28:18	95, 224	18:13	151
28:18-19	69	18:39	162
28:18-20	41	19:36	162
28:19	35	20:26	196
		21:20	220
MARK		22:14-20	190
1:21	31	22:19-20	151
3:5	321	23:47-48	298
5:35-41	307	23:55	20
8:31	22	24:1	22
10:11-12	176	24:2	21
12:31	267	24:14	22
14:22-25	190	24:21	22
14:25	195	24:34	382
16:3	22	24:39	315
16:4	21	24:41-42	315
16:9	20	24:44-46	19
16:9-11	382	24:46-47	252, 341
16:12-13	383	24:46-48	41
16:14	20		
16:15-16	41, 252	JOHN	
16:16	37, 282	1:1-3	94
		1:4	48
LUKE		1:14	35
1:26-37	144	1:29	146
4:18	156	2:15	231
4:22	144	2:25	321
8:4-18	136	3:2	119
10:41	277	3:16	46, 47, 203, 214, 340
12:15-21	277		
13:3	284	4:1-2	40
13:32	22	4:24	52
13:33	330	4:34	224
16:18	176	4:35	371
16:22	98	4:53	37
16:29-31	307	5:26-29	218

5:39	<i>144, 149</i>	17:14	<i>176</i>
5:46-47	<i>330</i>	17:14-17	<i>17:14</i>
6	<i>292</i>	17:17	<i>52</i>
6:38	<i>224</i>	17:20	<i>176</i>
6:66-67	<i>23</i>	17:20-21	<i>31, 106</i>
7:5	<i>24, 310</i>	17:21	<i>32, 34, 191-192, 224</i>
7:16	<i>224</i>	17:23	<i>224</i>
7:28	<i>321</i>	18:36	<i>221</i>
7:37	<i>292</i>	19:32-37	<i>308</i>
8:19	<i>46</i>	19:39-40	<i>20</i>
8:24	<i>43</i>	20:1	<i>21</i>
8:29	<i>224</i>	20:19	<i>24</i>
8:32	<i>52</i>	20:19-25	<i>382</i>
9:16	<i>31</i>	20:26-29	<i>382</i>
10:10	<i>216</i>	20:28	<i>24</i>
10:21	<i>144</i>	20:30-31	<i>311</i>
10:35	<i>54</i>	21:1-23	<i>382</i>
11:1-15	<i>305</i>		
11:13	<i>123</i>	ACTS	
11:24	<i>127</i>	1	<i>12</i>
11:25	<i>218</i>	1:1-3	<i>382</i>
11:38-44	<i>309</i>	1:1-11	<i>381-382, 385</i>
12:9-11	<i>309</i>	1:3	<i>25</i>
12:32	<i>46</i>	1:3-10	<i>382</i>
12:39	<i>224</i>	1:8	<i>120</i>
12:44	<i>224</i>	1:11	<i>52</i>
12:47-48	<i>320</i>	1:21-22	<i>25, 120</i>
12:48	<i>54</i>	2	<i>74, 112, 190, 352, 360</i>
14	<i>118</i>	2:1-12	<i>357</i>
14:1-6	<i>385</i>	2:4	<i>359</i>
14:11	<i>46</i>	2:5	<i>14</i>
14:24	<i>224</i>	2:6	<i>358</i>
14:26	<i>325, 331</i>	2:11	<i>358</i>
14:26-27	<i>53</i>	2:14-41	<i>143</i>
15:5	<i>151</i>	2:16-18	<i>17</i>
15:26-27	<i>53</i>	2:21	<i>342</i>
16:13	<i>53, 319</i>		
17:8	<i>176, 224</i>		

2:22	52	9:18	38
2:28	35	9:20	37
2:29-31	313	10	251
2:30-31	19	10:39-41	121
2:32	120	10:40-41	23
2:33-36	222	10:44-48	357
2:37-38	362	10:47-48	37
2:38	37, 41, 183, 266, 282, 284	10:48	35
2:41-42	190	11:17	357
3:12-21	75, 194	12:6	217
3:15	139	12:17	24
3:19-26	330	13:8-11	325
4:10-12	139	13:27	54
4:12	35, 52	13:36	217
4:13	139	13:42-44	7
4:33	121	14:1-2	7
5:1-11	71	14:15	119
5:3-4	253	14:17	51, 149
5:4	300	14:23-25	362
5:29	102	15:13	24, 362
5:31	222	15:21-28	310
5:32	121	15:28-29	286
5:41	324	15:36	4
6:5-6	352	16	284
7:9	207	17	243
7:60	217	17:1-4	7
8	11, 39	17:2	5
8:9-13	352	17:4	10
8:14-17	352	17:5	207
8:14-18	352	17:6	130
8:16	35	17:10-12	7
8:34	37	17:12	10
9:1-9	382	17:16-34	46
9:6	342	17:17	143
9:7	25	17:18	313
9:15	37	17:21	45, 116
9:17	121	17:23	46
		17:24	51

