

Sermons on 1 Corinthians-Lowell Johnson

SERMONS ON 1 CORINTHIANS LOWELL JOHNSON

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I CORINTHIANS 1:1-9

Imagine this scene – You are a parent sending your child off on his own for the first time he is going away to college or the military or moving into his own home.

- The car is packed, the good-byes are said. You watch your child get into the car and drive away into adulthood. You did your best to raise him right. You taught him right from wrong. You took him to church. You kept a close watch on his decisions. Now his life is in his own hands.

- Now imagine a few months have gone by. You've heard from some of his friends that he has moved away from his moral and spiritual roots. He's somewhat abandoned the values you instilled in him. He's losing his testimony as a Christian. Let's say the only way you could communicate with him is to write a well-thought-out letter expressing your feelings as a parent. What would you say? How would you write such a letter?

The Apostle Paul faced a similar task when he sat down to write the letter we know as 1 Corinthians.

- Paul founded the church in Corinth during his second missionary journey.
- He spent 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18), teaching them and firmly grounding them in the faith. Yet, as time went by, Paul heard some distressing news.
 - He learned the church was no longer unified, but divided into small factions.
 - He learned they had become arrogant and no longer had the attitude of a servant.
 - He learned that sexual immorality had invaded the church, even an incestuous relationship.
 - He learned they were profaning the Lord's supper and abusing spiritual gifts.
 - Some of them had even come to question the doctrine of the resurrection.

Pastors who serve several churches during their ministries often state that one of those churches served was their favorite or most enjoyable pastorate while another was their most difficult.

- No other church tried Paul's patience or caused him so much anxiety as did the church in Corinth.
- At times they behaved more like Corinthians than Christians.

This letter of 1 Corinthians is actually not the first letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

- 1 Cor. 5:9 Paul talks about "my epistle" that he wrote to them. It has been called the "lost letter." Actually, Paul wrote letters to many churches that did not make it into the Bible. God did not see fit to allow them into His divine word.
- Usually, Paul's letters contain a rather lengthy doctrinal section followed by a section of practical application. But in this letter, he weaves his doctrine in with the practical application throughout the letter. The reason for this is that Paul is dealing with one problem after another.

The history of the church is found in Acts 18.

- Paul founded a church in Corinth and stayed there 18 months.
- Paul joins up with Priscilla and Aquila who were tent makers and he begins to work with them.
- Sosthenes, a former leader of the Corinthian synagogue who had become a brother in Christ, was on one occasion beaten for bringing Paul before the civil court at Corinth.
- Sosthenes was probably Paul's secretary.

Corinth was a wealthy city, but it was also a wicked city. One problem was that the wickedness of the city was infiltrating the church.

- One of the things Paul emphasizes is the phrase "IN CHRIST" found 146 times in this book.
- Only those who are in Christ are members of the church of God.
- Notice that Paul addresses "the church of God which is AT Corinth." There are many CONGREGATIONS, but one CHURCH.
- Those in the ONE church are "Sanctified in Christ Jesus and call (not "to be") saints with those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

Sometimes we think, "If we could just get back to the way it was in those early New Testament churches, we wouldn't have the problems we have.

- But that's not true. Churches have always had problems. Do you know why that's true. It's not because of the devil as much as it is people. Saved people are not perfect, just forgiven.
- Saved people are not perfect. We still have sins that we have to deal with. We still have problems we have to face.

The church at Corinth became a troubled church. They were troubled with:

A. Immorality

You see, they lived in as immoral city. That's why God planted the church there, to be salt and light to that ungodly city. But it had gotten to the point that instead of the church influencing the city, the city was influencing the church.

1. There was Sexual Sin in the Church 5:1-2

This was incest whether it was his mother or his stepmother that this man was having sexual relationship with. And the church was so carnal and arrogant and so "broad minded" that they tolerated it. (By the way, some folks are so broad minded that their brains fall out.)

Note 6:9-11

2. They were Suing One Another – Carrying Other Christians to Court 6:1-8

3. They were Abusing the Lord's Table 11:17-22

B. IMMATURITY

1. They were Divided Over Preachers 3:3-4

2. They were Divided Over Spiritual Gifts

- They each thought they had a better gift than somebody else. One had the gift of knowledge; another the gift of tongues; another the gift of interpretation; each bragging their gift was the best and they each wanted to use their gift.

- Have you ever noticed that nobody ever brags about having the gift of giving? I wish that gift would break out every once in a while!

C. INSINCERITY

They say one thing and do another. They talked about knowledge and love and humility. They did a lot of talking, but the delivery was lacking.

There were many things about the church at Corinth that Disturbed Paul, but there were many things that Delighted him.

A. They Were Enriched By Grace 1:4-6

• In the Old Testament grace is often translated "loving kindness." It is the Hebrew work "kissed". It is one of the sweetest words in the Bible, because it describes the sweet disposition of God; His unmerited favor toward us. We are the beneficiaries of His grace.

• Psalm 63:3 "Because your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You."

There are a lot of different kinds of grace in the Bible:

1. There is Saving Grace Ephesians 2:8

2. There is Standing Grace Romans 5:2

It allows us the privilege of standing up for Christ

3. There is Singing Grace Colossians 3:16

We sing about grace:

- "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound"

- "Wonderful grace of Jesus, reaching the most defiled, By its transforming power, making me God's dear child."

- Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace. Grace that is greater than all our sin

4. There is Service Grace Hebrews 12:28

5. There is Sufficient (could be called Suffering) Grace 2 Cor. 12:9

B. They were Equipped with Gifts 1:7a

These are grace gifts, not deserved, but sovereignty distributed by God at the time of our salvation.

• Since they are a gift, they must be viewed as a trust also.

• To not know your gift is a tragedy; to not use your gift is a travesty!

The purpose of these gifts are to Enrich the church ...to Affirm the gospel ... and to Confirm the Saints.

C. They were Eager for Glory 1:7b-9

Paul speaks of the future life that awaits each believer.

• This life is not all there is. One day Jesus will come. This ought to stir our hearts.

• Knowing He is coming soon ought to encourage us to live blameless lives.

Before reading the Passage:

You will remember that the Book of I Corinthians was written to show that a saved person may go to heaven one of two ways: first class or second class.

The problem was that in the church in Corinth, most of the saints in the church there were going to heaven "second class."

The reason: carnality among its members which manifested itself in divisions and strife among its members.

One of the finest tributes paid the church in Jerusalem was that they were together.

1. Several times in the Book of Acts we are given brief progress reports on the church at Jerusalem.

a. Acts 2:44 "And all that believed were together, and had all things common."

b. Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul ...they had all things common."

2. Such togetherness is essential if the church is to be a witness for Christ in the world. Few things are as contradictory of the Christian message as a divided church.

3. Of all the problems that were in the church at Corinth, the first problem he deals with is that of division.

Read the Passage

Paul goes right into the unpleasant problems besetting this early church.

1. It is never pleasant – not easy – to have to deal with problems in our lives or in the life of a church, but it is needful if there is to be growth and if the church is to become what God wants it to be.

2. All churches everywhere have problems and they may handle their problems in one of several ways.

a. Some just sweep the problems under the rug and hope they will go away.

(1) Their philosophy is, don't rock the boat – no matter if you have to compromise the principles of the Word of God.

(2) The result is a powerless church where God cannot bless.

b. Some face the problems openly, honestly and in love seek to solve the problems through the Word of God and then move on for His glory.

3. I want you to notice something in I Cor. 1:11:

a. Well known problems in the church also become well known problems in the community.

b. Church troubles have a way of spreading faster than church triumphs.

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I. The Case for the Feudin' Folks 1:10-13

The word "declared" in 1:11 means "to be told in a plain, truthful way."

• This was not idle gossip. It was not a rumor. It was a fact, openly known to all.

We can't know who Chloe or her family was. Evidently she was or had been a member of the Corinthian church. Either she or someone from her family had either written or visited Paul, telling him of the trouble within the church. Though we can't know who Chloe was, she was well known to the church.

As a sidebar, I think Chloe did the right thing. The church was in trouble and she told Paul.

• Plus, she wasn't afraid for Paul to use her name. Many times I've had people come to me to tell me something about another individual, wanting me to take action, but not wanting me to reveal their identity.

• I detest anonymous mail. Over the years, I've received a few critical letters where the writer simply signs off with "a concerned Christian" or some similar way. If you don't have courage enough to sign your name, don't waste your time or mine because it's going in file 13 and I don't lose sleep over cowards.

D. L. Moody was given a note just before he preached. When he opened the note, it only had one word on it: "Fool" Moody stood before the people and said, "I received the letters where the message was written but the person forgot to sign his name; but this is the first time I've received a letter where someone signed their name but forgot to write a message."

I said that I think Chloe did the right thing in reporting what was going on in Corinth. You see, sin in the church is like a malignant cancer. If it is not treated Biblically, it will spread throughout the church body. Ignoring it won't make it go away.

Quarreling is inherent in the sinful nature. You don't have to teach children how to fuss and fight with each other. They inherited that ability from their parents.

• Infants are quick to express displeasure when they are not given something they want or when something they like is taken away.

• Little children cry, fight and throw tantrums because they cannot have their way.

• We argue and fight over a baby's toy; then a football; then over a girlfriend; then in business or over politics, or current issues.

• Friends fight, husbands and wives fight, businesses fight, nations fight – But in church, it should not be, though it often is.

Why? Why are we so prone to conflict? James 4:12

- Our fighting spirit comes from our selfish, sinful nature. We put our self first. We want what we want. We want our way.
- At the center of the word "SIN" is the letter "I". Fighting and a lack of unity always centers on I, me, and mine.
- Notice that Paul doesn't blame Satan for the quarreling. His plea for unity comes on the basis that they were "brethren" – brothers and sisters in Christ.

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He also reminds the "brethren" that the church belongs to Christ.

- Acts 20:28 It is "the church which He purchased with His own blood."
- This is not my church. This is not your church. This church belongs to Christ.

In I Cor. 1:10 Paul says "I plead with you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The word "plead" came from the same word that describes the Holy Spirit – "Parakaleo" which means "to call along side." Paul comes along side the believers asking them to live in unity.
- When we plead, we usually use the word "please." Paul is saying, "Please, please stop your bickering. Please stop dividing God's flock. Please learn to love one another

II. The Causes of Folks Feudin' 1:10-11

Notice two words:

1. Contentions 1:11

Paul is talking about strife, quarrels, debates, inward barbs that resulted in folks "taking shots" at each other – either openly or behind a brother's back.

- It even developed into hop-tempered shouting at each other.

2. Divisions 1:10

The word describes a rip or tear in a garment. The garment is not completely torn apart, but the internal strife threatened such.

- A split was possible. The fellowship was disrupted, strained, stressed. Ill feelings between little groups and schisms and cliques were known. Folks were choosing up sides.

Their problem was not due to Principles, but Personalities!

Notice: Favoritism was being displayed – 1:12-13

1. The Proud Pupils of Paul

This was the "feed me" clique. What a great teacher and scholar he is.

2. The Adoring Admirers of Apollos

- Acts 18:24 says he was "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures"

What a great preacher he is. Man, you ought to hear this man preach. He's polished and smooth. And what a voice he has. Sounds like the Lord Himself speaking.

3. Chummy Cult of Cephus (Peter)

He's a man's man. He speaks with authority. Remember, he was the mouthpiece for the rest of the disciples.

4. The Super Snobs of the Savior

They were the super-spiritual group who thought they were more in tune with God than the rest.

This Jesus group reminds me of a little church I heard about that named the church "Jesus Only," and put the name on their signs out front. A gust of wind came and blew off the first three letters of the sign. Then the sign read: "US Only."

Paul says, "Listen! In a unified church:

1 All speak the same thing Philippians 2:5-8

They speak with one voice. They are in agreement about the faith.

2. There is no Division Romans 16:17

3. Believers are perfectly joined together

Notice: The spiritual leaders were not in competition with each other. They were spiritual teammates ... co-laborers together who were in unity.

The problem came with the church members who were comparing ministers.

III. The Curse of Feudin' Folks

1. The gospel is the gospel of peace, love and forgiveness.
2. If one thing is PREACHED and another thing PRACTICED, then the fellowship will be PARALYZED!
3. Contentions and divisions are:
 - a. Forbidden by God
 - b. Totally out of character with our redeemed natures
 - c. In complete opposition to everything our Lord prayed for and intended for His church
4. Because of quarreling:

- a. The Father is dishonored
 - b. The Son is disgraced
 - c. His people are demoralized and discredited
 - d. The world is turned off and confirmed in unbelief
5. Fractured fellowships:
- a. Robs Christians of Joy and effectiveness
 - b. Robs God of glory
 - c. Robs the world of the true testimony of the gospel

HIGH PRICE TO PAY FOR AN EGO TRIP!

6. A rip or tear takes so little time to occur, but the healing process takes so long.
7. Take a sheet of paper, a roll of tape and a watch with a second hand and try an experiment. First, see how long it takes you to divide the sheet of paper into 20 pieces. Record your time. Then, using the tape, see how long it takes to unite those 20 pieces into a single sheet again.

IT TAKES A SOMEBODY TO BUILD!

Three years ago, I watched an old courthouse go down. At times there was a sadness about "that watch." And, believe it or not, the sadness was not because the old building was coming down, rather because it reminded me of what so many are doing today – tearing down.

For example, it is so easy to tear down the life of a church. It takes skilled men to build a building but unskilled men can destroy it. And the same is true with the life of a church.

What is your lot in life? A builder or a destroyer? Let me pass on this poem to you:

I stood on the streets of a busy town
 Watching the men tear a building down.
 With a heave and ho, a lusty yell
 They swung a beam, and side-wall fell.
 I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled,"
 "Oh, no," he said, "No indeed;
 Just common labor is all I need
 I can tear down as much in a day or two
 As it takes skilled men a year to do."
 I wondered then, as I went my way,
 Which of these roles have I tried to play?
 Have I traveled along life's road with care,
 Measuring each act with rule and square?
 Or, am I one of those who roams the town,
 Content with the labor of tearing down?

8. Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the Peace-makers

- a. not happy are the trouble-makers
- b. not happy are the complainers
- c. not happy are the hard to get along with
- d. not happy are the strife starters

9. Psalm 133:1-2 "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." - Verse 2-3 "It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Herman, descending upon the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing –life forevermore."

- The unity of God's people is "good and pleasant" and is illustrated in two ways.

- It is like anointing oil, running down the beard and garments of the high priest. Without going into great detail, the priest was anointed with several quarts of perfumed oil

which pictures the sweetness of the Holy Spirit's presence. - Second, unity is described as dew on a mountain top. Dew forms when the atmospheric conditions are right. Yet, dew is always obvious. You know when conditions are right because dew is simply there. When the spiritual conditions of God's people are right, there is a blessed unity.

IV. The Cure for Feudin' Folks 1:10

- Out of regard, reverence and love for Christ, "be perfectly joined together in the same mind," and be at peace with one another.

- Paul is saying, “Repair, mend, restore the rip.”

Every local church is a reflection of Christ. It either reflects positively on Him or negatively. If we choose to quarrel and fight, we will never reach our community for Him.

That's why Paul asked them to stop being feudin' folks and become fellowshiping folks.

I Corinthians 1:18–25

WISDOM IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The key word in this paragraph is “wisdom.” The word “wisdom” is found six times – (1:19, 20, 21 {twice}, 22, 24). The word “wise” is found twice (1:19, 20). The word “wiser,” once (1:25).

- Paul gives a number of contrasts between the revealed Word of God and the so-called wisdom of man.

In Job 28:12, Job asks, “where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” And then he begins to search for wisdom. He searches into the depths of the caves where gold is refined and discovers that wisdom is not there. He goes down into the depths of the ocean looking for wisdom and does not find wisdom there.

- Then in verse 28, the last verse of that chapter, he writes, “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.”

Romans 1:18-23: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that, when they know God, they glorified Him not as God ...professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

- Man's wisdom could never find God nor God's divine plan and method of salvation from his sin.
- God choose to reveal His wisdom and reveal His method of salvation through the preaching of the cross of Christ.

The cross is very special to those of us who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

- But we must remember that it is not so much the cross that we honor, as it is the One who died on it.
- We do not exalt those cross beams; those rugged blood-soaked pieces of timber that stood on Golgotha centuries ago...It is because of the One who hung on it that we honor it so very much.

Paul said in Galatians 6:14 that he would boast or glory only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For over 2,000 years the sign, symbol, and heart of the Christian faith has been the old rugged cross. It is amazing how many of our songs and hymns revolve around the subject of the cross.

The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;

For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above
To bear it to dark Calvary.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true;
Its shame and reproach gladly bear,

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;

I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride.
At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day.

Paul said that he was going to glory in the cost of Christ.

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Paul said that he was going to glory in the cost of Christ.

- Can you imagine someone finding glory in the electric chair, or glory in the gallows? Yet Paul said he was going to glory in the cross.

Paul preached the cross of Christ and the Christ of the cross!

Paul deals with four things related to the cross:

I. The Word of the Cross 1:18

Paul is careful to show the difference between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world.

- The wisdom of God comes through the Preaching of the Word of the cross, the wisdom of the world come through the Philosophy of man.

What is the difference between preaching and philosophy?

A. Preaching

1. Preaching is communication

(Preaching assumes we have something to say. Dr. Travis use to tell us preachers, "Med, when you stand behind the pulpit, make sure you have something to say and not that you have to say something.")

2. Preaching is communication of Truth

3. Preaching is communication of Bible Truth

4. Preaching is communication of Bible Truth through human personality

5. Preaching is communication of Bible Truth through human personality energized by the power of the Holy Spirit of God

• All is vain unless the Spirit comes down. But I'll tell you, when a preacher's heart is full of the Word of God and his mind is full from studying the things of God and he is energized by the Spirit of God – that's what preaching is all about.

B. Philosophy The best definition I know:

"Philosophy is a blind man in a pitch black room trying to find a black cat."

• Philosophy really is a waste of time. Everyone has different opinions and differences of opinions about everything.

The work used for preaching in 1:18 does not have its ordinary meaning of proclamation.

• It is the word "logos" which means discourse and is used of the Lord Jesus Christ.

• The word of the cross is presented in a Person while the wisdom of words merely declares philosophy.

Notice what emphasis preaching places on Jesus. It is the preaching of HIS cross. The cross is HIS cross.

• HIS cross speaks for more to our HEARTS than to our HEADS.

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

Philosophy admires the Life of Jesus, but would pass over the Death of Jesus.

Philosophy believes in the Example of Jesus, but turn from the Redemption of Jesus.

Philosophy doesn't object to the Cradle of Jesus, but it more Vigorously opposes to the Cross of Jesus.

II. The Work of the Cross 1:18, 22-25

Paul points out that there are three different attitudes toward the cross.

1. Some Reject the Cross – 1:22a, 23a

"Jews request a sign" – Even in the presence of Jesus' astounding miracles, the Jews continually expressed disbelief and requested more signs of the Lord's identity.

- Example: When Jesus gave sight to a blind beggar, the man's neighbors refused to believe a genuine miracle had occurred. Their response – John 9:9 – "Some said, " This is he."

Others said, "He is like him."

- Note Matthew 12:38-40

- Luke 23:8-9 While before Herod

- While Jesus hung on the cross – Matthew 27:42

I Corinthians 1:23a Stumbling Block means "offense." See I Peter 2:28.

• They stumbled, being disobedient to the Word.

2. Some Ridicule the Cross – 1:22b, 23b

The word "foolishness" means "a laughing stock"

- There are people like that in our world today. They laugh at Jesus, at the cross, make fun of the Bible and those who believe it.

- But the cross is no laughing matter. A person can laugh his way into hell, but he can't laugh his way out of hell.

- "Heaven is full of wise men. Hell is full of wise guys."

- I Corinthians 3:19

3. Some Receive the Cross 1:24, John 1:11-13

Notice 1:18 Are perishing now John 3:18

– We were saved – from the Penalty of Sin

– We are being saved – from the Power of Sin

– We shall be saved – from the Presence of Sin

III. The Witness of the Cross 1:21

1. Salvation is not by thinking but by believing.

a. Who does God save? "them that believe"

b. It does not say ... them that are "good" ... them that "think"... those that are "moral"... those that are "religious". There can be no substitutions.

2. There is a powerful sign or proof that the cross of Christ is true ... Look at the empty tomb and the changed lives!

3. One hymn expresses the depth of our faith:

When I survey the wondrous cross,
on which the Prince of Glory died,

My richest gain I count but lost
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were a present far too small
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands by soul, my life, my all.

A man came to George W. Truett and said, "Has Jesus made a real difference in your life?" What would you have said? He said, "The only thing real in my life is Jesus."

IV. The Way of the Cross 1:18

There is no "Plan B" to salvation. The only highway that goes to Heaven goes right through Calvary.

- You can't bypass the cross if you want to go to Heaven. You can't go around the cross if you want eternal life.
- Hebrews 9:22
- When the children of Israel were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness, the only way for them to keep from dying was to look in faith to the brazen serpent – strange cure!
- The only way for man to be saved is to look to Jesus in faith – don't try to figure it out – just do it!
- John 3:14-16

I must needs go home by the way of the cross. There's no other way but this. I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light, if the way of the cross I miss.

I must needs go on in the blood-sprinkled way, the path that the Savior trod. If I ever climb to the heights sublime, where the soul is at home with God.

Then I bid farewell to the way of the world, to walk in it never more; For the Lord says, come, and I seek my home, where He waits at the open door.

The way of the cross leads home; The way of the cross leads home. It is sweet to know as I onward go, The way of the cross leads home.

I Corinthians 1:26-31 GOD'S HALL OF FAME

The theme of this passage – and that of the entire letter – is found in verses 29 and 31 – "No flesh should glory in His presence" and, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

- The word "glory" means "to boast or brag". Paul's clear message to this troubled church is that there is no place for pride in the life of a Christian. If we must boast, then we should boast in the Lord.

The overarching sin that affected everything at Corinth – and in our churches today – is pride.

- Because they were prideful:

1. They were divided.
2. They wouldn't serve each other.
3. They would not deal with the immorality in their midst.
4. They abused their freedom in Christ.
5. They profaned the Lord's supper.

God hates pride! Proverbs 6:16-19

We as Christians must constantly deal with the sin of pride in our lives.

I like the fable about the two geese that were about to begin their annual fall migration south when a frog entreated them to take him with them. The geese said they would be willing to do so if he could devise a means of conveyance. So the frog produced a long stalk of grass and got each goose to take an end in his mouth while he grasped the middle with his mouth. The geese took flight and the frog held on as they began their long journey south. They made great progress on the trip when they were noticed by some men below. The men loudly expressed their admiration at such ingenuity and asked who had been clever enough to come up with this plan. The proud frog opened his mouth to say, "I

did" and fell to his death. The moral of the fable is simple: When you have a good thing going, keep your mouth shut!

Those in the church at Corinth had nothing to be proud about ... to boast about. They were all just common, everyday sinners – I Corinthians 6:9-11.

- God usually chooses the Ordinary rather than the Outstanding; the Common rather than the Cultured; the blue collar folks rather than the blue blood folks.

Now, if you happen to be among the wise, the mighty, or the noble, God can still use your life. It just takes a little more work in those folks lives than it does those who are ordinary folks.

Look at God's Hall of Fame:

16

I. The Selection into God's Hall of Fame 1:26

The world measures greatness by things such as Intelligence, Wealth, Prestige and Position.

- The world looks for Heroes; God seeks the Humble.
- The world looks for the Somebodies; God seeks Nobodies.

A. God's Calling is not According to Intelligence

Why? Because those who are wise after the flesh have a tendency to think independently of God.

- Greek culture placed high value on learning and wisdom; yet, as you look around, most saved folks don't fit the category of "wise according to the flesh".
- Many who fit in the category "wise according to the flesh" reject the gospel of Christ because their worldly wisdom is too great a barrier for faith.

When I think of foolish people that God uses, I think of Billy Sunday, one of the greatest who ever lived, but was certainly no brilliant intellectual. He was not highly educated.

- He would sometime break a chair over the pulpit in illustrating a point.
- Other times he would glide across the stage as if he were sliding into home plate to illustrate going to heaven.
- One biographer called Billy Sunday, "God's joke on the ministry."

One night he began to preach "hell hot, heaven sweet, sin black, judgment sure and Jesus saves," and the power of God fell. Hundreds came during the invitation. One who came forward that evening was an old man with a long white beard. He was standing near the platform when he gave his heart to Jesus. For some reason, Billy was fascinated by the man's beard and couldn't take his eyes off it. Finally, temptation got the better of him. He went over to the edge of the platform, bent over, grabbed that man's beard, pulled it and said, "Honk, honk!" Yet, God used him to win over a million souls to Jesus.

B. God's Calling is not According to Influenced

Why? The mighty like to work independently of God.

- The word "mighty" means "dynamic, powerful or popular people."
- The mighty are often too self-reliant. They have difficulty humbling themselves before God or anyone else.

C. God's Calling is not According to Importance

"Not many noble" means the "high born" or "well born" or affluent and powerful; great wealth and influence.

Now I want you to notice that it did not say not Any were chosen, but that not Many were chosen.

Lady Huntington was an English noblewoman of great distinction who had been converted under the street preaching of Roland Hill, a flaming evangelist. She remarked once that she owed her salvation to the letter "m". If it had been "not any wise ... mighty ... or noble" she could not have been saved.

- It is the meek that shall inherit the earth.

III. The Election into God's Hall of Fame 1-27-29

Note: "God choose ... God choose ... He choose" God has chosen to save:

1. The Foolish Ones 1:27

The word "foolish" comes from the Greek word "moronic" and from it comes our word "moron." The word means "silly or stupid."

- "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing". (1:18) It seems idiotic

to them that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead and even more idiotic that we could base our whole lives on that belief. Those who are wise in this age see the Word of God as an archaic book filled with superstitious myths as well as historical and scientific inaccuracies.

- Yet one day these "foolish things" will be their "shame." "Shame" here means disgrace.

They will be eternally disgraced and suffer the wrath of God because they treated flippantly and rejected His gospel, His Word, and His church.

- They who stand with heads raised in pride now will bow them in disgrace before God's throne – Rev. 20:11-15

2. The Feeble Ones 1:27

The words "weak things" refer to those that are "physically weak, handicapped."

During the Week of Champions revival, Paul Anderson, at that time the strongest man in the world, was giving his testimony. In one of the isles near the platform was a young man in a wheel-chair with the glow of Christ on his face. A young man came forward and gave his heart to Jesus. When asked what Paul Anderson said that spoke to his heart, he said, "Oh, it was nothing Paul said. When I saw the glow of the Lord on the face of that man in the wheel-chair, I said that if God could put that much joy in a cripple's heart, I wanted Jesus in my life."

3. The Familiar Ones

- The word "base" is the opposite of "noble" in verse 26. It speaks of the familiar, the

common, those born without a silver spoon in their mouth, those without pedigree.

- The lowly or insignificant.

4. The Forsaken Ones

- The word “despised” speaks of those that are treated with contempt and scorn. Those who others say will never amount to anything. Those who are looked down on by others and written off as no account.

- You may have been told that you would never amount to anything. Maybe you have grown up feeling that you were worthless. I have good news for you. God can use you.

5. The Forgotten Ones

- “Those which are not” refers to those who are completely overlooked. It means the nobodies.

- There is no greater demonstration of the power of God than when God takes nobodies and makes somebodies out of them.

III. The Protection of God's Hall of Fame 1:30

Believers are the wealthiest people in the world. Those who are “in Christ” are given wisdom, righteousness, and redemption.

A. God's Wisdom.

- We are given God's wisdom to replace our own. The truly wise of this world are those whose wisdom is not of this world, but from the Lord.

- Christians stand as a testimony for all time that God in His wisdom chose the sinful, the weak, and the unwise in order to make them righteous, strong, and wise. God grants them His wisdom that He might be glorified; that it might be clearly seen that the wisdom Christians have is not their own, but is by His power and grace.

B. God's Righteousness

1. Righteousness means to be “made right with God” and to participate in His rightness.

2. It is the inward confidence of our right standing or our position before God.

3. Rightness means to be as something or someone should be – right as opposed to wrong; good as opposed to evil.

4. II Corinthians 5:21 God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

5. No, Christians are not sinless, but they are to sin less.

C. God's Sanctification

1. Sanctification is a slow process of purification in separation.

2. This growth into the likeness of the Lord is slow, but perhaps it need not be as slow as it often is. Two Christians were talking together. The first said, “I'm so glad that God knows our frame and He remembers that we are but dust.” “Yes,” the other replied, “but do you really think we ought to be as dusty as we sometimes are?”

3. We are to grow in Him.

D. God's Redemption

1. The word redeem means “to buy back.” Christ has purchased us with His precious blood and we are God's own possession.

2. God has designed that there be a future transformation. I John 3:2

To be in God's Hall of Fame, you have to be in Christ.

Notice Verse 31 – Therefore ... Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.

I Corinthians 2:1-5 PAUL'S DECLARATION: PREACH NOTHING BUT CHRIST AND THE CROSS

Paul wrote more books than any other human author in the New Testament, but none of the books are about him.

• And yet, while the books he wrote are not about him, they do give us some glimpses into the life and ministry of this great man, and these five verses constitute one of those passages.

• Paul is not only a tremendous example to those of us who preach the gospel, but he is an example to everyone of us who name the name of Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- Paul knew that God had called him to be an example to other believers – I Corinthians 11:1 –“Follow me as I follow Christ “ (“Imitate me”)

The theme of these verses is, “Let the minister be hid so that Christ might be seen.”

- Every Christian is a minister and Paul gives us some principles that all of us are to apply to our lives as we witness for Him every day.

I. Paul's Approach to Ministry 2:1-2

The opening words, “And I,” can be translated “Accordingly,” on the basis of I Corinthians 1:31 – the glory of God.

Paul had not come to Corinth to glorify himself or to start a religious “fan club”. He had come to glorify God.

In 2:2 Paul said, “I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

The word “**determined**” meant “ to resolve; to make a conscious choice and decision to do things a certain way.” He did not fall into it by chance or by force of habit. Paul preached the way he did because he chose to do it that way.

Paul had made the decision that he was not going to use gimmicks or clever approaches, but simply give the people a clear presentation of Jesus Christ.

It's so easy to get sidetracked by good and worthwhile things. We can preach about social issues, the political debates of our day, the crisis in the Middle East, the economy. For Paul the choice was clear: “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

There were some things Paul determined to Avoid:

Paul knew all the tricks of the trade and knew how to move an audience.

- He knew human eloquence could move people to action. Vast audiences came to hear Hitler. He had an almost hypnotic effect on them. They would cheer and chant. He could move them to tears or rage. He could give them hope and purpose. He could move them to applause.
- Some preachers know all the tricks of the trade too. They use rhetoric, cleverness, passion in telling moving, tear-jerking stories, all as a means of getting “decisions” out of the people.
- Paul determined to avoid using those tactics.

I Corinthians 2:1 Paul did not come with “excellence of speech” or, 2:4 (“enticing”) “persuasive words of human wisdom.”

- “Enticing words” is the salesman approach. You know that some salesmen can talk you into buying anything.
- He didn't try to stir the folks with high level emotions.

Paul didn't use:

- The power of positive thinking, like Norman V. Peale.
- How to Win and Influence People, like Dale Carnegie.
- Possibility Thinking, like Robert Shuller.
- Nor did he try to persuade folks that “Something Good was going to Happen to Them Today, like Oral Roberts.

Paul preached simply – specifically (2:2).

- 2 Corinthians 4:5 “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.”

Listen to some preachers and they are the hero of every story they tell.

- They so magnify themselves and their gifts that they fail to reveal the glory of Jesus Christ. They want the limelight.
- A certain church had a beautiful stained-glass window just behind the pulpit. It depicted Jesus Christ on the cross. One Sunday there was a guest minister who was much smaller than the regular pastor. A little girl listened to the guest for a time, then turned to her mother and asked, “Where is the man who usually stands there so we can't see Jesus?”

II. Paul's Attitude in Ministry 2:3-4

Though Paul was an apostle, he came to them as a humble servant.

There is a strange paradox here. Paul preached with power and authority and yet, he said, “I was with you in weakness and fear and trembling.”

That is, he did not go to Corinth in the arrogant, over-confident attitude of one who had the situation well in hand. Paul knew his limitations as a man and the awesome and serious responsibility God had given to him.

By fear and trembling I do not think he was referring to physical shaking.

1. He preached boldly, lived boldly and counseled other believers to be bold in the things of the Lord (Acts 13:46; 19:8; Eph. 3:12; 6:19).
2. Paul served in “fear and trembling” because he knew of the importance of the gospel and felt the urgency to proclaim God and His Word.
3. Serving the Corinthians “in weakness and in fear and in such trembling” forced him to depend on the Lord perhaps more than he ever had before.

The phrase “fear, weakness, and trembling” refers to the spirit of Paul. Paul felt the task was too great for him to handle in his own strength and ability.

If we ever get to the place that we feel our abilities and strengths are equal to the task, we will become unusable.

Someone said to Charles Spurgeon, “I get so nervous when I preach. When do I get over that?” Spurgeon said, “Pray you never do, for then God cannot use you.”

2 Corinthians 2:4 Paul said that his preaching was “in demonstration of the spirit and of power.”

- Paul's preaching was a “demonstration,” not a “performance.”
- The word “demonstration” means “legal proof presented in court.”
- Paul preached the facts as made clear by God's word and Calvary. He left the results up to the Holy Spirit who responded with power.
- The Holy Spirit used Paul's preaching to change lives, and that was all the proof Paul needed that his message was from God. Wicked sinners were transformed by the power of God.

III. Paul's Aim in Ministry 2:5

1. Paul did not preach Christ in order that men would talk about what a great preacher he was, but what a great Savior Christ is.
2. His concern was that the faith of the Corinthians not be grounded in “the wisdom of men “ but in “the power of God.”
3. Paul didn't preach in a manner designed to impress men with his eloquence, but to lead them to commitment to Christ.
4. The purpose of a minister is to so guide the people's faith so that it may become a saving, steadfast faith in Jesus and Him alone so that – long after the minister is gone – folks will be strong enough not to be blown about with every wind of doctrine.

The prayer of every minister should be the prayer of John as he prayed for the saints: III John 2-4.

I Corinthians 2:6-13 GOD'S TEACHER

At one point in our Lord's ministry, the chief priest and the Pharisees sent some officers to bring Jesus to them.. They wanted to find some means of doing away with Jesus. But when the officers listened to Jesus speak, they returned to the priest and Pharisees without Jesus. When they asked the officers why they did not bring Jesus with them, they responded in John 7:46, “Never a man spake like this man.”

And they were right! In the Gospels:

1. He answered questions before they were ever asked.
2. He accurately identified the motives of people's hearts.
3. He described what happened after death.
4. He predicted future events with pinpoint accuracy.

No wonder His disciples were disturbed when He told them He was going away. But He made them a promise and that promise reaches to us today.

John 14:16-18, 26 "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you Another Helper, that He might abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you ... But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

God's Word is the manual by which we as Christians function, and the Holy Spirit is the One who applies this book to our heart. Taught by the Holy Spirit.

Two grand old hymns emphasize for us this grand old truth:

More About Jesus

More about Jesus let me learn, More of His holy will discern;
Spirit of God my teacher be, Showing the things of Christ to me.
More, more about Jesus, More more about Jesus
More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who dies for me.

I Am Resolved

I am resolved to go to the Savior, Leaving my sin and strife,
He is the True One, He is the Just One, He hath the words of life.
I am resolved to follow the Savior, Faithful and true each day;
Heed what He sayeth, do what He willeth, He is the living way.
I am resolved, and who will go with me? Come, friends, without delay;
Taught by the Bible, led by the Spirit, we'll walk the heavenly way.

George Mueller, after reading the Bible through one hundred times with increasing delight, made this statement: "Bible reading is a great means of nourishing the soul. If you neglect this, you will never make progress. Do not be discouraged if on your first reading you do not understand. By little and little you will learn more. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God."

The old songwriter said it well:

I am so glad that my Father in heaven,
Tells of His love in the Book He has given.
Wonderful things in the Bible I see,
This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

One of the joys of reading the Bible is the wonderful things God has for His children. An unknown writer has said:

- This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers.
- Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.
- Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, 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 character.
- Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed.
- Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.
- Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure.
- Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity.

I. The Testimony of God's Word 2:6-7

There are certain characteristics of God's Word.

A. God's Word is Distinctive Truth 2:6-7

The wisdom of this world (age) and the wisdom of the princes (rulers) of this world refers to all the wisdom of the great thinkers of the age .

The conjunction "but" (v.7) sets God's wisdom in contrast to all the wisdom of man.

Verse 6 – The wisdom of the great thinkers of the ages often “come to naught.” The wisdom of men is often “disapproved.”

Think of the early theories of medicine that have been disproved. The wise men of the world taught that the earth was flat disproved. But the Bible is in a category all its own. It is the only book known to man that is without error, contradiction, flaw or mistake. Often men have tried to discredit and disprove the Bible, but every attempt has failed. It is eternal truth.

B. God's Word is Disclosed Truth 2:7-8

The work “mystery” does not mean something that is full of suspense and has a surprise ending.

- In the Bible, the work mystery means a secret that has been made known. It is a revealed secret, something that man would have never accidentally stumbled upon.

- Man has eyes to see, but he cannot see the things of God.
- Man has ears to hear, but he does not hear the Voice of God.
- Man has a heart to understand, but he cannot understand the ways of God.

In his natural state, man cannot see, hear, or understand the ways of God. It was a mystery and the only reason that men ever got in on this mystery was because God chose to reveal it.

The word “**hidden**” in 2:7 means it was concealed or kept secret.

Paul gives an example of how certain truth was hidden or not comprehended. Those who crucified the Lord had no idea that they were crucifying the Savior of the world, or else they would not have done it. It was a truth they did not see or comprehend.

Let me emphasize that the Word of God has been given to us progressively over centuries of time.

Though God's Word was given progressively, it has been given completely. There are no further words of revelation. God's Word is complete.

II. The Treasure of God's Word 2:9-10

God's Word is a priceless treasure. It tells us of all God has given to us in His redemptive work for us in Christ Jesus.

A. The Things God Has Prepared 2:9-10

I Corinthians 2:9 is a verse that is often misused and misquoted. Most of the time it is used to speak of heaven.

- Yet, the verse is not talking about **things** that we must wait until we get to heaven to enjoy. It is talking about things God has prepared for His that can be enjoyed and experienced now.

B. The Things God Has Presented 2:12

- The things that God has prepared for us have also been freely given or presented to us.

- Eph. 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

But for this to be true, the Bible cannot be left in the church or on the table or on the shelf.

Barna Research Group found that:

1. Only 12% of all American adults read the Bible every day of the week.
2. 52% do not read the Bible at all.
3. 33% read the Scriptures at least once during a typical week.
4. 26% of evangelicals read the Bible daily; another 50% read it weekly or more
5. 22% of evangelicals report that they never read the Bible outside of church.

III. The Teacher of God's Word

Not only should we read the Bible daily, we should also be able to understand it.

- God has provided a Teacher, the Holy Spirit, to enable us to understand God's Word.

A. The Holy Spirit is the Giver of the Bible

It was the Holy spirit who inspired the writing of the Bible – 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16.

- The work “inspiration” means “God-breathed”. We must remember that the Bible is God's Book. It is the Word of God.

B. The Holy Spirit is the Guide to the Bible

The Holy Spirit not only gave Inspiration in writing the Bible, but also Illumination in understanding the Bible.

The Holy Spirit not only gave us the Bible, He also teaches us the Bible. Who better to teach us the truth about God and His Word than the author of salvation and the author of the Bible.

The word “search” (v.10) means “to explore, to search for information, to penetrate (the deep things of God).

Notice 2:11 – nobody knows you any better than you yourself. That's what Paul had in mind when he spoke of the spirit of man which is in him. I know myself better than anyone.

- A dog or cat cannot understand a man like another man. Nor can man understand a dog or cat like another dog or cat.

Now look at 2:12 – No man knows God better than the Holy Spirit, because He is God.

- He is the one qualified to teach us about God, who has revealed Himself in His Word.
- Notice: God's tool for revealing God's wisdom – 2:10 – through the Spirit.
- In other words, since one must be on the human level to know the human mind, so one must be on the divine level to understand the divine mind.
- When we are born again, the Holy Spirit comes into our life – indwells us – and lifts us from only a human level to a spiritual level so that God can communicate with us.
- We have received the Spirit of God. He lives within us and indwells us for many reasons and one of them is that He might help us to understand that which God has revealed in His Word.

One does not have to go to Bible college or seminary to understand the Bible. If you are saved the Holy Spirit, who is the Teacher of the Bible, lives in you. You can learn and know the Bible.

We need to dig into God's gold mine every day.

A boy had read his Bible completely through and when his dad asked, “Are you going to read your Bible tonight?”, he said, “No. I finished it last night.” The next morning at breakfast the dad said, “Are you going to eat breakfast again?” “Yes.” “I thought you finished your breakfast yesterday.” “I did, but I'm hungry again.” “Don't you think you might get hungry again for God's Word, even though you've finished it once?”

The truth is, we never finish God's Word!

God's Teacher is ready and able to teach us all things ... If we are willing to learn.

I Corinthians 2:14–3:8 WHERE ARE YOUSPIRITUALLY?

When I was a senior in high school, a group of us seniors spent an entire day exploring the nature trails along the Natchez Trace. There was one trail that was very difficult and several people had gotten lost on the trail. To prevent others from getting lost, the Park Rangers had put up wooden maps all along the trail. The maps always had three large red dots on them. One said, “You started here;” another said, “Journey complete,” but between those two points was a red dot that said, “You are here!”

You see, it is important not only to know where you started from and what your final destination is, but, also, where you are now.

The first question recorded in the Bible that God asked man was, “Where are you?” God did not ask Adam that question because He did not know where Adam was; rather, God wanted Adam to recognize where he was.

When God saved us, that was our starting point. But God also has a goal for us to reach in this life before we get to heaven. That goal is to be molded into the image of Jesus.

Now, we know where we started and what God's goal for us is, the important question now is, where are you and I now?

Dr. R. G. Lee once preached a message in which he came down fairly hard on sin. After the service a lady that was obviously upset met him at the door. She said, “I didn't appreciate that sermon one bit.” Dr. Lee replied, “The devil didn't either, so classify yourself.”

In the passage before us, God describes classes of people. Every human being falls into one of these classes. The three classes involve the natural man, the supernatural man, and the unnatural man. There is not one single person that cannot find themselves in

one of these classes.

What are these groups?

I. The Natural Man 2:14

Paul is referring to the lost person. This man is unsaved, unconverted, and unregenerate.

- He has been born physically, but has never been born spiritually. He is alive physically, but he is dead spiritually. You can say that he is a living dead man.

- Three characteristics are given:

A. He is Born into a Natural World

Eph. 2:3 “you were by nature the children of wrath.”

- Someone said, “Nature formed us, and it also deformed us. Schools may inform us, man may reform us, but only God can transform us.

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- When Jimmy Carter became president of the United States, he said that he had been born again. Someone asked Nelson Rockefeller, Gerald Ford's vice-president, if he had been born again. He said, “I am of the same faith as Me. Carter, but I certainly have not been born again. I count myself lucky to have been born one time.”

If he didn't get saved, he won't count himself lucky!

- If you are born once you will die twice; if you are born twice you will die once.

B. He is Blind to the Spiritual World

The word “receiveth” means “to welcome, to embrace, to make one's own.”

- The unsaved person doesn't welcome or embrace spiritual things in their lives because, “they are foolishness (absurd or distasteful) unto him.” He has no appetite for spiritual things.

- The natural man has no Appreciation or Comprehension of spiritual things. Spiritual things bore him.