17:30	284	24:25	143
17:30-31	69	26:15-16	40
17:31	116	26:16	25, 37
17:34	10	26:24	139
18	47	26:25	143
18:1-3	228, 323	26:26	308
18:1-8	357	27:38	322
18:1-18	33		
18:4	5, 7, 140, 141, 143	ROM.	
		1	119
18:6	5	1:1-4	380
18:8	5, 36, 47,	1:3-4	145
18:9-10	6	1:4	55
18:11	4	1:5	133
18:17	47	1:7	183
18:18-19	5	1:11	357
18:24-26	5	1:16	38, 54
19:1	33	1:16-17	46, 155, 248
19:1-7	249	1:18-20	142
19:5	35	1:18-32	46, 51
20:7	195, 283	1:19-23	234
20:17	38	1:20	51, 149, 158
20:27	319	1:24	51
20:28	153, 232, 266, 273	1:25	51
		1:26	51
20:28-32	321	1:26-27	64, 339
20:32	54	1:26-28	346
21:8	12, 24	1:28	51
22:2	363	1:32	212
22:9	314	2:12-15	51
22:14-15	25, 121	3:2	45, 46
22:15	37	3:21-26	146, 340
22:16	37, 372	3:23-25	49
22:20	121	4:17	48
23:7-11	116	5:8-9	44, 47, 55
23:10	320	6:1	282
24:14-15	305	6:1-2	293
24:15	219	6:1-14	37

6:3-4	48, 55, 133	1 COR.	
6:3-6	35	1-2	147
6:5	156, 311	1:1	30, 66
6:11	311	1:1-3	30
6:15-23	35	1:1-9	2
6:16-18	279	1:2	143
6:17	319	1:4-9	30
6:22	266, 273	1:5	30
7:2	186	1:6-8	30
8:9	266	1:7	12, 357
8:23	49	1:9	30
8:24	27, 44	1:10	30, 31, 165, 169, 171, 192, 204
8:24-25	213		
8:28	158		
8:31-32	236	1:10-16	42
8:31-39	158-159	1:10-17	30, 204, 318
8:32	158	1:11	164, 165, 191
9:17	54	1:12	33
10:4	49	1:12-14	5
10:5-9	125	1:13	34
10:9	44	1:14	5
10:13	44	1:14-15	36, 37
12:1	56, 264	1:16	36, 37
12:2	49	1:17	37, 40, 42, 43, 56
12:3-8	108		
14:1-23	107	17:17-18	148, 149
14:12	267	1:17-31	40, 42, 49, 56
14:12-13	69	1:18	38, 43, 144, 147, 244
14:17	223		
16:3	5	1:18-23	43
16:3-4	5	1:18-25	142, 250
16:16	34	1:18-31	40, 43, 155, 323
16:17	70		
16:17-18	31, 192	1:19	42, 45, 46
16:17-20	64	1:20	38, 42, 45
16:23	36, 47	1:21	46, 47, 51, 147, 235
16:25	52		
		1:21-24	144