C. He is Bound to the Material World

His motto is- “Get all you can and can all you get. Live for this world and this world alone – after all, it's the only world you're sure of.

- Someone said, “Unless the One above us is within us, we will fall for anything around us.”

- The word “discerned” means “to judge carefully or correctly”. The unsaved person lacks the ability to correctly understand the Bible.

II. The Spiritual Man 2:15-16

The story is told of President Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, walking through a cemetery on an official visit. They were reading the various statements on the markers. One caught President Reagan's attention. It read, “Here lies an honest man and a politician.” He looked at Nancy and said, “Isn't that something, two men buried in the same grave.”

Paul knew a man had to be one or the other – natural or spiritual; lost or saved. Nobody can be both at the same time.

- The spiritual man “lives by the Spirit (2:12), learns from the Spirit (2:12-16), and is liberated by the Spirit (2:15-16).

A. A spiritual Person is Someone Who is Saved

He has been born again, forgiven, redeemed, and adopted into God's family.

- His life has been radically transformed by Jesus – I Peter 2:9 – God has “Called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

- Eph. 5:8 “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”

- Col. 1:13 “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

B. A Spiritual Person is Someone Who is Surrendered

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1. He is a Discerning man.

“He judges all things”. He has the ability to see and comprehend spiritual things. He is able to come to the right conclusions about things.

2. He is a Different man.

“Yet he himself is judged of no man.” He lives, acts, and thinks differently because of the new life he has in Christ.

The Carnal Man 3:1-4

Let me give you several words that describe a carnal person:

A. Immature 3:1

The word for carnal means “to be retarded.” This is not a new convert, but someone who has been saved for a period of time, but still is a babe in Christ.

- When our children were born it is precious to hear them say such things as “da da.” But it would not be something that would thrill your heart if your 20 year old son or daughter were still saying “da da.”

- Our churches are filled with many gray-haired babies. They are saved, but have never grown in the Lord.

The word “carnal” basically means “fleshly.”

- To be carnal refers to our bodies. We are still subject to the Adamic sin nature. The Spirit of God leads us into righteousness, but our flesh causes us to crave our own selfish, sinful pursuit.

- Romans 7:18 Paul says of himself, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) Nothing good dwells."

- I Peter 2:11 "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lust which wars against the soul."

They are selfish. One of the favorite word of a child is "mine." They think the world revolves around them. They don't take responsibility for their own lives.

Spiritual people are a joy to pastor, but it's often a chore to pastor carnal people.

B. Dependent

They demand that someone else meet their needs.

- There are three stages of the spiritual life; we must be fed, we feed ourselves, we feed others.
- The carnal person needs to be fed and served and counseled; he needs visits and letters and attention.

C. Display 3:3

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The word "envy" means more than to just be jealous; jealous of others. It also means "to be seen of others."

- Have you ever had the experience of seeing your child put on a show when somebody visits? They must be seen and heard. They talk too much and they must get their way.
- They are easily offended; always quick to criticize; always touchy.
- They always want attention and praise and the moment someone steals the stage from them, they get upset.

D. Discord 3:3

The word "strife" means to quarrel and fight. To keep something stirred up.

Psalm 133:1

E. Division 3:3-4

The word "division" means "to set believers at odds with one another – Romans 16:17-18

The word "unruly" means "to be out of step". They distract from the unity of the church. They are in opposition. They complain. They criticize. They do not esteem their leaders. They spread division and strife. They try to draw others to their point of view.

- Titus 3:10
- Here's a member who is upset by something that is going on. Instead of going to the pastor or elders who may be able to help him, he goes to other members. He tries to get them to see the issue from his point of view. He makes assumptions that are often false. He says things like, "A lot of people are saying ..." or "many of us feel ..." or "If something doesn't change, we will all leave..."
- That's certainly not the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is it?"

I Corinthians 3:9-15 BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul pointed out several things that motivate him to be the best Christian that he could be for God. The things that motivate him should motivate us to be the best we can be for Christ. Let me share three of them with you:

1. First, he wanted to please his Lord.

II Corinthians 5:9 "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted (pleasing to) of Him."

2. Second, Christ's great love controlled everything he did ...his whole ministry was directed by his love for God. II Corinthians 5:14 "For the love of Christ constraineth us (compels us ... controls us).

3. Third, Paul's greatest motivation was the Lord's coming to reward His own.

a. The supreme objective of his life was to so glorify his God and Savior that he might stand before the Lord and be able to here Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant ..."

Matthew 25:21, 23.

b. Philippians 3:13-14 "One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

c. It was not that he wanted glory or honor for himself, or wanted to prove himself better than Christians, showing them up in Christian service. He wanted the Lord's highest reward because that would be the most pleasing to the Lord Himself, and would most graphically demonstrate his grateful love.

Four words capture the main thrust of these verses:

I. Illustrations I Corinthians 3:9

Paul compares us to two things as he challenges us to be the best we can be for Christ:

A. He uses the analogy of agriculture

1. He said that he planted the spiritual seed...Apollos did the spiritual watering... but it was God who gave the increase...did the growing.

2. God's servants are the same today: some have as the thrust of their ministry, sowing the spiritual seed...some have as their thrust reaping the spiritual harvest as a result of others being faithful to sow the seed and in spiritual watering – But God gives the increase.

3. The point is, we are God's Farmer. We ought to prepare the soil the best that we can ...we ought to plant the seed the best that we can ... we ought to care for the field the best that we can ... that we might be our best for God.

B. He uses the analogy of the Architecture

1. The word “foundation” is used three times (10,11,12).

2. In 3:11 we are told that Jesus is the only True Foundation – Matthew 16:18.

- All other foundations are sinking sand.

- The foundation is built upon the deity and Person of Jesus Christ – The Rock of Ages

- It is built upon His death, burial and resurrection and can never be destroyed.

I Corinthians 3:10 – Another builds on it (the foundation). Every person who has been saved is employed by God to be a heavenly carpenter in the construction of His building – the church.

I Corinthians 3:10 – Here is a warning: Take heed HOW you build upon the foundation.

- Every member is either building or destroying the testimony and strength of a church.
- Some church members belong to the wrecking crew rather than the construction crew.
- “Some church members are like blisters. They never show up until the work is done.”
- “Some are like lily-Baptist. They neither toil nor spin.”

An unknown author has written:

I think that I shall never see

A Church that is all it ought to be

A Church whose members never stray,

Beyond the strait and narrow way.

A Church that has no empty pews,

Whose pastor never has the glues,

A Church whose deacons always “deak,”

And none are proud but always meek.

Where gossip never peddles lies,

Or makes complaints or criticize,

Where all are always sweet and kind,

And all the others faults are blind.

Some perfect Churches there may be,

But none of them are known to me,

But still we'll work and pray and plan,

To make our Church the best we can!

II. The Investment 3:10-13

The work is trusted to us (3:19-12) and will be tested by Him (3:13-15).

The materials represent how believers respond to and know they serve with what God has given them .

• Something is going into the building of your life. In fact, something has gone into the building of your life this past week, what was it?

Paul says in 3:10 that we are to be “a wise master builder.”

• The word “wise” means “skillful.”

• We are not to approach the task of building our Christian life thoughtlessly. We are to think long and hard as to how we build our lives for the Lord. We are to keep our minds upon the

As long as we are still down here we can seek cleansing and forgiveness for our sins and shortcomings,task. We are not to allow the pleasures of the world to distract us; nor are we to allow the desires of the flesh to disrupt us.

We will build with one of two materials: Permanent of choice materials – gold, silver, precious stones – or Perishable materials –

wood, hay, stubble.

A. Permanent Materials – gold, silver, precious stones

- These materials are permanent, lasting, beautiful, valuable, hard to obtain.

- What do these symbolize?

- Gold speaks of the Price of our service – Done in the power of the Holy Spirit – Spiritual service.

- Silver speaks of the Price of our service – Sacrificial service.

- Precious stones speaks of the Persistence of our service – faithful and dependable service – steadfast service.

- Gold, silver, precious jewels: Doctrine – Deeds – Desires – Devotion

- We must dig deep into the Scriptures and mine out the precious gold, silver, and precious jewels and then build these truths into our lives.

- Spiritual qualities that last beyond this life: Galatians 5: 22-23; 2 Peter 1: 5-11.

B. Perishable Materials – wood, hay, stubble

These materials decay, perish over time, and are of little value.

- We can find wood, hay, and stubble in our backyard and it will not take too much effort to pick it up.

- The word “stubble” refers to grain left lying in the field after harvest. It represents giving God leftovers and work and service done without passion and dedication.

Wood: careless service – reveals no preparation not diligence.

Hay: worthless service – hypocritical type of service.

Stubble: leftover service – leftover time, faithfulness, devotion.

III. Investigation 3:13-15

Paul reminds us of the day when we will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. It will be a day of:

A. Revelation 3:13

The word “declare” means “to make plain” or “to reveal”.

- Many issues will be made plain at the judgment seat of Christ. Such things as unconfessed sin, wrong influence, ruined lives, wasted time and talents, squandered opportunities, neglect of spiritual things, ignorance or indifference to God's Word and will, prayerlessness, worldliness, and carnality. All such things will be reviewed in the presence of the Lord.

- Remember, this is a judgment seat, not a mercy seat. Thank God there is a Mercy Seat and it is available to any child of God at any time (Hebrews 4: 16; 10: 13-22). make restitution for wrongs done. Sin can be confessed, cleansed, and put away here. However, at the judgment of Christ, our lives will pass in review and it will be too late to put things right.

“Revealed by fire” speaks of the penetrating eyes of the Lord.

B. Reward 3:14

Works don't take us to heaven, but they do follow us to heaven – Revelation 14:13; 22: 12

- The quality of the work that will be tried.

- Out spiritual report card will say either A or F. There is no middle ground or gray areas.

- He will examine our motivation.

C. Regret

IV. Incentive 3:16

1. The word temple refers to the Holy of Holies.

2. The words “defile” and “destroy” means to mar, to damage, to hurt, to corrupt.

3. We belong to Him and He does not take a dim view of those who harm or damage His temple.

Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord to thee

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of the love.

Take my will and make it thine, It shall be no longer mine,

Take my heart, it is thine own, It shall be Thy royal throne.

When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ

And He shows me His plan for me,

The plan of my life as it might have been

Had He had His way, and I see

How I blocked Him here, and I checked Him there,

And I would not yield my will –

Will there be grief in my Savior's eyes,

Grief, through He loves me still?

He would have me rich, and I stand there poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing
Down the paths I cannot retrace.
Then my desolate heart will well-nigh break
With the tears that I cannot shed;
I shall cover my face with my empty hands,
I shall bow my uncrowned head ...
Lord of the years that are left to me,
I give them to thy hand;
Take me and break me, mould me to
The pattern Thou has planned!

I Corinthians 3:16 DEFILING THE TEMPLE OF GOD

“The temple of God” is the fourth metaphor that Paul uses in this chapter to identify what a New Testament church really is:

- 3:1-2 Paul speaks of the church as a Family.
Brethren and babes are family terms.
- 3:6-9 Paul speaks of the church as a Garden – an agricultural setting
- 3:9-14 Paul says the church is a Building
- 3:16-17 Paul says the church is a Temple

This passage in I Corinthians 3:16-17 is much like the passage in I Corinthians 6:19-20, with one exception.

- I Corinthians 6:19-20 refers to the individual believer housing the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 3:16-17 – All of the “yous” here in this passage are plural and refers to the whole congregation.
- Christians who are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, when the whole congregation gather together, that congregation becomes a great temple of the Holy Spirit and is the center of the presence of God.

I. The Purpose of the Temple

As you look into the Bible, you find that God has had three primary dwelling places on earth.

A. There was God's pattern House Hebrews 8:4-5

The tabernacle and then the temple was given to Moses as God opened heaven and gave Moses the pattern that he was to use to build the tabernacle.

- God gave Moses the design, the pattern of the tabernacle where He would dwell with His people.

B. There was God's Perfect House John 1:1-3, 14-18

C. There is God's Purchased House

Twice Jesus cleans the temple, once at the beginning of His earthly ministry (John 2:13-22) and again at the end of His earthly ministry (Matthew 21:12-13).

- Why did Jesus cleanse the temple? Because the temple was being defiled and corrupted.
- What was the temple for?

1. It was meant to be a Place of Proclamation

2. It was meant to be a Place of Praise

3. It was meant to be a Place of Prayer

II. The Pollution of the Temple

Believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit are to be holy.

- Notice that He is called the HOLY Spirit.
- I Peter 1:16 “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”
- Chuck Colson in his book “Loving God” said, “Holiness is the everyday business of every Christian.”

The word “holy” means “to be set apart” to God.

Now look at the word “defiled.”

- The word “defile” and the word “destroy” are the same word in the Greek. The word means to corrupt, to ruin, to spoil.
- Leviticus 15:31 – In the Old Testament the penalty for defiling the temple was death.

How does one defile the temple?

He is not just talking about the structure. He is talking about the whole testimony of the temple.

• We are not to corrupt, damage or harm in any way the testimony of the temple of God.

Notice that the word destroy does not mean to annihilate.

• Jesus said, “On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

• Nothing can destroy it, but it can be damaged, injured, corrupted.

• God takes a dim view of anyone who does so and He will do something about it.

Let me give some examples:

1. Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira indulged in a little hypocrisy.

They pretended to have a level of dedication and commitment which they really didn't have. The Holy Spirit pronounced them guilty through Peter and both fell dead at

Peter's feet.

• That was not intended to be a model of what the Spirit is going to do every time there is hypocrisy in the church, but it does give us a message from God as to what happens. Spiritually when hypocrisy is allowed to pervade the thinking of the congregation.

• Something dies; something is damaged; some injury occurs, and God takes it very seriously.

2. The Temple is defiled when the church compromises with the spirit of this age.

3. The Temple is defiled when the church permits the lax moral standards of the world to go unjudged within the congregation.

4. The Temple is defiled when the church is allowed to drift into a “mechanical” worship of formalism, ceremonies and ritual.

5. The Temple is defiled when it has a spirit of legalism.

6. The Temple is defiled when division and troublemakers – the grumblers, grippers, the complainers, the arguers – begin to form into little cliques.

7. The Temple is defiled when there is no respect and honor for its spiritual leaders – Psalm 105:15.

III. The Purification of the Temple

We should always walk as holy men and women, with dignity, reverence and worship.

• Philippians 2:3

• Hebrews 12:15

I Corinthians 3:18-23

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS

Many writers of commentaries just sort of look over these verses as though they are not important. But they are very important.

• These verses are a conclusion of the first major section of the Book of I Corinthians.

The first three chapters of I Corinthians deals with division in the church. In this passage Paul gives the root cause for the trouble – Pride. Pride in who they were and what they knew.

Paul told them in 3:18 to watch self-deception. The Corinthian church had some unusual advantages over many of the other churches.

1. They had access to the Scriptures.

2. They had the privilege of being ministered to by some of the most outstanding preachers, not only of their day, but of history – Paul, Peter, Apollos.

3. They had received an unusual outpouring of the gifts of God's Spirit (chapters 12-14).

However, the Corinthian church had a serious problem: the Corinthians wanted worldly recognition. They wanted to be known as intellectual, well-educated, and very capable in understanding the world and God.

• The tragic result was that they began to follow their own ideas and disregarded the will and word of God.

• They were exalting the wisdom and ideas of men over the wisdom of God.

This passage also teaches us about our riches in Christ. It is one of the major themes of the New Testament.

1. Romans 9:22-23 “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.”

2. Romans 11:33 “Oh, the depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

3. Ephesians 1:7 “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.”

4. Ephesians 1:18 “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His

inheritance in the saints.”

5. Ephesians 2:7 “ That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

6. Ephesians 3:8 “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ..”

7. Ephesians 3:16 “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.”

8. Philippians 4:19 “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Over and over and over again, “the riches of God.”

We sing the old hymn that says, “My Father is rich in houses and lands.

He holdeth the wealth of worlds in His hands,

Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,

His coffers are full, He has riches untold.”

We all know God is rich, but I Corinthians 3 goes a step beyond, and it says that everything that belongs to God belongs to those of us who are saved.

Now Paul tells us two things: Don't be deceived and don't boast.

I. Choose God's Wisdom, Not the World's 3:18-20

The root problem that brings division to any church is using worldly, human wisdom, In other words, we can't do God's work the world's way.

Notice three ways Paul describes human wisdom:

A. Human Wisdom is Deceptive 3:18

“Let no man deceive himself” obviously that means we can deceive ourselves – Jeremiah 17:9.

The truth is we are easily deceived about many things.

1. Romans 7:11 “Sin ... deceived me.”

2. Ephesians 5:6 “Let no one deceive you with empty words.”

3. Colossians 2:4 “ lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.”

4. I Corinthians 6:9 Don't be deceived about who will enter heaven.

5. I Corinthians 15:33 “Do not be deceived: evil company corrupts good habits.”

6. Galatians 6:3 “For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

7. Galatians 6:7 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that will also reap.”

8. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 Don't be deceived about the events of prophecy.

The point is we are easily deceived; so we must guard our hearts and minds. Proverbs 4:23.

I Corinthians 3:18 – The person he describes as “wise in this age” is someone who operates in worldly, secular wisdom.

• He's referring to someone who may be saved, but does not think biblically. His world view is secular; he is spiritually immature.

Sadly many churches choose their leaders on the basis of worldly wisdom.

• Instead of looking for men with biblical qualifications, they look for men who have been successful in business, academia or politics. As a result the church is not led by biblical principles, but by a worldly agenda.

“Let him (the worldly-minded person) become a fool that he may become wise.”

• Replace human wisdom and seek godly wisdom – found in the Bible.

B. Human Wisdom is Foolish 3:19

The word “foolish” is from the word we get our word “moronic” from.

• “The wisdom of the world” is seen in many Christians who look for answers in the culture rather than the Bible.

• There are always some who must be heard whether what they have to say is worthwhile or not. They can't appreciate what someone else has said or done. They must speak up. They must criticize. They must justify their feelings.

• A well-known Arab proverb goes: “He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool. Shun him. He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is simple. Teach him.”

C. Human Wisdom is Futile 3:20

The word “vain” means futile, empty, profitless.

--Ecclesiastes 1:14 says human wisdom is like “grasping for the wind.” It cannot be held in the hand. When we stand before the Lord, our hands will be empty with nothing to offer the Lord but ashes.

II. Boast in the Lord, Not in Man 3:21-22

Boasting in men was a primary problem in the church at Corinth – 1:12-13.

- These immature believers were more enamored by pastor styles and personalities than with Christ. As a result they boasted in Paul, Peter and Apollos instead of the Lord.

What does it mean “all are yours?”

1. It means we are to rejoice in all the leaders God gives us.

We live in a time of tremendous resources for biblical truth. Though there is a lot of deception, false teaching out there, there is also a lot of wonderful teaching – great books, radio, TV, internet – “all are ours.”

2. The world is ours The kosmos, the created world – mountains, rivers, forests.

3. Life – John 10:10

4. Death – Christ conquered death. We do not fear death. It is a sweet release into eternity with Christ.

5. Things present – refers to everything we have and experience in this lifetime.

6. Things to come

7. Verse 22. Reaffirms the truth – All things are yours.

III. Realize you belong to God, Not Yourself 3:23

Because we belong to Christ and He is one with the Father, we belong to each other.

- John 17:9-10, 22-23.

I Corinthians 4:1-5 HOW TO EVALUATE A MINISTER

A popular game played by many Christians is that of evaluating pastors and other ministers.

It's not a new game. The church of Corinth constantly played the comparison game. I might point out that Paul said that the church there was carnal because of it.

Some of the folks there loved Paul, but had no use for Apollos. Some thought Apollos was wonderful, but were turned off by Paul and Peter. Still others believed Peter was the man.

I Corinthians 3:21-22.

All kinds of criteria are used today to determine who are the most successful, the most influential, the most gifted, the most effective preacher.

Some rate pastors according to the size of the church membership, worship attendance, size of the church staff and Sunday school, degrees earned, denominational position, books written.

We've all seen “chain letters” but I've never seen one worth passing on until this one.. It is entitled, The Perfect Pastor. Let me share part of it with you.

The perfect pastor preaches exactly 10 minutes.

He condemns sin roundly but never hurts anyone's feelings.

He works from 8:00 a.m. Until midnight and is also the church janitor.

The perfect pastor makes \$40 a week, wears good clothes, drives a good car, buys good books, donates \$30 a week to the church.

He is 29 years old and had 40 years experience.

Above all, he is handsome.

The perfect pastor has a burning desire to work with teenagers, and he spends most of his time with senior citizens.

He smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to his church.

He makes 15 home visits a day and is always in his office to be handy when needed.

The perfect pastor always has time for the church council and all of its committees.

He never misses the meeting of any church organization and is always busy evangelizing the unchurched.

The postscript states: “The perfect pastor is always in a church other than your own. If your pastor does not measure up, simply send this notice to six other churches that are tired of their pastor. Then bundle up your pastor and send him to the church at the top of the list. If everyone cooperates, in one week you will receive 1,643 pastors. One of them should be perfect. Have faith in this letter. One church broke the chain and got its old pastor back in less than three months.”

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Have you noticed that in churches folks either CRITICIZE their pastor or IDOLIZE their pastor.

- Some are critical of every word, every action, every decision. There's no way he could do anything right.

- Others idolize their pastor. They put him on a pedestal and give him almost papal respect.
- As popular as that practice may be, it is exceedingly offensive to God.

I Corinthians 4:1-5 focuses on the true nature and marks of God's ministers.

1. It sets forth the basic guidelines and standards by which ministers are to minister and be evaluated.
2. It deals with what the congregation's attitude toward minister's should be and what the minister's attitude toward himself should be.

In short, it puts the minister of God in God's perspective. Paul makes it clear that popularity, personality, degrees, and numbers play no role in the Lord's perspective – and that should play to role in ours.

Three things Paul points out in this passage:

I. The Responsibilities of the Man of God 4:1

Let a man so Account (consider) of “us”

- The “us” refers to Paul, Apollos, Peter and other fellow workers. It refers to all pastors, ministers and elders who lead the church. The word “account” or “consider” means “to take an inventory, to number, to estimate.”
- It is an accounting term that brings to mind balancing books and getting things in order.
- While the world may rank pastors in terms of popularity and outward success, God gives us two marks of His true messengers.

A. Servants (Ministers)

The word minister means, “under rowers,” indicating the lowest galley slaves, the ones rowing on the bottom of a ship.

1. On both sides of the ship there was a single row of benches. The benches were raised high enough so the rowers could see the captain. At his command, they would row; at his command, they would stop.
2. The under rowers were the most menial, unenvied, and despised as slaves.

Christian ministers are first and above all else servants of Christ.

The master observes how we as under rowers are working and we are answerable to Him.

A minister cannot serve Christ rightly unless he sees himself rightly: as Christ's underslaves ... as His menial servant.

“We are not the captain of the ship,” says Paul, “but only the galley slaves who are under order from our Master.”

Note: Pastors are “servants of Christ.” They are not servants of the church, but servants of Christ.

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- Pastors serve IN the church, but are not servants OF the church.
- The church may write the check, but the Lord meets his needs. He doesn't answer to the people, but Christ. The undershepherd doesn't work for the sheep, but for the Chief Shepherd.

I want the church to be happy. I want you to be pleased with my service. Yet, at the end of the day, I will not stand before you but before Christ in judgment. So I must not ask what will please the church, but what will honor Christ.

The point is that “under-rowers” are equal. They all have the same task of pulling the oars. They all have the same lowly rank. Therefore, one should not be exalted above another.

B. Stewards

A steward is a slave too, but he is a different kind of slave from the under-rower. He is a “house manager” or overseer of all that the master has.

- He is still owned by a master, but he has proven his dependability and trustworthiness and has been given a position of management.
- The word “steward” means one who manages a house or household, but it is not the steward's house. It's the master's house.

The pastor does not own the church. It's not my church.

- Jesus said, “Upon this rock, I will build my church.” The church doesn't belong to the pastor or deacons or congregation. It belongs to Jesus. It's His house. It's His ship.

On what basis does the pastor manage a church?

As a steward of God's mysteries, a minister is to take God's revealed word and dispense it to God's household. He dispenses all of God's word, holding nothing back.

Paul could tell the Ephesians elders, “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house ... solemnly testifying and declaring to you the whole purpose of God.” (Acts 20:20-21,27)

The reason so many Christians have spiritual malnutrition is that so many preachers dispense an unbalanced diet of biblical truth.

A preacher is a steward of God whose responsibility it is to go into the Bible's treasures and dispense them to God's people when they come to church.

The word “steward” is also used in the Bible to describe every Christian.

I Peter 4:10 “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

God wants us to take the gifts He has given and be good stewards so that our gifts will bless our fellow Christians in our local churches.

II. The Requirements of the Man of God 4:2

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Paul gives only one requirement for the man of God: faithfulness. This is the one essential for the minister. There is no other requirement of him.

- He is not required to be eloquent, brilliant, clever, creative, loaded with ability, popular or successful. He is required to be faithful.
- God does not require a minister to be an administrator, counselor, visitor or socializer – as important as these ministries are.
- Charles Swindoll said, “God is not nearly as concerned with fruitfulness as He is with faithfulness. Faithfulness is what He honors.”
- He is held accountable and shall be judged for how well he ministers the mysteries of God.
- We are required to be faithful in our message ... our ministry ... our motives ... our morals.

The church choir director was being driven out of his mind at the rehearsals for the Christmas choral concert. It seemed that at least one or more members of the choir was absent at every rehearsal. Finally they reached the last rehearsal and he announced: “I want to personally thank the pianist for being the only person in this entire church choir to attend each and every rehearsal during the past two months.” At this, the pianist rose, bowed, and said, “It was the least I could do, considering I won’t be able to be at the concert tonight.”

How sad that many treat the work of God like something they can fit into their schedule and drop from their schedule if there are other things to do. The work of God is a priority and should be treated as a priority. If you have a job in the Church, everything else should take a back seat. Your job in the church should not be something you show up for if you feel like it. It should be something that you are faithful to and faithful in. Why? It is what God requires.

Paul challenged others to take inventory of his service. Have you taken an inventory of your work for God?

III. The Review of the Man of God 4:3-5

A. Human Evaluation 4:3a

Paul doesn’t say that he ignores criticism. He just doesn’t become overly depressed by a negative criticism nor overly elated by flattery and positive criticism, since neither may be true.

- Since pastors are in public view, judgment is Inescapable, but it is also Insignificant.
- Paul says that it is “a very small thing” because no human being can accurately judge another human being. Only God can judge fairly. He alone knows man’s motives. He alone has a clear view of man’s heart.
- When the final analysis comes, we do not answer to man!
- George Whitefield said, “If I please man and not God, it matters not who I please. If I please God and not man, it matters not who I displease.”

B. Self Evaluation 4:3b-4a

Paul is not talking about a minister evaluating his ministry for the purpose of strengthening it.

- He’s talking about passing judgment upon his ministry in comparison to other ministries.

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- No minister can honestly judge his own ministry. His judgment of himself is not complete. He is blind to his own faults and failures.
- Sometimes we are too hard on ourselves; sometimes too lenient. Our own evaluation of ourselves is often as unreliable as that of others evaluation of us.
- After a service a pastor asked his wife as they were driving home, “Honey, how many really, really, really good preachers do you think there are in this town?” She answered, “One less than you think.”

C. God’s Evaluation 4:4b-5

God has a day planned when He will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts.

- Paul gives a warning not to prejudge anyone. We are not to judge “before the time, until the Lord comes” when believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

It is good when fellow Christians can speak well of us sincerely. It is good when our own conscience does not accuse us. But it will be wonderful beyond description if, on that day, our Lord can say of us, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Notice that last phrase in 4:5, “Then each one’s PRAISE (not condemnation, not ridicule, not put-down, not scolding) will come from God.”

- God wants the best For us and From us and looks not for the negative, but for the positive in us.

I Corinthians 4:6-21 DEFLATING THE INFLATED

The Bible warns against many sins, but one that seems to pop up more than any other in scripture is Pride.

Proverbs 6:16-19 offers a list of things God hates, and number one on the list is “a proud look.”

Pride has been defined as an exaggerated and dishonest self-evaluation. It seeks value in honor ... importance in reputation, and ...significance that it does not deserve.

- “Pride is an ego-motivated maneuver to hide the truth about myself.”

- The Christians in Corinth were haughty and arrogant and preoccupied with their own importance.

Someone has said, “Swallow your pride occasionally, and console yourself with the knowledge that it is 100 per cent calorie free.” There are many that need to swallow their pride.

Someone else has said, “People are strange: they want the front of the bus, the back of the church, and the center of attention.”

- Proverbs 8:13 “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth, I hate.”
- Proverbs 16:18 “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”
- D. L. Moody used to say, “Be humble or you will stumble.”
- I Peter 5:5 “God resist the proud and gives grace to the humble.”

The word “resist” means “to fight against, to come against.” If there is anyone I don't want fighting against me, it is God. You never win when you fight against God.

The Christians at Corinth were filled with arrogance, boasting, and pride. They liked themselves a lot.

- How does one deal with an arrogant person?
- How do you cure the feeling of superiority?

With authority and love, Paul uses his pen as a rod to correct the wayward Corinthian Christians.

Three times in this passage Paul says, “You are arrogant”. (The KJV uses the words “puffed up”)

I Corinthians 4: 6, 18, 19.

Great men and women of God are always marked by humility, which is the opposite of being arrogant. Examples:

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1. Genesis 18:27 When Abraham was interceding to the Lord on behalf of Sodom, he said, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes.”
2. Genesis 32:10 When Jacob was afraid that Esau was about to attack him, he prayed, “ I am unworthy of all the loving-kindness and of all the faithfulness which Thou hast shown to Thy servant.”
3. Exodus 3:11 When God commanded Moses to go before Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites, Moses replied, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”
4. Matthew 3:14 John the Baptist could not conceive of his baptizing Christ. “I have need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”
5. Luke 5:8 Self-confident Peter, after witnessing the miracle of the great catch of fish, “fell down at Jesus' feet saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' “

The Corinthian Christians had not learned that virtue.

I. The Conviction of Pride in the Church

Remember that the Christians at Corinth were in conflict about who was the best preacher – Paul, Apollos, Peter.

- Paul says, “these things” (verse 6) and refers back to the imagery he has already given to liken himself and Apollos to Farmers (3:6-9), Builders (3:10-15), and Stewards (4:1-5).

- He says these illustrations he “figuratively transferred” or applied to himself and Apollos.

Then he says – and this is key – “learn in us not to think beyond what is written.”

- Paul warns of a danger: Pastors and church leaders deserve respect. I Timothy 5:17 says, “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”
- But they had gone “beyond what is written.” They had taken their loyalty to unhealthy extremes. Their love and loyalty was contaminated with pride.

Many churches don't give their pastor the respect and honor that God commands, but there are some churches that go overboard or as Paul says, “go beyond what is written.”

- They set their pastor up almost as a little god. Whatever he says, goes. He is THE authority. No one is to question him.
- The sad thing is that the pastor encourages such or even demands it or allows it to go on.
- The problem is that when that pastor goes, it not only hurts the church, it hurts the next pastor or pastors who follow him.

Paul deals with this kind of contaminated pride. He is going to ask three questions to show them the folly of their pride, arrogance, and boasting. Note 4:7.

A. “Why do you think you are better than others?” 4:7a

Many Christians who don't see themselves as they really are think they are something when they

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are nothing! Charles Kingsley: Recipe for Misery

“If you wish to be miserable, think about yourself; about what you want; what you like; what respect people ought to pay you; and then to you nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch; you will make misery for yourself out of everything good; you will be as wretched as

you choose.”

Pride is wrong because it is Unjustified.

Muhammad Ali was in his prime, and as he was about to take off on an airplane flight, the stewardess reminded him to fasten his seat belt. He came back brashly, “Superman don’t need no seat belt.” The stewardess quickly came back, “Superman don’t need no airplane, either.”

Feeling like you are better than others is the essence of pride. It is an inflation of self that leaves one thinking they are better and superior.

Acts 10:34 Peter said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.” He doesn’t consider one better than another.

B. “What is it that you have that you did not receive from God? 4:7b

Pride is wrong because it is Unscriptural.

Pride forgets that who we are and what we have can all be traced back to the goodness of God.

- There would be no fields if it weren’t for God.
- The seed we put in the ground would be worthless if not for the life God put into the seed.
- It is God who gives us life, strength and the ability to work with the land.
- Deuteronomy 8:18 “But thou shall remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth the power to get wealth.”

The goodness of God in our life should lead to giving God glory. But pride turns the focus on us instead of God. Instead of giving God the glory for who we are and what we have, we take the credit. Pride causes us to rob God of the glory that is rightfully His. It is this very thing that makes pride such a wicked and perverse matter. Pride makes us a thief and robber. It makes us a spiritual criminal. It robs God of His glory.

A young woman talked to her pastor about her besetting sin. She said, “Pastor, I have become aware of a sin in my life which I cannot control. Every time I am at church I look around at the other women, and I realize I am the prettiest one in the whole congregation. None of the others can compare with my beauty. What can I do about this sin?” The pastor looked at her and said, “That is not a sin. That’s just a mistake!”

May I say that pride is both a mistake and a sin. It is a sin because it robs God of His glory.

I Corinthians 1:31 “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

C. “What right do you have to be proud if God gave you everything you have?” 4:7c

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Pride is wrong because it is Unspiritual.

Pride is baseless and without foundation. There is no reason to be proud. Instead of being haughty, we should be humble.

Instead of pride there should be praise.

The inflated need to be deflated.

II. The Correction of Pride Among the Saints

These folks thought they were better than they were. They had an inflated opinion of themselves.

- Paul tells them how the world thinks of them as servants of God – not as living an elevated lifestyle, but as humble servants, even fools. The world views Christians as:
 - a. Spectacles 4:9 Condemned prisoners brought into Roman arena to fight and die.
 - b. Senseless (fools)
 - c. Sufferers 4:10-12
 - d. Scum 4:13 Garbage scraped from dirty dishes. Nothing to be proud of in that description.

I heard about a Quaker who had a cow that was terrible to milk. Whenever he started, she would switch her tail and hit him up beside his head. She would then kick her leg and turn over the milk pail. Because the Quaker was a non-violent person, he could not hit his cow. One day, he finally reached his limit. He went around to the front of the cow, took her by the horns, looked her in the eye and said, “Thou knowest I am a Quaker and thou knowest I cannot lose my temper and thou knowest I cannot hit thee. But what thou dost not know is that tomorrow I shall give thee to my neighbor who is a Baptist, and he shall beat the devil out of thee!” The Quaker found a remedy for his problem.

I Corinthians 4:18-21.

I Corinthians 5:1-13

HOW TO HANDLE A CHURCH SCANDEL

The first four chapters of I Corinthians deal with divisions in the church. Now in I Corinthians 5-6 Paul deals with the problem of Defilement and Discipline in the church.

- One of the helpful things about teaching through a book of the Bible verse by verse is that it causes us to look at every issue in

Scripture.

- This is not a pleasant chapter, but if we are going to be faithful in teaching the whole counsel of God, we cannot pass over this passage.

- In our day the average church member is not even aware that the truths about church discipline is even taught in God's Word, or that the church has a responsibility to maintain the integrity of its membership and the purity of its fellowship.

Discipline is important in every area of life.

- There must be discipline in the classroom or students will not learn.
- There must be discipline in military maneuvers or lives will be lost.
- We must be disciplined with our money or we won't have enough to pay our bills.
- We must be disciplined with our eating or we'll become overweight.

Get the picture?

- Our spiritual lives need discipline too.
- Jesus said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)
- We must discipline ourselves spiritually. We must say "Yes" to daily Bible reading, time for prayer and meditation.
- We must say "No" to temptation and sin. We should constantly turn from what is wrong and do what is right.
- If we fail to discipline ourselves concerning temptation and sin, and it leads to things that are harmful to you spiritually and harms the fellowship, church discipline is needed.

I. The Reality of the Immorality 5:1

"Reported commonly" means that this was not a matter of hear-say or malicious gossip or rumor.

- Paul never confronted people over things that came to him by innuendo or suspicion. He was always certain of his facts. He made sure of his information before he responded.

- These facts were reported by godly members of the congregation in whom Paul had utmost trust.

Paul would not accept information from someone who wanted to remain anonymous.

- He didn't hesitate to reveal the source of his information. He was not going to confront the members of this congregation without proof of the accusation.

- Paul would not allow "snipers" to take pot-shots at others and stay hidden.

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- "Fornication" means any kind of sexual sin.

- The Bible teaches that all sex outside of marriage is wrong. Period. There are no loopholes. Sexual sin outside of marriage is wrong.

- The word encompassed everything from pre-marital sex, extra marital sex, prostitution, to homosexuality.

Notice that Paul uses the word "that one should HAVE his father's wife."

- He doesn't say "he HAD his father's wife." It had been going on for some time and it was still going on.

- He was not repentant, but rebellious.

And it was public knowledge!

- There was no need for Paul to name those involved. The matter was on everybody's tongue.

One of the first indicators for church discipline is when the sin becomes public knowledge.

- How could the church effectively witness to the community. If unbelievers were gossiping about the sexual sin of believers in the church, then their testimony was tarnished. Such sin brings reproach upon the church and upon Christ.

This man was having perverted sex. It was with either his mother or, more likely, his stepmother.

- Even if it was his stepmother and even if his father was dead, it is still incest in the eyes of God.

Paul didn't deal with the woman which means she was an unbeliever. Leviticus 18:8; Deuteronomy 27:20.

II. The Reaction to the Immorality 5:2

Paul was as much troubled by the reaction of the members of the congregation toward the immorality in the membership, as he was troubled over the immorality of this member.

There were three possible ways they could have reacted:

1. They could have ignored it and pretended that it did not exist and pretended it was not a problem.

2. They could have accepted it as being alright and have gone on with business as usual.

3. They could have rejected it as being correct behavior for a believer and have been brokenhearted over the conduct of a fellow believer.

They had not been shocked over this brother's sin.

- They had not become brokenhearted over his conduct.

- They had not wept over what had occurred.

Their reaction was one of tolerance ... broadmindedness ... arrogance ... and pride.

If you ignore a problem, it won't go away.

- To tolerate it simply opens the door for others to become involved.

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- Judgment must be taken; action must be taken.

This man's sin was bad enough, but the church's sin was worse. Instead of dealing with his brother biblically, they swept the whole thing under the rug and pretended it didn't happen.

- According to 5:9 they had been well-taught. They knew what they should have done.
- But verse 2 said they were "puffed up". They were proud to admit their sin or to "mourn" for their brother.

When a church will not discipline her members, God will discipline her – Revelation 2:18-23.

- Judgment came to the church so that the other churches would respect the judgment of the Lord.

We are to be loving but firm. We must not rationalize sin in our midst.

- But let me give you a warning: Paul doesn't tell us to go on a crusade to crucify the man; nor to form a posse to track him down, string him up and hang him high.

- Paul reminded them to "mourn".

- I've had folks tell me, "Preacher, deal with that! We can't have that!"

But how should we deal with the person?

- Galatians 6:1-4 If you were the sinning person, how would you want someone dealing with you? In judgment? In condemnation? Or in grace, mercy and love?

- The goal is not to downgrade the brother or kick him while he's already down.

- I've had folks tell me to "deal with that" and their sin of the spirit against the brother creates more problems than the sins of the flesh of the sinning brother.

- I've had folks tell me to deal with something when I was already dealing with it. They didn't have all the facts and, truth be known, never thought of being redemptive toward the brother.

By the way, what Paul says here is a matter of last resort.

III. The Response to the Immoral 5:3-5

Come together:

- In the name of the Lord Jesus.
- Though I am absent in body, I will be with you in Spirit.
- I have already made the decision as to what to do in this matter.
- Withdraw fellowship from the brother and let him suffer the consequences of his sin – It may even result in the loss of his life.

Again, this is the last resort. As we are about to see, they were to work for repentance and reconciliation with the man.

IV. The Requirement Toward the Immoral 5:7

Paul didn't come up with these steps of discipline. They came from Jesus Himself – Matthew 18:15-17

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1. When sin becomes known, it is to be dealt with Privately.

If someone sins against you or you know of such a sin, you are commanded to go to that person and encourage them to repent. This is level one discipline. Most matters can be handled at this level.

2. If he refuses to repent, you must take "two or three witnesses." Preferably, these are church leaders who can establish the facts.

3. If the brother or sister will not listen to the "witnesses," there is nothing left but to "tell it to the church." His name and his sin are to be shared to the whole church and the whole church is to call him to repentance.

4. "If he refuses to hear the church," then fellowship is to be withdrawn from him and he is to be treated "as a heathen and a tax collector." (You treat heathens like they are lost and in compassion and love try to win them to the Lord.)

Some may think this is harsh and inconsistent with love; yet, it is love that motivates such action.

- We love this wayward brother and do not want him to be judged by God. We do everything possible to help him.
- Yet, we cannot condone his actions, for his actions will destroy both him and us.
- Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives."

The Results of the Immorality

Paul knew that if this immorality was tolerated in the membership at Corinth, there would be some very tragic results. He gives an illustration of leaven and dough to help the congregation see the danger that existed.

Whenever one was baking bread, they would follow a process. The ingredients would be mixed together. The dough would be kneaded by hand until it reached the right texture. Then the baker would take a small piece of dough that had been saved from a previous batch of bread. That small piece would contain yeast spores. It was called leaven. Leaven was what made the bread rise. It would only take a small piece of leaven, placed inside the larger lump of dough to affect the entire lump. The yeast spores would soon infiltrate the whole lump. The yeast spores would quickly infect the entire lump and make it rise.

Paul wanted the congregation to understand that this immorality in the membership would not stay contained to just this one man. It would spread across the congregation to others.

“Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?” I Corinthians 5:6b

The results of this immorality could show up in several ways. It would affect adults in the

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congregation. There could be some men who would see this man's conduct and be tempted to be unfaithful to their wife. There could be women who saw this immorality and be tempted to be unfaithful to their husband. There could be young people who witnessed this immorality and they could make choices not to remain sexually pure before marriage. The moral climate would be lowered by this immorality and children would grow up in this lower moral climate.

Let me illustrate how “a little leaven leavens the whole lump”. I can remember going to see the movie,

“Gone With The Wind” at the local theater. We had heard that it contained one word of profanity at the end. Up until that point, there was no profanity allowed by the censors. I watched the whole thing. I saw Scarlet and Rhett fuss and fight and fall in love. I saw her bury two husbands. I listened as Prissy said her famous line, “Mister Butler, Mister Butler, I don't know nothing about birthing no babies!” I watched Rhett rescue Scarlet as Atlanta burned in the background. Finally, as the movie was coming to an end, I was heartbroken along with the audience as the little girl Bonnie was thrown from her pony and died. Then came that scene when Rhett confronted Scarlet at the foot of the massive staircase and tells her he is leaving. Scarlet responded, “Oh Rhett, What is going to happen to me?” Rhett looked at her and told her, “Frankly, my dear, I don't care.” Actually, he uttered his word of profanity. I can still remember the gasp that went up from the audience. They had never heard such in a film.

It was just one word of profanity. It was a common word of profanity. It was just four letters long, but it was a tiny piece of leaven. That little piece of leaven began to infiltrate the lump of the media. It spread until it infected the whole lump. Today, we hear the results. Virtually every program on television, virtually every movie, is filled with profanity and the tragic thing is, nobody gasps any more. We have become as Jeremiah described.

“Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They were not even ashamed at all. They did not even know how to blush.” Jeremiah 6:15.

VI. The Resolution of Immorality 5:8-13

Sexual sins are not all that are to be dealt with in relation to church discipline.