1:21-25	140	3:4	204, 231
1:22	22, 47, 56	3:5-6	5
1:23	38, 43, 47, 48, 55, 56	3:5-8	231
1:23-24	47	3:6-9	321
1:24	43, 145, 155	3:7	131
1:25	38, 47, 244, 323	3:9	231, 236
1:26	228	3:10-15	321
1:27	9, 48	3:11	134
1:27-29	323	3:12-15	235
1:27-31	47	3:13	135
1:28	48	3:15	135
1:30	49, 57	3:16	231
1:31	57, 236	3:16-17	231
2:1-2	9, 48, 144	3:16-23	231, 328,
2:1-5	138	3:17	231, 233
2:2	47, 55, 139, 159	3:18-20	231, 233
2:3	150	3:20	235
2:4	139, 140, 147	3:21-23	34, 231, 235
2:6-16	152, 240, 241, 243	3:23	237
2:7	42	4	210
2:7-10	9	4:1	319
2:8	245	4:1-2	318
2:9	247	4:1-5	321
2:9-13	359	4:1-21	318
2:10-13	176, 251	4:2-3	319
2:12-14	178	4:3	320
2:13	53, 54, 252	4:3-5	318, 319
2:14-15	10	4:6	171, 236, 321
2:16	32, 139	4:6-13	318, 321
3:1	12, 231	4:7	171
3:1-3	167, 231, 318	4:9	323
3:1-4	107	4:11	323, 324
3:1-6	204	4:11-13	323
3:1-15	128	4:14	324
		4:14-15	229, 324
		4:14-21	318, 324
		4:15	279
		4:16	324

4:17	164, 325	6:8	169
4:18	171	6:9	64
4:18-20	209, 325	6:9-11	74, 122, 128, 170, 336, 338
4:18-5:13	166		
4:18-6:20	165, 166	6:9-20	165, 166
4:19	171	6:11	74, 122
4:21	325	6:12	11, 259, 261
5	325	6:12-20	167, 170, 258
5:1	11, 62, 165, 260	6:13	11, 165, 167, 260, 265
5:2	62, 64, 70, 165, 166, 170, 171, 204	6:13-15	259, 263
		6:14	265
5:3	66	6:15	264, 265
5:3-13	62, 66	6:15-18	259, 264
5:5	70, 325	6:16	81, 264
5:6	67	6:17	259, 263
5:7	68, 70, 190	6:18	11, 260, 264, 267
5:8	68	6:19	259, 263, 265
5:9	64, 68, 164	6:19-20	273, 319
5:9-11	70, 325	6:20	260, 264, 265, 266
5:9-13	166		
5:10-11	170	7	81, 211, 348, 363
5:10-13	68		
5:11	69	7:1	75, 165, 170, 352
5:11-13	68		
5:12	69, 70, 167	7:1-9	74, 165
5:13	64, 70	7:2	11, 165, 260
6	13, 211	7:10	174, 176, 177, 178, 181
6:1-8	164, 165, 166, 170	7:10-11	176
6:1-11	170	7:10-13	181
6:2	166	7:10-16	174, 175
6:2-5	81	7:11	165, 177, 181, 182
6:3	166, 167, 168		
6:4	166	7:12	167, 178, 181, 182, 184
6:5	167, 168		
6:7	169, 171	7:13	181, 182, 184

7:15	175, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187	10:1-10	361
7:16	187	10:1-11:1	290
7:17	270	10:8	11, 261
7:17-38	270	10:10-28	10
7:18-19	7, 271	10:11	297
7:20	279	10:12	388
7:20-21	272	10:12-13	298
7:22	273	10:14-22	298
7:25	75, 274	10:14:33	298
7:26-27	275	10:15	299
7:27	186	10:16-17	298
7:28	275	10:17	194
7:29-31	275	10:20-21	298
7:32-35	277	10:24	210
7:36	278	10:26	299
7:37-38	278	10:27	299
7:39	186, 346, 347	10:28-33	171
7:39-40	346, 217, 350	10:29-33	299
7:40	176	10:31	319
8	210, 282, 290	10:32	8
8:1	75, 171, 285, 352	11	211
8:1-3	171	11:1	325
8:1-10	10	11:2-16	88, 89, 91, 100, 363
8:1-9:27	282	11:3	89, 93
8:2	204	11:5	90
8:4	298	11:6	90, 96, 97
8:11	204	11:10	90, 99
8:10-13	286	11:11-12	92, 93
9	171, 282, 286	11:14-15	90
9:1	25	11:15	97
9:1-3	325	11:17	191, 352
9:1-14	286	11:17-22	190, 191
9:19-22	14	11:17-34	190, 352
9:24-26	11	11:18	31, 165, 352
9:27	265	11:18-19	192
10	290, 292	11:18-21	191
		11:20	284