1. Covetous – Those who seek more and more while millions are dying of hunger, disease.
2. Extortioners – thieves and those who take advantage of the poor to get gain themselves.
3. Idolaters – those who either worship false gods or don't have a right relationship with God.

To keep company – to get mixed up with or have intimate fellowship with.

Scrub brush or fishing pole? Many of us are trying to clean up the world's fishbowl when all God asks us to do is fish. Jesus says, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Not cleaners of fishbowls – fishers of men! If you've been spending your time trying to scour the world, put down your scrub brush ... pick up your fishing pole ... and go for the fish!

I Corinthians 6:1-11

CHRISTIANS AND LAWSUITS

A father overheard a commotion outside the window. He looked out the window and saw that it was his little girl playing with some friends. Their voices got louder and louder and more heated and argumentative. The dad pushed the window open and said, “You girls stop that fighting.” His little girl looked up and said, “But, Daddy, we were just playing church.”

• Tragically, in some churches, you would get the impression that fighting is what church is all about. That's the impression you would have gotten from the church at Corinth.

Any time there is division or conflict in the church, the testimony of the church is hurt.

• This church at Corinth had already begun the process of losing their testimony. Why?

- Because of their division over preachers and who was the best preacher. Was it Paul or Apollos or Peter?

- Because of the defilement in the church. They tolerated immorality in the church and refused to discipline the sinning brother.

- Now Paul deals with a third matter that was causing them to lose their testimony. Christian brothers were suing each other in public courts.

We live in a lawsuit-crazed society.

• Did you know that there are now over one million lawsuits filed in America every month, and unfortunately, it is not just the world's crowd that's doing it. Many Christians today are suing other Christians; and the Word of God takes a very strong stand against that.

• There are 20 times as many lawyers per capita in the U.S. than in Japan.

• European nations average 300-400 lawsuits per 100,000 people, while the U.S. Average is 5,000 per 100,000 people.

• Books on how to file suit fill the shelves of bookstores.

Paul is not saying that a Christian should never go to court.

- Paul was not opposed to the judicial system. In fact, he supports the judicial system in his writings – Romans 13:1-3.
- Paul made an appeal to the legal system as a Roman citizen to benefit the furthering of his ministry – Acts 25:10-11.

Paul never says believers should never use the court system. Rather he is teaching us that we should never go to court against a brother in Christ for personal gain.

- Sometimes going to court with another Christian may be unavoidable. In cases such as divorce, the abuse of a child or neglect we may be forced.
- But it is not right for Christians to take Christians to court who are more concerned with revenge or personal gain than with the unity of the body, the church, or with the glory of Jesus.
- Lawsuits normally grow out of covetousness, something God abhors.

Before a Christian sues another Christian, there are some principles that he or she needs to understand .

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- The principles of God are always in effect. The Holy Spirit has imposed the Word of God – the Bible – on those of us that belong to the Lord Jesus. This is our guidebook; our road map; our instruction manual.
- Before a Christian sues another Christian, there are some principles that he or she needs to understand.

I. Understand What God Says about a Christian Suing Another Christian

A. It is a shameful thing 6:5

I Corinthians 6:1 “Dare any of you” means “How dare any of you do such a thing.”

Connect 6:1 with 6:5 and Paul is saying, “You ought to be ashamed at how you have been behaving.”

– They should have been ashamed that they could not get along with one another.

– They should have been ashamed that they were taking one another to court.

– Most of all, they should have been ashamed that there was no one mature enough or spiritual enough to be able to pass judgment on their problems and come to a wise decision about such things. It was a rebuke to their pride, their carnality, and the leadership of the church.

It was shameful because:

- It dishonors the Lord Jesus
- It dishonors the New Testament church.
- It brings insult to the Holy Spirit of God.
- It diminishes your testimony before the world. It is improper behavior!

B. It Is a Senseless Thing 6:7

- The word “fault” means “defeat”.

• When a Christian sues another Christian, even if you win the lawsuit, you have already lost.

- “And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also.” Matthew 5:40

• Both Paul and Jesus are saying, “It is better, it is better not to sue.” But he goes a step further than that. “It is better to BE sued and to lose than to sue and to win.”

• Now that goes against the grain of our day. Today our mind set is, “get all you can and can all you get and sit on top of the can.” “Go for broke! Get it all!”

• Jesus says that if someone sues you and the law says to give them a coat, go beyond that and give them a cloak.”

• Paul says that a Christian should not sue because even if you win, you lose.

• What do you lose when you sue a brother? You lose a friend and you lose your testimony.

C. It is a Sinful Thing 6:8 Why?

• You do wrong – The word “wrong” means “you do unjustly”. In other words, that means you're acting like someone who has never been justified by the grace of God. You're acting like a person.

• And you “defraud;” you cheat or rob. God looks at Christians suing Christians as one stealing from another.

• You say, “Now wait a minute. I'm not trying to steal anything. I just want what's rightfully mine.” God says He sees it as stealing.

II. Understand What You Use to Be 6:9

The word “unrighteous” means “to be lost.” They have never been born again.

• The point is that when Christians sue Christians, they are acting like unsaved folks. Then he gives a list – not an exhaustive list – but rather a list that Characterizes the type of people who are lost.

A. Sexual Corruption (sin)

1. Fornicators – Those who are involved in sexual sin of any kind, but primarily unmarried people who are engaged in sex.

2. Adulterers – Married people who engage in sexual relationships outside the marriage vow.

3. Homosexuals and Sodomites – Includes lesbians, transvestites, pedophiles, sex-changes.

Homosexuality is one of the greatest sins facing us today.

B. Spiritual Corruption (sin). Those who worship false gods and false religions.

C. Social Corruption (sin) 6:10

1. Thieves and Covetousness – are sins of greed
2. Drunkards – Though Scripture doesn't explicitly forbid the use of alcohol, its abuse is strictly prohibited. As a matter of conscience, I choose to avoid alcohol entirely.
3. Revilers – Those who destroy with their tongues and wound with words.
4. Extortioners – Those who steal indirectly. They swindle, embezzle and con folks out of their money.

I Corinthians 6:11 “and such were some of you”

- Do you know what the church is made up of? Swindlers. Thieves. Covetousness. Homosexuals. Adulterers. Idolaters. Fornicators.
- You say “Well, Preacher, that doesn't describe me.” Well then add pride to that list. Whatever your sin is separates you from God, was an offense to God, and cost Jesus His life on the cross. “And such were some of you.”

III. Understand What You Are Right Now 6:11

“BUT” Isn't that good!

A. You are Washed.

- Clean! Clean! Clean! What can wash away my Sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What

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can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

B. You are Sanctified – set apart ... Been given a brand new life and purpose.

C. You are Justified.

My washing gave me a new Life; my sanctification gave me a new Purpose; my justification gives me a new Standing before God.

IV. Remember What You're Going to Be 6:2-3

The saints will one day judge the world and the angels. What does that mean?

I don't know ... nor does anyone else! But in the kingdom age, during His millennial rule, believers will reign with Christ.

What is the gist of all this?

1. God's people ought to get along with one another – John 13:35.
2. If and when Christians do have disputes, they are to be settled within the body of Christ.
3. What if there is no settlement?

You're not going to like this, but look at verse 7.

If you settle the matter, take the high road – take the wrong ... suffer the injustice of it ...

and watch God make it up in your life.

Proverbs 19:11.

I Corinthians 6:12–20 YOU AND YOUR BODY

I want to say from the outset that these next few verses at the end of I Corinthians 6 and at the beginning of I Corinthians 7 are difficult for me to preach from the pulpit before a diverse congregation. Yet, it has always been my policy to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent.

In the case of sexuality and sexual sin, the Bible is very specific and so I must be specific too.

We are in a sexual revolution. Our value systems and standards concerning sex have done an about face in the last few years.

- It hasn't been that long ago that a girl who sleeps around was someone who was looked down upon; but now a girl who remains a virgin is often criticized for being weird.
- The attitude, even among Christians, is that sexual relationships outside of marriage should not be condemned if the couple is serious about each other.

Some people have the idea that God is against sex. He isn't. In fact, God created sex! It was His idea!

- He meant it not only for procreation, but also for pleasure. That's why He gave men and women sex drives and appetites.
- Within the sacred and safe boundaries of marriage, sexuality is part of a healthy relationship. It is the most intimate expression of love and acceptance. It bonds a husband and wife like nothing else.
- In fact, God intends for married couples to express sexual intimacy regularly – I Corinthians 7:3, 5.
- But God also gives a warning. Hebrews 13:4, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Basketball is a fast-paced, high action sport. Yet you can imagine the chaos of a basketball game that had no rules. There would be

no out of bounds, no fouls, no referees. Each team could do whatever they wanted to score. Oh, it might be exciting at first, but it wouldn't last long. The players would become frustrated and quit. The point is: rules keep the game safe and makes it enjoyable for everyone. In the same sense, God has given us rules for sex. The boundary is marriage, and as long as we play within the rules, it is fun and safe.

The Corinthians were breaking the rules. They weren't using sex as God intended.

- In I Corinthians 5 we learned that a man was having sex with his father's wife.
- We are going to learn in chapters 6-7 that there were several abuses relating to sex.

Read the passage.

It may be that the human body is abused more than any other single thing on earth.

- If there is any single thing that proves man's utter depravity, it is how man treats his own human body. This passage deals with this problem.
- It is God's case against the indulgence of the human body.

As believers we are members of Christ's body. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Both our body and soul are designed to honor God.

- Most of us set out to fulfill the desires of our bodies. We work, eat, sleep, and socialize to fulfill our body's desires and urges.

In Paul's day most people felt like the soul was important, but the body was a worthless tomb; therefore, how one dealt with the soul was important, but the desires of the body and how one responded to those desires, meant nothing.

Three things Paul deals with.

I. The Cause of Immorality 6:12-17

The first thing Paul deals with is the Difference between Liberty and License – 6:12-13

Paul is trying to correct a perversion that had crept into the theology.

- Paul had told them that before a person is saved, he is enslaved, entangled, chained in bondage to sin, to the world, the flesh and the devil.

• But when a person becomes a Christian, he is set free from the debt, the penalty and the curse of the Law. Christ sets us free! Our Christian life is not a life of rules and regulations. It is not about dotting an "I" and crossing a "T".

- The Christian life is a life of freedom. The Holy Spirit is living in my life and all things are lawful to me.

But the folks at Corinth had come to pervert that.

One of the deceptive snares of the devil is to take the great truth of God, pervert it and twist it and make it mean something completely different from what God intended.

- They thought that to be free in Christ gave them a license to sin.
- Note 6:12: We have liberty in Christ, but we don't have liberty to do what we want to do. We are free to do what Jesus wants to do in our lives.
- Christian liberty is not the privilege to do as we please; it's the power to do what we ought!
- Just because I'm free to do something doesn't mean I should do it.

Listen to some verses:

Romans 6:14 "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the Law, but under grace."

Romans 8:2 "For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

Galatians 5:1, 13 "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage...for you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

"All things are lawful unto me". However, there are two restrictions that are clearly seen to any thinking and honest person.

A. "All things are not expedient"

"Expedient" means helpful, worthwhile, advisable, profitable, of any value.

- They won't help me, build me up or strengthen the body of Christ.
- In fact, I can do some things that will be harmful to others and to myself.

B. All things are not wise.

Some things enslave. Some things do no build my self-image and self-respect.

C. I will not be brought under the power of or be mastered by anything.

Man is not to become a slave to any thing on this earth – not to food, drink, substance, desire, urge or anything else.

They had a little slogan in Corinth: "Meats for the belly. Belly for the meats. Meats for the belly. Belly for the meats." That means that food and the belly go together.

- They carried it a step further: "Sex for the body. The body for sex."
- We are free in Christ; just do what you want, when you want; with whomever you want.

It's the age old argument that is so often heard in every generation.

- Just as the body desires food and must have food for normal function, so the body desires sex and must have sex for normal functioning.

• The desires of the body are normal and natural; therefore, satisfying those normal desires is only natural. Nothing wrong with that. After all, God gave me those desires.

• I'm just doing what comes naturally.

We may have freedom to choose sexual sin, but there is nothing expedient, or wise or helpful about it.

• Nothing has more pitfalls and causes more heartaches than sexual sin.

• It destroys more marriages and shatters more homes. It breeds lying, stealing, deceit, cheating and killing, as well as bitterness, hatred, and unforgiveness.

If Christ is in us through the Holy Spirit and we commit sexual sins, the Holy Spirit is right there with us during the sin.

If our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, sexual sin takes place on God's altar.

II. The Curse of Immorality 6:18

There are some sins that are too appealing, too subtle, too strong for us. The only thing to do is to run away.

Don't toy with it, flirt with it. Run!

Joseph did. David didn't and look what happened!

How is sexual immorality against one's own body?

1. It lowers the person to the level of an animal in that it ignores man's spirit.

2. It looks upon the other person as an instrument, a tool to satisfy passions.

3. It defiles and corrupts the temple of God.

4. The emotional and mental make-up of a person is affected more deeply than by any other sin.

- It causes a sense of guilt because it damages the family's unity and cohesiveness.

- It damages the trust and oneness the spouses have with each other as well as the security of the children.

5. If you're a Christian, you will always be disappointed in yourself. It is something one cannot undo.

III. The Cure for Immorality 6:19-20

The word "glorify" means to honor, to magnify, but also to form an opinion about God.

– We are to so live that folks will form a right opinion about God.

I Corinthians 7:1-2, 6-9, 25-26, 32-35

THE HIGHWAY OF HELPFULNESS FOR THE SINGLE LIFE

You will remember that in I Corinthians 7 Paul begins to answer some specific questions that the church at Corinth had asked him.

In this chapter Paul deals with marriage, divorce, remarriage, and the single life.

Keep in mind that in chapter 7, Paul does not deal with the whole area of marriage – rather he deals only with the specific questions that they asked concerning marriages.

Paul spends a great deal of time talking about the Single Life:

a. Many books, magazine articles, conferences, and programs today focus on the biblical standards for marriage and the family. Many of those are excellent and helpful. Much less attention, however, is given to what the Bible says about singleness. A great deal of the literature and programs for singles is directed toward helping them "cope", and seems to reflect an underlying assumption that being single is not quite normal and is certainly not desirable.

b. In his discussion of marriage and singleness, Paul has made it clear that neither state is spiritually better than the other.

The Roman Catholic (they point to both Peter and Paul – both of whom were married) idea that celibate priests and nuns are necessarily more devoted to God is contrary to this teaching. Being married or single has nothing in itself to do with spiritually. Spiritually is based on obedience to God.

Read the passage.

1. Are you aware of the fact that one out of every three adults in the U.S. are single?

2. Three groups make up this large number:

a. Those who have never been married

b. Those who are widows/widowers

c. Those who are divorced

3. Because we live in a "married oriented" society, many have a warped view of the single life.

a. Poor thing – they can't be happy single – Says who?

b. Or, if they never marry, there must be something wrong with with ... something happened in their childhood and that's the reason they never married ... or they must have had a bad experience in their date life and that's the reason they aren't married.

4. I like what Barbara Sroka says: "One is a whole number." You do not have to be married to be a whole person. When two people get married, they are not two halves getting married, but they are two whole persons coming together to form one unit."

5. There are many singles in the Bible who were greatly used of God:

a. John the Baptist

b. Martha, Mary Lazarus

c. Jesus was He unfulfilled? No!

Was He incomplete? No!

In this passage Paul points out three things about the single life:

I. It is a Good Life 7:1-2

1. Paul does not say that it is "Best" or "Better", but it is perfectly alright for one to remain in the single state.

2. The single life has some definite advantages over the married life.

- One advantage that Paul points out is that singles have fewer distractions or responsibilities so that they can devote more time and energy to their relationship with God.

- It may be God's plan for some to remain unmarried ... some to serve Him in a special way ... Lottie Moon... Bertha Smith. Note 7:32-33.

3. There are worse things than not being married – one is to be married to the wrong person.

4. One man said, "For 25 years my wife and I lived in perfect bliss ... and then we got married!"

II. It is a Gifted Life 7:6-7

Notice: Marriage is also a special gift. Same sex marriage is a perversion.

1. I Corinthians 7:7 is a very interesting verse. The word "gift" is the same word used in chapter 12 for spiritual gift.

a. In other words, God has called some to the single life – it is their spiritual gift. I've never heard this gift discussed when dealing with special gifts.

b. God has designed that some function better in His kingdom by remaining in the single state.

2. Matthew 19:11-12 "Jesus replied, 'Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.'"

III. It is a Guarded Life 7:9

1. The single person must constantly be on guard against sexual impurity.

2. Remember the theme of this chapter: If you are single, don't live as if you are married. If you are married, don't live as if you are single.

Some final Guidelines:

A. It's Better to Remain Single Than ...

1. To marry outside the Lord's choosing. A non-Christian partner will always create relational problems.

2. To marry someone who will hinder our Christian growth.

3. To marry for the wrong motive.

Marrying for money, power, prestige, fear of growing old alone, or simply because it is expected will inevitably lead to disaster.

4. To marry without being willing to give ourselves to another completely. If we are unwilling to sacrifice our wants and needs for those of another every day for the rest of our lives, we shouldn't even entertain the idea of marriage.

B. It's Better to Marry If ...

1. Our lives would be more complete with a mate.

2. God leads us to someone we love and who loves us.

3. We are confident that our relationship will illustrate Christ's love for His church.

4. We are willing to spend the remainder of our days giving more than receiving.

How can I find the right person?

Before you find the right person, it is important to be the right person.

I Corinthians 7:1-5

MARRIAGE BY THE BOOK

What kind of marriage does God want us to have? Can we have the kind of marriage today that God wants us to Have? Can we

have marriage by the Book?

Today one out of every two marriages end in divorce. The sad thing is that the number of divorces is the same for both church goers and non-church goers.

- In 1980 one in three marriages ended in divorce.
- In 1980 Harvard University revealed an amazing statistic. They found when a couple was married in a church ceremony and they were both believers and they attended church on a regular basis, read the Bible together daily and prayed together daily, there was one divorce in 1,105 marriages.

If we want to experience the kind of marriage God wants us to have, we must put forth the effort and work toward making our marriage what God wants it to be.

Zig Zigler said, "If you treat your wife like a thoroughbred, you'll never end up with a nag."

Two fellows were talking and one said, "My wife is an angel." The other replied, "You are lucky, my wife is still living." Guess which one had the best marriage.

One young lady came to her pastor, asking why her prayers for a husband were not being answered. "Pastor," she said, "I go to the altar every service and ask God to give me a husband. Why doesn't God answer my prayers?" The pastor said, "It may be that you are praying selfishly. You are asking for yourself." The next service, the girl went to the altar and was overheard praying, "God, please give my Mother a son-in-law."

Paul speaks to the married:

A. Elevating Marriage as a Special Relationship 7:1-2

In the Bible marriage is always depicted and described as a special relationship in life that is elevated above all other human relationships.

The Bible speaks of special privileges and pleasures reserved only for the marriage relationship.

1. When God prohibits sexual relationships 7:1

The word "touch" does not speak of the total absence of touch. Some have taught that a couple dating should never kiss or even hold hands.

- The word speaks of "kindling a fire." It is used here to speak of a touch that arouses and stimulates, as an intimate contact that leads to sexual relations.

- It means that single men and women are not to go too far on dates or to co-habit with each other. There is to be no immoral sin between the singles of God's church.

The touching that Paul speaks of is directly connected to the word "fornication" in verse 2.

- In a nutshell, Paul is saying in verse 1 that all sex outside of marriage is prohibited, forbidden, and condemned by God.

- Paul knows there are human desires and passions that can be inflamed and incited. Therefore, he says it is not good (pure, wholesome) to "touch" a person to satisfy those desires outside of marriage. Any sex before marriage is not acceptable to God.

- God commands purity before marriage and fidelity after marriage.

2. Where God permits sexual relationships 7:2

The message of our society is "safe sex", which is a subtle way of saying that the priority is not keeping sexually pure, but keeping from catching some STD or AIDS.

- America now has more than two and a half million unmarried couples living together. That's a million more than in 1980.

- U.S. News and World Report, October 23, 1995, stated that about 30% of teens have had sex by age 15.

- Pregnancy is the leading reason young girls drop out of high school. In our country one million teenage girls become pregnant every year.

Everyone has sexual desires. These desires are stronger in some than in others.

- Sexual desire is healthy and right when released in marriage. However, overcoming sexual temptation can be a tremendous problem for many single people. This is why Paul says in verse 9, "For it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

One reason God gives us marriage is to provide a legitimate sexual outlet. However, this is not the only reason. Marriage is not to be seen merely as a sexual relief valve. There are many biblical reasons for marriage.

1. Marriage is for Procreation

God told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). God intends for us to raise up godly children and train them up in the ways of the Lord.

2. Marriage is for Pleasure

In verse 3 we're told that God intends married couples to maintain regular sexual activity.

- Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled."

- Proverbs 15:18-19 says we are to be "enraptured" with the love of our mates.

3. Marriage is for Partnership

Woman was created as a "helper" for man (Genesis 2:18). Friendship is the key ingredient for a good marriage.

4. Marriage is for Purity

It protects us from "sexual immorality" by giving us a wholesome outlet for sexual desires.

B. Enjoying marriage as a Satisfying Relationship 7:3-4

One survey found that only 10 to 20% of marriages could be called intimate marriages.

The sad truth is that many marriages are not happy and satisfying.

To have a satisfying relationship in marriage we must understand:

1. The Responsibility of the marriage partner 7:3

In marriage, the husband and the wife have certain rights and responsibilities to each other and these are pure and wholesome.

The words “due benevolence” speak of a debt that is owed, an obligation.

- The word “render” is a command, not a recommendation.

In 7:1-2 Paul tells us what we should NOT do and 7:3-4 tells us what we should do.

- The husband is obligated by God to meet the needs of his wife and the wife is commanded by God to meet the needs of her husband.

Someone has said, “The problem in many marriages today is the husband and wife are behind in payments.