11:20-21	192, 193	12:21	111
11:21	193	12:22-24	111
11:22	191	12:23	111
11:23	194	12:25	111
11:23-26	55	12:26	112
11:24	194	12:27	112
11:24-25	194, 283	12:27-28	358
11:25	195	12:28	353
11:26	195	12:28-30	112
11:27	196	12:30	284
11:27-34	196	12:31	204, 207, 353
11:28-29	197	13	171, 203, 214, 320, 353
11:30	198, 217		
11:31-34	198	13:1	205, 353
11:33	171	13:1-3	205
11:33-34	193	13:1-7	202, 204
12	204	13:2	205, 353
12:1	75, 352, 358	13:3	205
12:1-3	204, 352	13:4	171
12:1-30	106, 107	13:7	213
12:2	10	13:8	214
12:4-6	352	13:8-10	284, 326
12:7	12	13:8-12	109
12:7-10	353	13:8-13	328, 352, 360
12:10	93, 360	14	112, 171, 357, 358
12:11	109		
12:12	31	14:1	353, 358
12:12-13	198	14:1-5	357
12:12-26	109	14:1-40	352
12:12-27	353	14:2	358
12:13	34, 109	14:2-5	354
12:14	110	14:4	358
12:15-17	110	14:6	359
12:15-19	208	14:6-18	359
12:17	110	14:7	31, 359
12:18	110	14:8	359
12:19	110	14:9	359
12:20	111	14:10	359

14:11	360	15:18	123, 127
14:12	360	15:19	124
14:13	360	15:19-20	391
14:14-15	93	15:20	216, 217
14:15	360	15:20-28	216
14:20-25	361	15:21-22	218
14:21-22	361	15:23	219
14:23	12	15:24	221, 236
14:23-25	362	15:25	221
14:26	12, 362	15:26	223, 316
14:26-27	362	15:27	224
14:27-28	362	15:28	225, 236
14:29-32	363	15:28-29	286
14:31	93	15:29	310
14:32	363	15:29-34	304
14:33	363	15:30	311
14:34	91	15:32	229
14:34-35	10, 93, 363	15:35-38	386
14:36-37	364	15:35-58	380
14:37	321, 325	15:50-53	387
14:38	364	15:51	217
14:40	364	15:54-57	236
15	310	15:57	391
15:1-4	44, 47, 305, 385	16:1	75
15:1-5	144	16:1-2	195
15:2	44	16:1-4	367
15:3	52	16:1-24	366
15:3-4	16, 19, 42	16:2	184, 370
15:6	217, 382	16:5-9	367
15:7	382	16:7	164
15:8-9	121	16:8-9	371
15:10	151	16:10-18	367
15:12	116, 117	16:12	75
15:12-19	116, 216	16:13-14	374
15:14	118, 123	16:15	36, 37, 217
15:15	120	16:17	164, 375
15:17	118, 119, 121	16:19	5
		16:19-24	367

2 COR.		1:10	320
1:12	38	2:9	310
1:15-16	164	2:12	24
1:17	325	2:14	24
1:22	217	3:13	47
2:3	164	3:16	55
2:6	66	3:19	79
2:6-7	62	3:26-27	30
2:13	164	3:26-29	271
2:15	43	3:27	133
3:5	151	3:28	272
3:7-8	8	4:6	266
4:7	252	4:19	49
5:5	217	4:26	225
5:10	67, 69, 267, 321	4:28-31	64
5:11	141	5:6	271
5:14-15	144	5:16	266
5:19	56	5:19	33
5:21	49, 144, 153	5:20	33
6:16	231	5:21	33
7:6-7	164	6:7-9	259
7:12	62	6:14	49, 56, 144, 151
8:1-9:5	14	EPH.	
8:16-18	164	1:3	236
10:4-5	234	1:7	49
10:7	34	1:14	49, 217
10:10	325	1:19-22	224
11:2	66, 207	1:19-23	145, 381
11:5-12:13	7	1:22	92, 93
11:12	66	1:22-23	34, 109, 198
12:12	325	2:5	44
12:21	261	2:8	44
13:1	381	2:14-16	272
13:5	364	2:21	231
GAL.		3:1-5	319
1:4	44	3:1-6	341
		3:1-7	247

3:11-12	340	4:2	318
3:16-19	155	4:6-7	389
4	292	4:8	267
4:1-3	206	4:11	322, 323
4:32	206	4:15	13
4:1-6	31, 106	4:18	13
4:15	92		
4:30	49	COL.	
4:32	207	1:9-10	48
5:3	66, 266	1:15-19	145
5:11-12	66	1:18	34, 198
5:19	363	1:23	309
5:21-27	66	1:27	49
5:22-24	92	2:8	244
5:22-31	349	2:10	92, 93
5:22-33	95, 275	2:18	171
5:23	92, 93	3:1	282
5:24	177	3:1-3	55
5:25	81, 153	3:5	291
5:33	81	3:12-13	206
6:1	347	3:16	363
6:4	324	3:17	30
6:5-8	273	3:18	177
		3:18-21	275
		4:6	140
PHILIP.		1 THESS.	
1	213	1:7	14
1:9-10	213	1:8	14
1:9-11	205	2:10-12	223
2:1-4	106	2:13	53, 54, 330
2:3-4	208	3:10	32
2:3-5	210	4:13	217
2:5	49	4:13-18	216
2:6	35	4:14	217
2:8	55, 94	4:14-15	123
2:9-11	55	4:15	217
3:8	369	5:17	389
3:9	49		
3:10-11	117		

5:21	142	1:7	372, 373
2 THESS.		1:10	18
1:2	14	2:15	113, 192, 319, 359
1:7-9	386	2:16-18	307
1:9-10	219	3:14-17	144, 149
2:10	43	3:16	32, 52, 184, 325
2:13	217	3:16-17	52, 142, 234, 252, 329
2:13-15	47	4:2	31
3:6	30, 67, 70	4:7	274
3:14	67, 68, 70		
3:15	67		
1 TIM.		TIT.	
1:2	4	1:2	54
1:5	82	1:6	275
1:15	35, 320	1:10	119
2:2	140	2:3-5	91, 275
2:4	341	2:4	81
2:5	132	2:4-5	177
2:5-6	55	2:8	71
2:11	163	2:11-12	52
2:11-14	363	3:4	207
2:12	91	3:5	342
2:15	363	3:10	70
3:2	210, 275		
3:4	390	HEB.	
3:14-15	68	1	122
4:1-5	8	1:1	53
4:12	324	1:1-2	52
5	373	1:2-3	117
5:1-2	124	1:4	98
5:3	373	1:14	98
5:14	71, 275	2	122
5:17	<i>xi</i>	2:1-4	109
5:21	99	2:4	328
2 TIM.		2:12	126
		2:14-15	55

3	122	JAS.	
3:6	30	1:1	24
4	122	1:17	49, 322
4:12	362	1:19-20	211
4:15	126	2:1-4	318
5	122	2:13-14	276
5:8	94	3:1	112
5:12-14	129	3:13-18	211, 244
6	122	3:15	46
6:1	282	3:16	31
6:18	54	3:17	235
6:19	390	4:1-4	318, 360
7	122	4:2	207
8	122	4:13-15	384
8:1	222	4:16	208
8:6	55		
7:7-13	195	1 PET.	
9	122	1:10-11	246
9:15	55	1:11	331
9:27	218, 384	1:16	49
10	122	1:18-19	265, 273
10:1-10	35	1:19	35, 232
10:19-22	49	1:20	42, 54
10:25	285	1:21-23	324
10:26	47	1:22	54
10:28	18	1:23	54
10:34	124	1:25	54
11	123	2:3	207
11:1-12:2	146	2:5	231
11:7	168	2:9	366
11:25	276	2:12	71
12	123	2:21-25	213
12:2	47	2:24	144, 153, 156
12:24	55	3:1	188
12:28-29	223	3:1-6	177
13	123	3:7	82, 85
13:4	261	3:8	210

3:15	142	3 JOHN	
3:15-16	213	1:2	198
3:16	324		
3:19	292	JUDE	
3:21	37, 342	1:1	24
3:21-22	117	1:3	319
3:22	324	1:6	98, 99
4:11	319	1:12	191
5:8-9	387		
		REV.	
2 PET.		2-3	98
1:9	293	2:1	54
1:13-15	27	2:7	54
1:20	32	2:13	121
1:20-21	330	2:14	295
1:21	53	3:17	322
2:4	98, 168	5:9	48, 56, 359
2:13	191	7:9	359
2:18	119	9:11	359
2:22	293	10:11	359
3:4	123, 217	11:9	359
3:10	221	13:7	359
3:18	359	13:17	124
		14:6	146, 359
1 JOHN		16:16	359
1:1-4	28	17:15	359
1:7	132	19:10	144, 149
1:9	267	20:11-15	54, 306
2:9	368	21:8	43
2:15-17	69		
3:1	387		
4	203		
4:1	142		
4:8-10	47		
4:20	368		
5:4	387		
5:13-15	389		