When we got married we incurred more than house payments, light bills, etc. We incurred the debt of fulfilling the needs of our mate.

- Furthermore the command is in the present tense, meaning that the debt is never paid and is a debt we always owe. This is true for the length of the marriage.

2. The Right of the marriage partner 7:4

The word “power” refers to one's rights and authority.

- Biblically, the number one priority in the marital, sexual relationship is NOT self-gratification, but the complete and total satisfaction and fulfillment of your mate.

C. Experiencing marriage as a Spiritual Relationship 7:5

Unresponsiveness always causes problems in marriage – emotionally , psychologically, and spiritually.

The word “defraud” could be translated: “Do not refuse one another ... Do not cheat one another ... Do not rob one another.

Sex within marriage is NOT:

- A right to be earned
- A reward to be given
- A tool to be used as a threat
- A means of punishment because of some mistake or to get even or to get what you want from your mate.

Sexual oneness in marriage should not be withheld because of fatigue, apathy, resentment, etc.

Three guidelines are given by Paul for withholding sex:

1. By mutual consent
2. An important reason
3. For a brief period – then come together again.

When we deprive our mates, Satan can use that to tempt our mates to become unfaithful. You are tempting your mate.

You are also destroying a spiritual principle – that of ministering to one another.

I Corinthians 7:1–14

THE HIGHWAY OF HAPPINESS FOR THE MARRIED LIFE

Paul has spent the first six chapters of I Corinthians dealing with the carnal conditions of the Corinthian Church.

In chapters 7-11 he is going to discuss four specific questions that the church has asked him about:

1. Marriage 7
2. Meats sacrificed to idols 8-10
3. The place of women in the church 11
4. The observance of the Lord's Supper 11

Then the rest of I Corinthians is going to deal with what Paul calls “spiritual things.”

- Spiritual gifts
- Bodily resurrection
- Stewardship and tithing

Because there is so much misunderstanding concerning I Corinthians 7, let me point out several things before we dig into the passage.

A. Paul is NOT anti-woman; nor is he against marriage.

1. Paul mentions four groups relating to marriage

a. 7:25 virgins (unmarried)

b. 7:10 the married

c. 7:8 the divorced (the word “unmarried” refers to those who have been divorced and not yet remarried, rather than those who have always been single.)

d. 7:39 those who wish to remarry.

2. Paul encourages some to marry I Corinthians 7:9, 28, 29; I Timothy 5:14

3. Was Paul ever married?

a. If Paul was never married, then he was only theorizing when he spoke of marriage rather than speaking from experience. But Paul always spoke from experience. The method of the Spirit of God is to choose a man who knows something about the subject on which the Spirit of God wanted him to write.

b. Jewish Tradition

In Paul's day marriage was expected among pious Jews and Rabbies when they reached the age of 18. Jews thought: “A Jew who has no wife is not a man.” If a man did not marry and have children, he was slaying his posterity and lessening the image of God in the earth.

c. A member of the Sanhedrin could not vote if he were not married, because it was thought that a married man was more merciful. Paul declares in Acts 26:10 that he “cast his vote,” so he must have been married.

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d. I believe Paul had been married because he spoke so tenderly of the marriage relationship. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” (Ephesians 5:25)

e. I Corinthians 7:7-8 implies that Paul was “unmarried” which means that his wife had died or left him.

- I Corinthians 9:5 : “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife (KJV- a sister, a wife), as do the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?”

B. The Condition and Situation at Corinth

• Some of the things Paul is about to say will seem strange unless you remember that he was writing to a people known for their carnality and they were under unusual persecution at that time.

• I Corinthians 7:26 The “present distress” may refer to the terrible persecutions Christians suffered at the hands of Roman officials. Paul's advice is that in times of physical hardship, it may be better to stay single and avoid the heartbreak of losing a loved one.

C. The language Paul used in I Corinthians 7 is found no where else in the New Testament. 7:6, 10, 12,25.

In these phrases Paul meant three things:

- He used the teaching of Jesus on the subject.

- He amplified on the teachings of Jesus on marriage.

- When Jesus did not teach specifically on the subject, Paul compared scripture with scripture and, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, came to an inspired, authoritative conclusion.

D. Some question if the subject of marriage and the sexual aspects of marriage should be taught from the pulpit. Let me remind you of two things:

1. The world is not shy about presenting a corrupt, abusive, distorted view about the sexual aspect of marriage.

2. The Bible is not shy – but is plain – to say that sex within the bonds of marriage is pure, wholesome, and blessed of God. Genesis 1:27-28; Hebrews 13:4.

E. The Bible gives us at least five crucial passages on marriage, separation, divorce, and remarriage.

• To get an accurate Biblical understanding about marriage, divorce, and remarriage, we need to study these five passages together. To lift one passage out and fail to compare the other passages with each other may lead to a distorted view of what the scriptures have to say on the subject.

• Genesis 2:18-25

Deuteronomy 24:1-5 (this is the first passage that mentions divorce.)

Matthew 19:3-12

Ephesians 5:22-33

I Peter 3:1-7

I Corinthians 7:10-16 SHOULD I LEAVE OR NOT?

Sadly, many think of marriage as a burden, but God intended it to be a blessing.

- Marriage was intended to be a happy and harmonious relationship. But sadly, many marriages fall short of what they can be and what God intended them to be.

- This is obvious in the number of divorces that occur in our society.

The word “depart” in verse 10 speaks of divorce. Here are some interesting statistics about divorce:

- Between 1960 and 1978 divorce increased 83% for those aged 45-68. The increase was 196% for those under 30.

- There is now a divorce every 27 seconds.

- The median age for divorce (after a first marriage) is 27 for women and 29 for men.

- Those most likely to get a divorce are those who marry young ... those who have had more than one sexual partner prior to marriage ... those with less than a high school education (least likely to divorce are four year college graduates).

When there is a death in the family, there is a funeral, prayers, and open grief in the church. But when a divorce occurs, there is no service, people don't know how to pray, and there is rarely anyone to stand with you through the pain.

Some marriages are broken by death, others by unfaithfulness, and still others by one partner rejecting Jesus.

Contrary to some opinions, the concept of divorce IS biblical.

- The Bible recognizes and regulates divorce. Certain provisions are made for it.

- Malachi 2:14-16; Jeremiah 3:8

- Obviously, from these passages, it is clear that sometimes, in some ways, divorce for some persons, under some circumstances is altogether proper and not objected to by God.

God hates what occasions every divorce: Immorality and the hardness of heart.

God hates the results that often flow to children and to the injured parties of a divorce.

God hates divorce obtained on unbiblical grounds.

Divorce is not God's perfect will, but it may be His permissive will. There should be a compassionate side of divorce.

It is important that the church have a right understanding about biblical divorce and the right attitude toward those who are divorced.

(Remember: according to Jeremiah 3:8, God divorced Himself from His people).

I. A Separation That is Denied 7:10-11

A. A Separation that is Prohibited 7:10

The word “depart” speaks of divorce. Here Paul describes those who leave a spouse and the reason is not a case of being unfaithful in marriage. There was no infidelity.

- According to Matthew 19:9, Jesus allowed divorce on the grounds of adultery, although it was not God's original plan. God's original plan in marriage was permanence.

- Remember: Paul is describing a separation on the grounds of something besides infidelity.

We are not sure of the reasons the couple is seeking a divorce, but one thing is obvious: one is unhappy and wants to leave the other.

- Paul is talking about one spouse being unhappy and wanting to leave. There may be several or many things that cause dissatisfaction in a marriage. It is the attitude of “divorce for any reason.”

- “Irreconcilable differences” may be a basis for divorce in the legal system of America, but it is not a basis of divorce in the Scriptures.

- Getting a divorce just because you are unhappy is disallowed and denied by God.

- We may live in a society that will grant a divorce for almost any reason, but that still doesn't change God's command.

B. A Separation that is Permanent 7:11

God intended for marriage to be a permanent relationship, so an improper divorce is to result in a permanent state.

If one divorces except for the God-given grounds, the person is forbidden by God to remarry.

There are only two alternatives that are given in verse 11.

1. Remain unmarried

2. Be reconciled with one another, or repair the broken relationship.

Listen to Jesus – Matthew 19:9 To disobey God's command is to live in a constant state of adultery.

The laws of God are strong but they are intended to make us take marriage seriously.

II. A Separation that is Discouraged 7:12-14

Paul is not talking about a saved person marrying an unsaved person.

- He is describing two lost people who got married and after they were married, one of them got saved.

- As you can imagine, there are a number of problems that can be created in a marriage where one is saved and the other is not.

- For example, the unsaved spouse may want the saved spouse to go places or do things that the saved spouse would not do because of their relationship with the Lord. In such a case, the differences may lead to such problems that a separation is sought.

Paul discourages such a separation. He speaks of:

A. A mixed marriage with a Harmonious Relationship 7:12-13

Not all mixed marriages (a saved and unsaved spouse) are strained and at the point of separation. It is possible that the relationship can be harmonious.

It could appear that in the Corinthian church that there was some that felt that since they were saved, it was wrong to be married to an unsaved spouse. Therefore, they felt they should leave the unsaved spouse.

But Paul says that is not necessary. The word “pleased” speaks of each thinking well of each other, agreeing with one another. Even though one is saved and the other unsaved, they still find pleasure in dwelling together. Paul says, “don't leave.”

B. A mixed marriage with a Holy Resource 7:14, 16

The saved spouse can have a great influence over the unsaved spouse.

Paul is saying that the saved spouse is a holy resource in the marriage to reaching the unsaved spouse.

The saved spouse can have a “sanctifying” influence over both the unsaved spouse and the children.

Verse 16 While it is true that a saved spouse can have a positive influence over the unsaved spouse, it is also true that the saved spouse can have a negative influence.

- A saved spouse can at time be more of a hindrance than a help in getting a spouse saved or in church.
- When one lives before an unsaved spouse a compassionate, concerned, and committed Christian life, it can have a positive impact.
- But if the saved spouse nags or preaches to the unsaved spouse or puts them down, he can drive the lost spouse further away.

III. A Separation that is Decided 7:15

Here is a case where one spouse is saved and the other is unsaved. And the unsaved spouse is not pleased to dwell with the saved spouse. The situation becomes difficult and the saved spouse is asked to leave. It is unpreventable.

- The saved spouse is not to fight or contest the departure. Just leave. The words are actually a command; not a suggestion.
- The saved spouse is not to blame. There is not to be war, but peace.

In God's sight marriage is a bond between a husband and a wife. When that bond is broken in any biblical fashion, a person is free to remarry.

There are three ways the marriage bond can be broken in the eyes of God: The death of a spouse, adultery, and an unbeliever's leaving.

- The believing spouse must not be the one to initiate the divorce.

Where God allows for a divorce, He allows for remarriage.

Notice: Remarriage is always to be “in the Lord.” 7:39

In a nutshell Paul is saying: If you are single, don't live as you are married. If you are married, don't live as though you are single. principle – that of ministering to one another.

I Corinthians 8:1-13

GRAY AREAS, QUESTIONABLE PRACTICES, DOUBTFUL THINGS ABOUT WHICH THE BIBLE IS SILENT

One thing that you will quickly find among Christians is that not everyone agrees on what is right and what is wrong.

• On many issues, the Bible is very specific. However, there are many issues, the Bible gives no clear-cut commands. We might call these “gray areas, questionable practices or doubtful things.

• Some issues are not black and white. There are no easy answers.

There are some things that we KNOW are wrong. Adultery is wrong. Lying is wrong. Slandering someone is wrong. Stealing is wrong. Murder is wrong. Covetousness is wrong. There are some things that the Bible clearly and distinctly teaches are wrong.

As Christians the Scriptures teach that some things ARE to characterize our lives: the worship of God, knowledge of the Word of God, love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and grace in our relationships.

But – there are some things that the Bible does not clearly and distinctly teach that are wrong.

- Some believe that it is morally wrong for a Christian woman to wear makeup. I'm for women wearing makeup. Some need more help than others. I'm for it. Paint away.
- Some think that it's morally wrong for women to wear pants.
- Some think it's morally wrong for a Christian to play cards – of any kind – Old Maid, Rook, Go Fish.
- Some believe no Christian should play any game that has dice in it. Monopoly? Sorry? For some it's morally wrong.
- What about mixed swimming? Or as those who think it's wrong call it, mixed bathing. Now personally, it's hard for me to share a tub with anyone.
- What about eating out on Sunday? Listen, I haven't even talked about wearing a toupee or dying your hair!

In I Corinthians 8 the gray area Paul deals with is eating meat sacrificed to idols.

We don't know anything in our culture about animal sacrifice. The only thing I know about animal sacrifice is when I try to cook a steak on my grill and it ends up being a burnt sacrifice.

Idol worship was commonplace in Corinth. They were polytheistic (the worship of many gods). They had a god for just about anything you could imagine. There was a god for love, a god of war, a god of travel, a god for the sun and moon, etc.

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- People would bring sacrifices for the purpose of appeasing their gods and finding favor with the gods. Many times the offerings made to these gods consisted of meat.

- They also believed the air was filled with demonic spirits that tried to enter into and possess men. One of the ways evil spirits entered men was by attaching themselves to food. So these pagans developed the practice of sanctifying this meat by first offering it to idols. This way it gained them favor with their gods and it cleansed the food from evil spirits, making it safe to eat.

The sacrificial animal was divided into three parts. The first part was burned on the alter as the main sacrifice. The second part was given to the priest. The third part was taken home by the worshiper after being blessed by the priest and certified to be free of demonic spirits.

- The priest couldn't eat all of the meat they received. So much of it would be sold in the marketplace. It was a "holy" butcher service.

- Obviously only the best animals were used for sacrifices so this meat was prime-grade-A-choice. Since it was certified to be free from demons, it was even more valuable. It was the best meat available.

The big question was whether Christians should eat meat sacrificed to idols or not.

- Some believers knew that the pagan gods were really nothing. The meat, though handled by pagan priest was not spiritually contaminated because it had been offered to an idol. Therefore,

they had no problem with eating leftovers from sacrifices.

- Others, however, felt that there was some sort of spiritual contamination and were offended by the practice of eating meat that had been sacrificed.

- So on the one hand there were those who exercised their freedom in Christ and ate, and on the other hand there were those who were offended by the exercise of this freedom.

You say, "How does that affect us today? That has no relevance to us today." Oh, yes, it does.

- Remember, Paul is dealing with questionable issues; not those which according to the Bible are clearly wrong.

- The purpose of Paul's writing I Corinthians 8 was not to give Rules, but Principles and Guidelines concerning questionable issues.

Three things must be considered in dealing with gray areas:

I. The Care of the Fellowship 8:1-3

Listen: The most important word in chapter 8 is found in verse 9 and it is the word "liberty". That's what chapter 8 is about. That's what chapter 9 is about. That's what chapter 10 is going to be about.

In Christ we have great freedom – Christian liberty.

1. Luke 4:18 Jesus says that He came to set men free.

2. John 8:32 "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

3. 2 Corinthians 3:17 "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

4. Galatians 5:1 "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

5. Galatians 5:13 "For, brethren, we have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for

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an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

There are two extremes in these "gray areas": LEGALISM AND LISCENSE.

The legalist believes that everything is black and white, right or wrong.

Legalist live by rules rather than by the Spirit. Legalist keep list of what real Christians should do and should not do. Legalist make it their business to keep tabs on everyone around them. The legalist's life is controlled by the law and stifles liberty.

License sees almost everything as white. Christ has forgiven us of all our sins so as long as what you are doing is not expressly forbidden in Scripture and you don't feel guilty about it, it is okay.

I Corinthians 8 helps us strike the balance between these two extremes.

Freedom is not without Restrictions.

Liberty is not without its Limits.

Liberty without limits becomes License.

Christian liberty is like a road: as long as you keep your car on the road, you are alright, but on each side of the road are ditches or rails. If you get off of the road, you are in danger.

- The two rails in liberty are mentioned in 8:1

- Learning – knowledge alone puffs up – Big Head

- Loving – love alone fills up – Burning Heart

The real issue was not the eating of meat, but the unity among the brethren.

Before you take any course of action, you should:

- Consult your Bible
- Consider your Brother

We are recognized as Christians, not just by our knowledge, but by our love.

John 13:35; Romans 12:10; 13:8; Ephesians 4:1-3

II. The Caution Concerning the Fellowship

A. Don't Hinder your Brother or Sister

1. Don't be a stumbling block 8:9
2. Don't harm the spiritual progress of another 8:11

The word "perish" here means to "ruin or destroy". It is possible that the spiritual growth of a brother in Christ can be ruined or even destroyed because of the actions of another Christian.

B. Don't Hurt your Brother or Sister 8:12

1. Don't damage the Spirit of a weaker brother. What one does to his brother, he does to Christ .
2. Stumbling blocks result in:

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- a. Sin against the brother – cause him to violate his conscience
- b. Wound his weak conscience – The protection of the Holy Spirit over that person's life has been wounded (slapped in the face).
- c. Sin against Christ.

3. Don't offend your brother to the point that he turns back to his old ways – 8:13

Somebody is watching you – including the lost.

Matthew 18:6 If you offend one of these little ones, it would be better if a millstone were tied around your neck and be cast into the sea.

III. The Criteria for the Fellowship

Before you do or say anything, ask yourself:

1. Will it glorify God?
2. Will it edify (build up) me and others?
3. Will it hurt or hinder (offend) others?
4. Will it bring harmony and unity to the fellowship?

A checklist to help us decide about gray areas:

1. Is it Excess? Is it necessary or important or something we should give up?
2. Is it Expedient? Is it helpful and useful or only desirable?
3. Is it Emulation? Is it Christ-like?
4. Is it an Example? Are we setting the right example, especially for weaker Christians?
5. Is it Evangelistic? Will unbelievers be drawn to Christ or turned away from Him by what I say or do?
6. Is it Edifying? Will I be built up and matured in Christ?
7. Is it Exalting? Will the Lord be lifted up and glorified in what I do?

I Corinthians 9:1–23 THE PASTOR'S PROVISION

This is one of those messages I would rather not preach. It sounds self-serving.

- It might be self-serving if I selected this text out of thin air. That's why I like expository preaching – preaching verse by verse through books of the Bible. When someone asks me why I preach on a certain topic, I can say, "Because it was next!"
- So we must deal with this text and I hope you understand the humility with which I approach it.

Paul is dealing with providing for the pastor; paying the preacher. In providing for the pastor, most church members could be put in one of two categories:

The first category thinks the pastor has the easiest job on earth.

- They point out that he only works two days a week. He preaches on Sundays and Wednesdays and the rest of the week he can do whatever he wants to do.
- He doesn't go to work early or stay late. In between golf, hunting and fishing he makes an occasional visit to the hospital and performs weddings and funerals.

The second category of church member thinks the pastor has the hardest job on earth.

- They know he doesn't work just two days per week, but is on call 24/7.
- They know the long hours of study to prepare messages. They understand the hard work of feeding the flock, counseling, visitation, and caring for His people.
- How a person views the role of the pastor determines how he views the compensation of the pastor and all church workers.
- Financial support of God's servants has always been an issue, which the enemy tries to use as a tool to divide believers. Almost every minister realizes there are always those in the church who feel servants should not be financially supported, those who feel they are being supported too much, and those who feel they are being supported too little.

Some churches have the philosophy, "Lord, we'll keep our pastor poor and you keep him humble."

- I Timothy 5:17 says, "Let the elders (pastors) who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine."
- The words "double honor" is literally "double pay." A hard working pastor may not receive "double payment," but his people should treat him as though he deserves it and seeks to do their best by him.
- I was in a church one time and every time the matter of raises came up for the staff, this one deacon who owned a drug store would always vote "no" and have something negative to say about "raising the pastor's pay." In a message I said that
- I believed every deacon and every member of the finance ought to have a son in the ministry. Low and behold, his only daughter married a preacher. From that time on he had no problem with giving the pastor a raise.
- Let me say from the outset that I am very, very thankful for this church's care and concern for the needs of my family.
- You know that quite honestly I'm teaching through the Book of I Corinthians verse by verse, not bucking for a raise.

I Corinthians 9 is really an illustration of the principles Paul set forth in chapter 8.

- The key verses of I Corinthians 8 are verses 9, 13 (read). The principle he gave was that in doubtful matters – gray areas – the motive for Christian conduct was for the good of fellow believers. We should not do anything which causes a weak brother to stumble.
- This shows us that there are limitations on our Christian liberty. For example, you have a perfect right to swing your fist any way you want to, but where my nose begins, your liberty ends!
- You can tell a great deal about a Christian's maturity level by the way he uses his liberty. The mature Christian, for example, will know that he is free to do certain things, but he will not do them because of his love for fellow Christians and the desire not to become a stumbling block to them.
- We are recognized as disciples, not by our knowledge of the Bible or the liberty in Christ we love, but by our love for the brethren.

John 13:35

Christians are usually in one of three stages of Spiritual growth:

1. I know my rights – Liberty
2. I demand my rights – Carnality
3. I renounce my rights – Spiritually

Two things I want to share with you:

I. The Review of Paul's Rights 9:1-14

Paul uses the word "power" six times in this chapter and it means "authority or rights." I will use the word "rights."

Paul mentions three rights:

A. Ministerial Rights 9:1-2, 19-23

Paul was an Apostle. He meets the requirements for being an Apostle.

- He had seen the risen Lord on the road to Damascus.
- He had been separated unto the Lord.
- He had been commissioned by the Lord and sent by the Lord and was a messenger of the Lord.

As an Apostle Paul deserved a certain respect and even the recognition of his apostolic authority – But, he did not demand those rights.

• See 9:19-23

- In 9:2 the word "seal" refers to authenticity. Like the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval which tells us that a product has met certain standards, so had Paul's ministry among them.

B. Matrimonial Rights 9:3-5

The word "sister" means a wife who is a believer. Paul says, "I have a right to be married. Peter is married and some of the other apostles are married; but for your sakes and the gospel's, I will remain single."

C. Monetary Rights 9:6-14

Throughout the Word of God, God teaches that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel.

- Jesus said, "The laborers are worthy of his hire." Luke 10:7.
- But in Acts 18 Paul said that at the church at Corinth – and this is the only church that we have record of that is true – he would take no money for preaching, but would make his living by tent making, which he did for about a year and a half.
- Why? Because in Corinth there were many false teachers and pagan philosophers who had deceived the Corinthians in money

matters and he did not want to be connected with them. He says, "I have a right to expect pay for preaching and teaching, but for your sakes I will take no money."

Then he gives some illustrations: 9:7

1. Soldier 9:7

In Paul's day there was no volunteer soldiers; all soldiers were mercenaries. A soldier who serves his country in the military does not do so at his own expense. Soldiers do not furnish their own tank, planes or weapons. A soldier doesn't have to buy his own uniform and meals. His country pays his wages and supplies him with all he needs to be a soldier.

When a soldier went to fight, he got paid. Paul labored for the Gospel in the spiritual war, and had every right to be paid for his labors.

2. Farmer 9:7

- Who works in a field or vineyard without getting paid for it? No one would plant a vineyard and not expect to enjoy the benefits of his harvest and fruit.

- Paul was planting seeds of the Gospel and had the right to enjoy the fruit of his labor.

3. Shepherd

- If you raise sheep, it's your right to expect to use the wool for yourself. The shepherd tends his flock and cares for his flock that the flock may in return take care of him in a financial, material, and physical way. His work is not for free. He is compensated for the work he gives.

4. Oxen 9:8-11

Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 25:4. He quoted the same verses in I Timothy 5:17-18.

- Paul calls the witness of the Law to support his point. It was against the Law to put a muzzle on an ox while it was grinding the grain in the field; it was to be allowed to stop and eat the grain that was dropped to the ground. Paul's point is that even an animal has the right to participate in the harvest.

5. Priest 9:13-14

When the people brought both the grain offerings and the animals to sacrifice, The priest got a portion of both.

II. The Renouncing of Paul's Rights 9:15-23

Paul wanted no one to say he was in ministry for the money. He is not saying that all ministers should pay their own way. On the contrary, he was teaching this church to take good care of its spiritual leaders.

Paul renounced his rights for two reasons:

1. So he would not become a stumbling block.

2. For the love of the brethren.

It is possible to exercise our rights in such a way to hurt people and cause others to stumble. That's an abuse of our rights and can lead to God's disapproval.

Paul's goal is found in 9:19.

I Corinthians 9:24-27 THE DRIVING FORCE IN PAUL'S LIFE

What was it that kept Paul going? (2 Corinthians 11:24-30)

"Paul, five times you were beaten with a cat-of-nine tails on your back. Did you like the way that felt?"

"Three times you were beaten with rods. Did you enjoy that?"

"You were often thrown in prison, you were stoned, you were robbed, you were shipwrecked, you were rejected by your own countrymen. With all that happened to you, why did you keep going? Why did you keep following Christ?"

Paul would say, "No, I didn't enjoy all the pain. But I have a devotion to Him and I have a desire to bring others to Him. And I have a dread of disappointing Him."

That was the driving force in Paul's life.

I. Paul's Greatest Devotion Philippians 1:21

Christ was Paul's life. He had presented his body as a living sacrifice unto God.

The word "commitment" is what Paul's life was all about.

II. Paul's Greatest Determination 9:24-26

Paul wanted to live a faithful life unto Jesus.

- He wanted Christ to rule and reign in his life.

- He wanted to serve Christ with all of his being.

- He wanted to win others to Christ.

But when his life on earth was over, He wanted to hear Christ say to him, "Well done, Paul!"

Paul compares the Christian to a race.

- In a race, all runners will run but only one of them will win and only he receives the prize.
- Paul's point is clear: No athlete runs just to run. They spend months and years training and preparing for the race. They train hard and give up many luxuries and pleasures, not just so they can compete in the race, but so that they will win the race.
- Every athlete runs to win! That is his SET DETERMINATION! Every day as he trains he thinks about winning. Every time he pushes his body harder, he determines to win.

So, it should be in our Christian lives! We should not merely run the race, we should run to win!

The great difference between athletic contests and our lives as believers is that every Christian who will strive can win.

- We do not compete against other believers, but against the obstacles and hindrances that lay before us.
- Each of us runs his own race. Each of us can win. Each of us can receive eternal rewards.
- Hebrews 12:1-2 How do we win?

1. "Lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us."

- We repent of and renounce sin that keeps holding us back. We must lay aside certain things that may not necessarily be sinful within themselves, but still may hinder us. We may choose not to exercise certain Christian liberties.

2. "Run with endurance the race set before us."

- The Christian life is not a sprint, but a marathon. We must approach it with a set determination to finish well.

3. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

- We keep our eyes on Him and know that when we cross the finish line, He will be there to greet us. He endured the cross and He will help us finish the course too!

Sometimes in P.E. Classes or on track teams, there are some who don't want to be there. They don't like to run or to train. They only participate half-heartedly. When the coach is not looking, they slack off or don't do the exercise at all.

- In the same sense, there are many believers who run the race, but don't run to win.
- What's the point of being in a race if you're not trying to win?

The Bible makes it plain that when this life is over, there will be eternal rewards for obedience and faithfulness.

I Corinthians 9:25: "Striveth" means "to agonize" and speaks of self-discipline; to run with certainty and without distraction.

Paul wants not only to Compete in the race or to Complete the race, but to WIN the race. That was Paul's set determination!

- Notice: We do not compete against other believers, but against the obstacles and hindrances that lay before us. Each of us runs his own race. Each of us can win. Each of us can receive an eternal reward.
- That's why Paul says that we are to run in such a way as to obtain it.

This week I read about a lady who struggled for years with her weight. Finally she exercised enough self-discipline to lose a great deal of excess weight. One of her greatest challenges was

to stop going into a doughnut shop on her way to work. She had not stopped for many months and decided to reward her amazing self-discipline by stopping in only for a cup of coffee. She sat quietly at a table sipping her java while at the next table a man sat eating several delicious-looking doughnuts. He then got up and walked away leaving one doughnut untouched on a napkin. It was her favorite too, creme-filled with powdered sugar. She glanced around, saw no one was looking, grabbed the pastry and scarfed it down. Then the man came back with a fresh cup of coffee. He looked at this table and she just smiled ... with powdered sugar all over her mouth!

I Corinthians 9:26: "So fight I not as one who beats the air." This is a picture of shadow boxing. Paul was not in a pretend battle. He was in the ring. He was bruised and bloody. But who was he fighting? In 9:27 :

- He was fighting his own flesh.
- Paul would not let his flesh master him; he was determined to master his flesh. That means he must control his body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, his mind and thoughts, and his spirit.

III. Paul's Greatest Dread 9:27

Paul knew he would face temptation and sin all of his life.

- The word "castaway" means to be rejected, disqualified, disapproved, unfit, to be put on the shelf, no longer useful.
- Paul knew the utter necessity to live what he preached. He knew the Lord would not tolerate hypocrisy.

It was not a matter of losing his personal salvation. The emphasis is on reward.

Nothing in heaven or earth, nor nothing present and nothing to come, could ever separate him from the love of God. The Lord is able to keep him until the day of redemption.

Only one life, will soon be past;

Only what's done for Christ will last.

I Corinthians 10:1-13

WARNINGS FOR THE OVERCONFIDENT

The time when a person is most likely to fall or yield to temptation is when he is confident that in his own strength he can handle any situation.

The key verses in this passage are words of caution:

- 10:6 “Now these things were our examples...” or “these things happened as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.”
- 10:11 “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for the admonition ...” or these things were written down as warnings for us.

We get our English word “type” from the words translated “examples” and “ensamples.”

Paul is saying that everything that happened to the children of Israel is a type and picture of the believer.

In 10:11 Paul says that the record of their experiences is for our “admonition.”

- The word “admonition” means “to place in the mind.” They were not only a type OF the believer, but also a type FOR the believer.
- Their experiences are to be IN our mind and ON our mind. In other words, we are to learn from them. They are to be like object lessons in the Christian life.
- As Paul takes us back to the experiences of the children of Israel in the desert, he does so as a warning. He uses the children of Israel as a warning so that we will not do what they did or end up as they did.

Here is the lesson Paul wants us to learn: Christians NEVER get to the place in their Christian walk and life where they are IMMUNE to temptation. Every Christian is susceptible to temptation.

Galatians 6:1 “Consider yourself, lest

On July 20, 1948, “Time” magazine ran the story of a lady named Grace Wiley, who collected poisonous snakes. She played with them and it attracted a lot of attention. A photographer came one day to photograph Mrs. Wiley with some of her snakes. She agreed to pose with her newest pet, a five-foot cobra she had recently received from India. The photographer wanted her to make the cobra spread its hood, but she explained that her cobra was just “too tame to spread its hood.”

As they were posing, she noticed that the cobra was weaving from side to side rather nervously. She reached out to put the cobra back into the cage and instantly the cobra bit her middle finger and began to gnaw at it. For a full thirty seconds she struggled to get the needle-sharp fangs out of her middle finger, pressing with all her strength against the cobra’s locked jaws. She then put the snake back into its cage. She looked for her needle to give herself an injection, but it would not work properly. The photographer took her to the hospital and an hour and forty minutes later, she was dead. She had played with the deadly snake just once too often.

The same principle is true concerning sin. When we play around with sin, it will one day sink its deadly fangs into our lives and deposit its deadly poison.

When a Christian becomes so confident of his ability to handle any situation, he is over confident and in great danger of falling. The warning is summarized in 10:12: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

The danger is not of falling from salvation but of falling from holiness and from usefulness in His service.

Remember I Corinthians 9 ended with Paul saying that he did not want to be a castaway. He expands on that thought in chapter 10. Ancient Israel provided Paul with sobering illustrations of the pitfalls of over confident living. Using the examples of the Hebrews in the wilderness, Paul urges the Corinthians to stick to the guidelines God had given them to live by.

I. The Advantages Enjoyed by the Hebrews 10:1-4

The word “ignorant” speaks of lacking information or intelligence. He wanted the Corinthian believers to know what had happened to the children of Israel and why it had happened.

The little word “All” is used five times in these four verses to indicate oneness in experience and blessing. Every one of them – the feeble, the strong, the sick, the weak – every one of them experienced the wonderful things of God.

- Not all took advantage of the wonderful things that God provided for them, but the blessings were there.
- So it is today. Christians limit themselves. God has no pets. We all have the same blessings offered to us from God.
- Neither the Hebrews nor the Corinthians could blame their failure to follow God’s guidelines on receiving unclear instructions; both were wealthy with privileges that encouraged them to live godly lives.

In these verses Paul concentrates on four of those great privileges:

A. God's Presence 10:1 "All our fathers were under the cloud"

The cloud he refers to is "the pillar of cloud by day" and the "pillar of fire by night." The cloud they were under was the visible presence of God (Exodus 13:21-22). They were constantly reminded that God was present by a pillar of a cloud that hovered above them by day and by a pillar of fire that hovered over them by night.

For them it was no guessing game. God showed them when He wanted them to move to the right or to the left; to stop or to start Christians today are guided by the Person of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14).

He leadeth me, O blessed tho't
O words with heavenly comfort fraught
What e'er I do, where e'er I be
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

B. God's Power 10:1-2 "All passed through the sea" (Exodus 14:21-22)

Every physical law says they all should have drowned; yet, because of God's intervention, not even their feet got wet.

What a marvelous demonstration of God's power. God had parted the waters and allowed them to walk across on dry land and then destroyed the enemies that pursued them.

I Corinthians 10:2 does not mean that Moses had a baptismal service. The Greek word "baptizo" means "to dip" but it also means "to be identified with."

- If you wanted a garment dyed a different color, you would take it to a merchant who would "baptize" it or dip it to change its identity.
- The Hebrews were baptized (identified) with Moses as he followed God; they would follow him.

C. God's Provision 10:3-4 (Exodus 16: 4-36; Psalm 78:24-25, 29)

Paul is referring to the manna that God supplied for the Hebrews for 40 years, six days a week, so that they never went hungry. It was to be a means of grace to God's people.

This food was not only physical nourishment to the Hebrews, but also a symbol of the body of Christ, which would be broken for them to restore their souls (Luke 22:19)

He also gave them water as an act of grace. Someone estimated that it would require 11 million gallons of water per day for the bare necessities.

D. God's Person 10:4

Not only did they experience God's Presence, Power, Provision, they experienced Christ Himself.

III. The Abuses Examined By Paul 10:5-10

"But with many of them God was not pleased." Man, is that an understatement!

How many Hebrews came out of Egypt? Over 2 million. How many of that group entered the Promised Land? Two – Joshua and Caleb.

Paul details the reasons for God's displeasure. Simply having privileges doesn't guarantee successful living.

Even with great advantages, you can be disqualified for the journey with God if you live outside the will of God.

The word "overthrown" (10:5) is where we get our English word "catastrophe." God was displeased with them and a spiritual catastrophe took place in their lives.

Paul is going to say, "If you don't want to displease God, don't do some things:

A. Don't Crave Evil Things 10:6

The word "lust" carries the idea of "boiling up." They boiled over in their desires for evil things.

They kept longing ... craving ... the old life of onions, leeks, garlic (Numbers 11:4-6). They lusted for that that was outside the will of God.

B. Don't be Idolatrous 10:7

An idol is anything that seizes the adoration from us that belongs to God. It is anything that takes God's place on the throne of our hearts.

Anything that replaces our worship of the true God is an idol. It may be materialism or things. It may be some hobby – hunting, fishing, etc. It may be some event – ball games.

C. Don't be Immoral 10:8

The incident Paul refers to is recorded in Numbers 25. The Moabite and the Midianite women came and seduced the Jewish men and they committed immorality. God sent a plague upon them and 20,000 died. The plague was finally stayed when Aaron's grandson, Phinchas, thrust a spear through the hearts of a couple engaged in immorality.

The standards of God for His people have not changed one bit. He still calls for purity among His people.

We live in a day of rampant immorality when we are bombarded with low standards from every direction.

- Virtually every film shown in the theaters exposes immorality.
- The majority of TV programs are becoming more and more brazen and nothing is left to the imagination.
- The homosexuals promote their agenda. Language is becoming more vulgar. More and more men and women are involved in internet porn sites.

D. Don't Try the Lord 10:9

The word "tempt" carries the idea of "challenging." It is to put God to the test time and time again, just to see how much He will put up with.

Wal-Mart is a great place to study human nature. It is particularly a good place to see the way children will tempt their parents.. Mother tells little Johnny how she expects him to behave while they are in the store. You can see it in little Johnny's eyes, "I'm going to see how far I can go without her taking action against me."

He begins to disobey and he waits to see if he has gone past her limit. When she doesn't take action against his actions, he takes a step further. On and on it goes until finally he pushes her to the breaking point and she takes steps to discipline him. It may be a look or a word or a lick.

- We do that with God. We try His long suffering to see just how far we can push Him.
- Numbers 21 The Jews pushed God beyond the limits and He sent fiery serpents to bite the people.

E. Don't Grumble 10:10

Israel was a complaining bunch. They grumbled at the Red Sea, when they had no food, when they wanted another flavor of food, when they wanted water.

- They grumbled against God and the man that He had chosen to lead them – Moses. Finally, God said, "I've had enough." In Numbers 16 God opened the earth and swallowed 14,000 that grumbled and complained about the man God chose to lead them.
- There have been times I've prayed for the ground to open up and take a gulp! – Not really!!

I've met some of Korah's descendents. Some folks live life with a whine, always dissatisfied, constantly upset, going through life complaining that the roses have thorns when they ought to be grateful that the thorns have roses!

Do you ever get tired of hearing folks poor-mouth, grumble, and complain? So does God!

III. Applications Explained by Paul 10:11-13

It doesn't matter who you are, you could fall today. You can be a real saint, mature in the Lord, and love Jesus and still fall.

Don't ever look down your long spiritual nose and say, "I would never do that!" Under the right circumstances, with enough pressure, in a moment of weakness – yes, you would!

Let me remind you: Being tempted is not sin. Yielding to the temptation is sin.

One of the test that is done on so many products is to test the tenacity of the product.

- It's finding out where its breaking point is. How much pressure can it withstand.
- Did you know that our all-knowing God already knows your breaking point in life. He already knows how strong or weak you and I are. He knows the limits of our life. He knows exactly at what point our resistance comes to an end.

Every temptation has a prohibition, a limit, a boundary placed upon it in every believer's life.

And for every temptation that comes our way, God has a solution, a way of escape. He is faithful!

One of the reasons we yield to temptation is that we are like the little boy in the pantry. His mother heard a noise because he had taken down the cookie jar. She said, "Willie, where are you?" He answered that he was in the pantry. "What are you doing in there?" He said, "I'm fighting temptation." That's not the place to fight temptation. That's the place to RUN!

I Corinthians 10:12-11:1

DETERMINING WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG

For three chapters now (8-10) Paul has been dealing with meat sacrificed to idols ... Is it right for a Christian to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols.?

Paul's answer:

1. For him ... and from a literal standpoint ... an idol is nothing. It is no god. How can something be contaminated that has been offered to a nothing?
2. On the other hand: Some new Christians who have just come out of paganism may feel that for them ... and all Christians ... it is wrong. Now that they are saved they want to separate them-selves from everything related in any way to paganism – and that includes eating meat sacrificed to idols.
3. In this case, if eating meat sacrificed to idols offends a weaker brother or if it would be a stumbling block to eat meat sacrificed to idols, you should not eat it.

Let me give you a twenty-first century illustration:

Picture yourself at a late-night gathering with another believer. You get some punch, and your friend says to you, "Hey ... smells like there's something more in here than just juice. I used to be an alcoholic – this is a real struggle for me." At that point, you should set your glass down and ask for a 7-up. Why? Because an issue was made. And not offending others is more important than exercising your own liberty. As Paul explains:

Give no offense (Do not cause anyone to stumble) either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved (32-33).

There are two important relationships that we as believers must consider in determining whether actions are right or wrong:

- a. Vertical relationship: What will this thing do to my fellowship with Christ?
- b. Horizontal relationship: What will this do to my relationship with the lost and with my brother in Christ.

Several questions will help us to determine what is right and wrong:

1. Will our actions be a stumbling block or a stepping stone to fellow Christians? I Corinthians 8:13
2. Will our actions build us up or tear us down? I Corinthians 10:23
3. Will our actions please us or bring glory to God? I Corinthians 10:31
4. Will our actions help people come to Jesus or hinder them from coming to Jesus? I Corinthians 10:33

I. Our Actions Have Spiritual Implications 10:14-22

In these verses Paul gives a contrast between the Lord's table and the table of demons. There is to be:

A. Participation at the Lord's Table

1. The Lord's table is an illustration of Christ's blood shed for our sin and His broken body, sacrificed for us.
2. But – there are two other aspects that are given here:

a. Identification with Christ 10:16

- (1) The word "communion" (KJV) means "partakers".
- (2) It means more than sharing; it embodies the thought of possession – we belong to Him.

We no longer live as we choose, but as He chooses.

- (3) He is to totally engulf our life.

(4) A certain university was having a special celebration for Father's day. Many fathers came from far and near. One of the father's was introduced to the algebra professor.

"I'm delighted to meet you," he said. "My son took algebra under you last year." The professor said, "It might be better to say he was exposed to it, but he didn't really take it."

- (5) Too many Christians are exposed to Christ and His Word and will, but few are possessed by Him.

(6) Paul says, "When we observe the Lord's Supper, we are saying that, as far as we know, everything in our daily lives brings glory to God."

b. Unification with every other child of God 19:17

When we partake of the Lord's Table, we are saying – as far as we know, we are in unity and harmony with the entire body of Christ.

B. Separation from the Demon's Table 10:21-22

1. God won't tolerate split loyalties. Paul is pointing out the great truth of our Lord. Matthew 6:24

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

2. I John 2:15-16

3. James 4:4

4. The “jealousy” spoken of in 10:22 is godly jealousy. Because of His great love for us, He knows that anything that tears us away from His great love is harmful to us.

II. Our Actions Have Social Implications 10:23-11:1

1. Christians do not live in a vacuum. How they live has an effect upon other believers as well as the lost.

2. Sometimes Christians say – It's my life ... it doesn't matter to me what others think about the places I go or the practices I participate in.

3. Note: I Corinthians 10:24 (KJV) “Wealth” means “well being”. “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.” (NIV)

4. Philippians 2:4 “Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interest of others.” NIV

5. Titus 2:11-13

A. Our Actions Must Not Hinder Others 10:32

1. That is, don't be a stumbling block to anyone by what you do.

2. One time the great old preacher, Dr. George Gladden, was being introduced to a group of people in Columbus, Ohio. Someone who did not know him asked, “Dr. Gladden, where do you practice?” Without thinking he said, “I don't practice, I preach.”

3. We have a great influence and impact on folks that we may never know about.

B. Our Actions Must Help Others 10:24, 33

1. For years David Livingston, that great missionary to Africa, prayed each morning – “Oh, God, help me to resemble Jesus Christ.” After his death, someone asked one of the natives, “What do you think God is like?” He said, “I don't know, but He must be like David Livingston.”

2. Acts 24:16 “So I strive to always keep my conscience clear before God and man.”

3. I Corinthians 11:1 “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

To sum up:

Always live for God's glory and for the good of others.

I Corinthians 10:13-14 DEALING WITH TEMPTATION

Let me say from the outset that this passage of Scripture is about temptation. It is not about life's difficulties or hardships ... it's about temptation.

Now sometimes in the KJV the words trials, test, and temptation does mean difficulties or hardships and at other times the words means temptations. You must look at the context to see which it means.

- For example, James 1:2 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.” The word “temptations” here does mean trials and hardships.

- But the word “tempted” in James 1:13-14 means “to entice to do evil”.

- Again in James 1:12 the word “temptation” means “trials”. You must examine the context.

Sometimes when folks come to this passage of Scripture, they interpret it to say, “God won't put more on you that you can bear.”

- Have you ever heard that? I've heard that all my life. God won't put more on you than you can bear. But this passage isn't talking about hardships, it's talking about temptation.

- Folks often think the Bible says things it doesn't really say. For example:

- Some folks think that the Bible says that cleanliness is next to godliness. The Bible doesn't say that. Now I do think you ought to take a bath, but that's not in the Bible.

- Some folks think the Bible says that God helps those who help themselves, but the Bible doesn't say that. As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches that God helps those who cannot help themselves. That's how we get into the family of God.

- Some think the Bible says that every tub shall sit on its own bottom. Dr. Bob Pitman said that he was preaching down in Panama City years ago and made the statement that the Bible didn't say that every tub must sit on its own bottom. An elderly lady came up to him after the service and said, “Young man, you told a lie in the pulpit tonight.” He said, “What did I say?” She said, “You said the Bible does not say every tub shall sit on its own bottom.” He said, “No, ma'am. It doesn't say that.”

She said, “It does too. I have read it.” Bob said, “Well, ma'am, I've been married almost 30 years, so I don't date much any more. But

if you'll go home and find that and bring it back tomorrow night, you and I will go out on the town tomorrow night." As she walked away, Bro. Bob thought to himself, "Lord, I hope that's not in the Bible."

She came back the next night and said, "Well, Preacher, I have to tell you one thing. They just don't print Bibles like they use to." And he said that he sure was glad of that.

I've heard some folks say that God won't ask you to do the impossible. Well, Jesus stood before the tomb of Lazarus and said, "Lazarus, come forth." That's quite a lot to ask of a man that's been dead for four days.

The Bible doesn't say that God will not put more on us than we can bear.

2 Corinthians 1:8 "I don't want you to be uninformed or ignorant of the trouble that came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure [crushed] above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." In other words, "God put more on us than we could stand," but he says, "God did it so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in Him who raises the dead."

Now, Paul is talking about temptation.

I. The Common Experience of Temptation 10:13a

That means that temptation is a very human experience. Everybody goes through temptation.

- Paul does not mean to imply that since temptation is universal we ought to simply give up and yield to sin, but that everyone goes through it.

- Even Jesus faced temptation Hebrews 4:15

- If Jesus experienced temptation, that means temptation itself is not sin. Yielding to temptation is sin.

- Charles Spurgeon use to say, "No one can keep a bird from flying over his head, but he surely can keep it from building a nest in his hair."

Temptation means an enticement to do evil. There are many different kinds of temptation, but you can boil all of them down to three categories. I John 2:15-17

Genesis 3:6 "And when the woman SAW that the tree was good for food (the lust of the flesh)

and that it was pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes) and a tree to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life.)"

"Love not the world". What is the world?

It is the world system of sin and lust and evil and pride and rebellion against God. It is a system of values and goals from which God is excluded. It is possessions and pleasures that would entice and seduce us to attach our self to rather than focusing on God.

A. Lust of the Flesh

Flesh has to do with feelings, touching, tasting, smelling, hearing, seeing. It is the seat of desires and urges.

Desires and urges are not wrong, but the desires of the flesh must be controlled. If they are not controlled, they can lead to evil.

Fleshly desires are wrong when the desires are directly forbidden by God.

- Example: Sex is not wrong within marriage, but pre-marital sex and adultery are wrong because then sex would be outside of God's timing and His boundaries.

- One helping of food is not wrong, but several helpings may be gluttony.

What are the sins of the flesh? Galatians 5:19-21

B. Lust of the Eyes

Many temptations come through the eye-gate.

- Do not look upon the wine when it is red.

- Whosoever looks upon a woman to lust after her

C. Pride of Life

Pride of self-centeredness – one who focuses on his honor, recognition, fame, power, position, importance.

A feeling of being better, superior.

II. The Controlled Environment of Temptation 10:13b

God allows temptation but He promises to limit the kind of test and the intensity of it. You might think we would be better off without temptations, but we really need them. God uses them as His approval in our lives. Temptations prove us and causes us to grow.

- That's why He allowed His Son to be tempted – not to see if He would yield, but to prove He would not.

- That's why God allowed Job to be tested.

III. The Certain Escape from Temptation

The word "escape" refers to a mountain pass. When an army was trapped in the mountains, surrounded by the enemy, an escape route had to be found.

- In the midst of being surrounded by the temptations of Satan, God will provide an escape route. It is our choice whether to access the escaped route or not.

- Most of us simply cry, "Lord, take the temptation away!" But the Lord says, "No, I want to teach you that your escape is found in

staying in the battle and saying 'No' .”

• Hebrews 2:18 tells us that as “He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor (help) them that are tempted.” The escape for us in the midst of temptation is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

Two principles for resisting temptation:

1. Remove any means of sin far from us.

Romans 13:14 “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh.”

- Instead of setting ourselves up for failure, we should get rid of the things in our lives that cause us to be defeated. The things that we know are bad for us, we need to do away with . When you remove sin far from you, you'll be amazed at how much more victory you'll experience.

2. Replace bad influences with good ones.

Some influences in our lives drag us down into sin. Replace them with something that moves us toward righteousness.

God provides three ways for us to endure temptation: Prayer, Trust, and Focusing on Jesus Christ .

I Corinthians 11:2–16

WOMEN'S RIGHT OR WOMEN'S ROLE IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

Paul continues to deal with the issues that the Church at Corinth asked him to deal with.

- In I Corinthians 7 Paul deals with the principles of marriage.
- In chapter 8 he deals with eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols.
- In chapter 9 he deals with providing for those who minister for the Lord – should the pastor be paid. Paul responds by saying, “Yes.”
- In chapter 10 Paul deals with how to handle temptation.

When we come to I Corinthians 11, Paul deals with two matters related to public worship:

1. The Attire in worship (mostly as to what women are to wear in public worship) 11:2-16
2. The Abuse in worship (concerning partaking of the Lord's Supper) 11:17-34

The matters Paul discusses in I Corinthians 11 are not Difficult, but they are Delicate. They are charged with explosive issues that have brought Disaster to many churches.

It is amazing how many commentaries skirt the real issue in this passage. It is a hot potato issue. I mean, “If you deal with the issue of women's roles in church, you'll stir up a real hornet's nest, so leave it alone.” The only problem is that Paul dealt with it, so I must.

As I come to this eleventh chapter I feel sort of like the young soldier who was out on maneuvers and got lost. He wandered for a while and finally saw a clearing. In the middle of the field was a sign, but it was so far away he couldn't read it. He walked out into the clearing toward the sign and got nearly to the middle when he could finally begin to make out the letters. He called the out: “M-I-N-E F-I-E-L-D. This chapter is a “minefield” because it deals with some very sensitive issues.

One of the biggest problems that faced the church at Corinth was disorder in the public meeting.

Corinthian women were reveling in their new freedom in Christ and began flaunting that freedom in the public church services by ripping off their veils in an act of defiance as a means of expressing their new found liberation.

- In Corinth at that time, a covered head was a visible expression of a woman's modesty. The veil revealed something distinctive about her relationship with her husband. So when a woman stood up in church, threw off her veil, and began to speak or pray, she was bringing dishonor to her husband, who was her head.
- By flaunting her lack of submission, she revealed her rebellion toward God. Her shame fell not only on herself, but also on her husband. By the way, I've seen women get up in business meetings and state the family's position on something, and in doing so, dishonored her husband. He should speak up for the family. Either she needs to be quiet or he needs to speak up. Something is wrong when the women is the spokesman.
- Of course, she can speak to an issue of her own, but she shouldn't jump up and represent the family. That's her husband's job. And that's the sort of thing that was going on in Corinth. Women's outward conduct was exposing their lack of acceptance of God's plan for headship.

So, Paul is going to deal with the attire of women in public worship.

- Someone is probably saying, “Do you mean to say that God is giving instructions regarding trivialities like a woman's dress? Certainly God cannot be concerned with what a woman wears or whether a man gets a hair cut.” Well, the Bible makes it clear that God is interested in what we are wearing and how we fix our hair.
- There is probably no single item that takes up more space in newspapers, magazines and television time than what men and women wear and how to fix their hair. The Word of God has some things to say about that, too.

To really understand I Corinthians 11, we must go back to the culture and climate of Corinth to get a feeling for what life was like back then.

- Remember, this letter was written to a culture in the midst of domestic chaos with immorality influencing the church toward a perversion of Christian liberty.
- The Corinthian church had begun to go wild over their new freedom in Christ.
- One of the expressions of freedom was the new way women were dressing when they came to worship. Some ladies had begun arriving at public assemblies without veils, which in Corinth was deemed immodest. That made it a distinctly unchristian behavior.
- Prostitutes went around bare-headed and with extremely short haircuts, but modest women did not. To do so was tantamount to the holding up a sign proclaiming yourself a loose woman. Some of the women who had come to Christ under Paul's leadership decided that since they were free, they could do as they pleased, regardless of what the culture deemed appropriate. They would stand up in the service and throw off their veils in a display of liberty.

We need to remember that the most significant thing a believer does is to worship God.

The holiest moment in the life of a church is when it comes together for worship. Worship is more than just being in a place set aside for worship. Worship is acknowledging the sovereignty of God, seeking to know the will of God and offering ourselves to God. The emphasis of worship is always placed on the Lord God.

There was a feminist movement in Corinth which sought to throw off the order of things by doing away with the plan of God for man and woman.

- The feminist movement began with Eve's desire to usurp the place that belonged to her husband which created tension between their God-given roles.
- The leadership of the husband and willing submission of the wife were in place in the original state, but after the fall the woman desired to dominate her leader. God never intended the wife to compete with her husband; He intended her to complement her husband.
- Headship does not mean hardship. The headship of man over woman is God's order, and when His orders are followed there is happiness for all involved. When they are broken, there is calamity.
- Destroying God's order for families will not help women become free of God's sovereign plan.

Three things I want to share with you:

I. The Praise 11:2

Paul wisely begins with words of praise. Where there is something to commend or give approval to, especially when a rebuke is coming, it is always wise to soften the blow.

- He praises them because the saints in Corinth “remembered him:” that is, they respected Paul's Apostolic authority and Spiritual insight.
- Second, he praised them for maintaining or keeping the traditions he had delivered to them. The traditions (“ordinances,” KJV) were teachings that were passed from one generation to another.

II. The Principle 11:3

The most important word in verse 3 is the word “head”, used three times. The head is that portion of the body that gives direction.

Note: The question that Paul is addressing here is the role of women in Public Worship. Since God is a God of order, Paul points to God's “chain of command” for the family of faith.

There are four areas where God has given His pattern for order:

- A. Personal order: Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25 Believers can go directly to God in prayer.
- B. Family order: Ephesians 5:21-6:4 Christ-Man-Woman-Children
- C. Church order: Hebrews 13:7 Christ-Pastor/Teacher-Deacons-Members
- D. Governmental order: Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-14

There are actually three kinds of headship mentioned by Paul in this passage.

1. Christ is the head of man.

Christ is our leader and determines our destiny. Every man reports to Jesus Christ as his leader and will one day give an account for the leadership of his family.

2. God is the head of Christ.

Jesus is equal to the Father in deity, but submissive to the Father in humanity. That's why Jesus said, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Christ never functioned independently of the Father; He submitted Himself to the Father's will.

- Jesus was never inferior to the Father, and women are not inferior to men. Headship is not a matter of inferiority, but of function.
- Just as Christ was submissive to the Father, the woman is submissive to her husband.

3. The man is the head of the woman.

A woman voluntarily undertakes a support role when she marries her husband, to help him fulfill the objectives of their life together.

- The husband safeguards his wife, provides for her, and cares for her in such a way that she can willingly submit because she trust his leadership.

When the Bible speaks of the husband as the head of the wife, it is not speaking of him as a dictator, master, or dominate.

- It does not indicate that the man is superior to the wife. The idea of a man as the head of the wife is that he has the role of being the Spiritual leader of the wife. He is to follow God and lead his wife in spiritual matters.

- The role of the wife is to follow the husband as he follows the will of God.

The emphasis in this passage is in public worship. Men are to take care of the business affairs of the church.

The main passages are clear that women are to be in submission to men in the Role of public worship.

I. I Timothy 2:11-15

Women are not to be the public teachers when the church assembles, but neither are they to be shut out of the learning process.

- Note: "learn in silence with all submission" women are to be silent by not teaching, and they are to demonstrate submission by not usurping the authority of the pastors or elders. Of course, women can teach women. In a mixed class, a man should take the lead.

I Timothy 2:12 – "I do not permit" means that he was not to allow someone to do what he desired to do. Paul may have been addressing a real situation in which several women in Ephesus desired to be public preachers.

- "to teach" indicates an official function in the church.

- Paul is not forbidding women from teaching in other appropriate conditions.

- Paul forbids women from exercising any type of authority over men in the church assembly, since elders are those who rule.

I Timothy 2:13 – The woman's submissive role did not result after the fall; rather, God established her role as part of His original creation. God made woman after man to be his suitable helper.

- The fall actually corroborates God's divine plan of creation. By nature Eve was not suited to assume the position of ultimate responsibility. By leaving Adam's protection and usurping his headship, she was vulnerable and fell. It would not have happened if she had stayed under Adam's protection.

- Adam then violated his leadership role, followed Eve in her sin, and plunged the human race into sinfulness – all connected with violating God's planned role for the sexes. Ultimately, the responsibility for the fall still rest with Adam, since he chose to disobey God apart from being deceived (Romans 5:12-21; I Corinthians 15:21-22).

2. I Corinthians 14:34-35

For a woman to speak (prophecy, or speak with tongues) was "shameful" or disgraceful. They were out of order in disruptively asking questions publicly.

- When a congregation follows this biblical principle, the result is usually order and peace in the congregation. But – when ladies do not follow God's chain of command and become the outspoken and active in the business affairs of the church, problems and difficulties occur.

III. The Problem 11:4-16

Here was the problem: The women in Corinth showed they were not willing to follow God's chain of command by uncovering their head in public worship.

To understand what Paul was talking about, one must understand the custom of Paul's day.

- For a woman to cover her head in public worship was a sign of submission. So if she attended worship with her head uncovered it was a sign of rebellion.
- Also, in Paul's day, in relation to women, their custom was for women to wear veils when they went out in public. The veil was a sign of modesty and virtue. In the city of Corinth, a woman in public with her head uncovered was recognized as a prostitute.
- Paul said that if the women in the church were going to "dress" like prostitutes, they may as well go ahead and shave their heads (v.6).

Notice I Corinthians 11:14-15.

"Nature" refers to an inner sense, a built-in sense, of our distinction.

Paul is saying that your style and fashion should support your sexual identity; not confuse it.

1. If you are a man, you ought to look like a man, act like one, dress like one; if you are a woman, you ought to act like one, look like one, dress like one.
2. I don't think folks ought to have to ask, "Is that a man or a woman?"
3. Pony tails and earrings on men bother me – a lot!

I heard about a preacher who was performing a wedding for one of those couples that was hard to tell which was which. He closes by saying, "Would one of you please kiss the bride."

I Corinthians 11:17-34

RIGHT ATTITUDES AT THE LORD'S TABLE

Here in I Corinthians 11 Paul deals with two issues relating to worship:

(1)The role of women in worship and (2) the Lord's Table.

- I want you to notice the sharp contrast made by Paul. In verse 2 Paul says, "I praise you ." I praise you for recognizing my Apostolic authority and for praying for me and your financial support and for carefully following the teachings that I handed down to you.

- But – concerning their coming to the Lord's table, Paul said, "I have NO praise for you"

(11:17). The Reason: "You did not follow my instructions concerning the Lord's table."

The Result: "You do more harm than good by the way you come to the Lord's table."

Let me share an interesting side-note here:

1. The Lord's supper is the highest expression and the holiest exercise of Christian worship.

- Three of the four Gospels record the institution of the Lord's supper, and it is repeated in this epistle.

- It is interesting that nowhere are we commanded to remember the Lord's Birthday, but we are requested and commanded that those who are His own should remember His Death day.

2. This is the earliest reference we have to the Lord's Table in Scripture.

- You see, the Bible is not given to us in the order in which it was written. For example, the first book we come to in the Old Testament is the Book of Genesis, but it is not the first book that was written. The Book of Job is unquestionably the oldest book in the Bible. The Bible is not arranged chronologically. The Bible is arranged topically.

- In the New Testament the four Gospels were not the first books to be written. The first of the four Gospels to be written was Mark. It was written between A.D.55 and 65. The Book of James was the first New Testament book to be written. The Book of I Corinthians was written about A.D. 55. Paul couldn't consult the Gospels to learn about the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. They weren't written yet.

- Where did Paul learn about the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? From the disciples? No!

- Galatians 1:11-18 – Paul spent three years in Arabia and there the Lord Jesus revealed to

Paul what He had revealed to the disciples in the upper room.

- Notice I Corinthians 1:23-26 "I passed on to you what I received (by revelation) from the Lord."

3. In early New Testament times the Christians practiced something that we do not practice today. The Lord's Supper was usually preceded by a common meal, known as the "love feast" or the agape feast.

- It was a feast of charity. The Book of Jude also talks about this love feast. It was a social meal, much like our potluck suppers.

What was the purpose of it?

- When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He did so only after they had observed the Passover meal. And so, they thought that since Jesus observed the Lord's Supper after the eating of another meal, they felt that they should have the Lord's supper after eating a meal. So all the members would bring food and eat together. It was a beautiful practice in the early church, but the Corinthians had turned it into an ugly matter.

- In that day the two meals were probably celebrated in the homes and celebrated daily – Acts 2:46-47.

The whole purpose of the Love Feast was to promote fellowship, unity and a spirit of oneness among believers. It was intended to stress affection and mutual caring; to draw believers closer together and deepen the oneness they shared in Christ.

Just like in most churches, there were some people who were well to do and there were others people who were very poor. Obviously, those who had greater wealth would bring better food and greater amounts of foods. Those who were the poor members looked forward to this because this was one of the best meals they had.

But in Corinth, what was intended to help the fellowship was actually hurting the fellowship.

- In I Corinthians 11:17 the word "better" means "to make one stronger." The word worse speaks of that which is morally evil, worthless, depraved, injurious.

Several things were happening:

1. Divisions were formed 11:18

There was dissension. The fellowship was being ripped or torn apart. Instead of unity, there was disunity.

2. Heresies were formed 11:19, 21

Paul is not speaking of doctrinal heresy here. The word here means to separate or choose sides.

They were forming little groups or cliques.

I Corinthians 11:21 Instead of all of them getting together at the same time, some were coming before the others and having their own little meal. If the Love Feast was announced to be at 6:00, they met at 5:00. They didn't want to sit with the others, eat with the others, share with the others or fellowship with the others.

- Paul said, "One is hungry." The rich were bringing their food and the poor that could not bring anything were being left out. Instead of everyone pooling their food so that all could have equal, the rich got off in their little groups, ate their food, and the poor had nothing or very little and left hungry.

- If that was not bad enough, Paul said, "Another is drunken." Those who brought food and drink so gorged themselves that some of them were drunk before they left.

- With this happening one can see why there would be division in the church.

Notice 11:22 Some use this verse to say that it is wrong to eat at church. Some feel that only liberal churches have fellowship halls.

- But Paul is not saying it is wrong to eat at church. He is saying that they had destroyed the meaning of the Love Feast.

- "If that is all this meal is about, you can do that at home."

Their actions had revealed two things:

1. Disrespect for the Church

The word "despise" means to think down upon, show disrespect.

2. Disgrace for the Poor

Instead of edifying all, they shamed and embarrassed the poor.

The purpose of the Love Feast was to edify every member of the Church.

- As believers we should never do anything or behave in any way that would hurt another brother or sister. Instead, we should in our words, actions, and deeds, build one another up.

- We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We should act that way.

Beginning in verse 23, Paul turns his attention to the matter of the Lord's Supper. He gives us the clearest description in the Bible of the meaning of the Lord's Supper and what it means for the believer to take the Lord's Supper.

Paul speaks of:

A. A Revelation 11:23-26

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the very same night that He was betrayed. But how did Paul know that? He wasn't present in the upper room. He got this divine revelation directly from the Lord in Arabia.

- He wants them to know that the instructions he's about to give them concerning the Lord's Supper are not merely his suggestions, but the Lord's command.
- The matter of the Lord's Supper is a priority for the church. It is not just something we should do – it is something we must do for we are commanded to observe the Lord's Supper. This is a command to be obeyed.
- Then Paul takes us back to the night before our Lord was crucified and lets us visit that sacred moment when Jesus spent His last hour with his disciples.

Jesus gave us an example of what to do. We are to take and eat bread as well as take and drink of the cup. He also told us why we should do it. It is to be a time of celebration. He gave “thanks” (v.24).

- It is a time that we come with a spirit of thanksgiving that Jesus paid the price for our sins and saved us by His grace.
- The bread represents His broken body and the cup represents His shed blood.
- He doesn't tell us how often we ought to observe the Lord's Supper, but He does tell us that we should regularly observe the Lord's Supper.

B. A Commemoration 11:24-25

We are to remember what happened to Jesus. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we come together for the purpose of recalling what Christ did for us.

- The word “remembrance” means “to re-live the event, to consciously call to mind the event. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are to re-visit in our minds what Jesus has done for us through His crucifixion and death on our behalf.
- Nothing will magnify our worship more than to close our eyes and picture Jesus hanging on that cross in our place, paying the penalty for our sins.
- Think of His body whipped, His brow thrust with thorns, His beard ripped from His cheeks, His hands pierced with nails, blood dripping from His wounds, His side thrust with a spear.
- Remember! Be reminded! Re-visit! Because we forget so easily.

Verse 24 should read, “This do For the remembrance of me.” He is calling us from our busyness and from all the pressures of life to be still in our hearts and remember Him – my body; my blood.

- Remember, too, that Jesus took the bread, the symbol of His broken body, and He “gave thanks.” He didn't complain or just endure it. He gave thanks that He could do His Father's will – even death.
- “For you” are two of the most beautiful words in all of Scripture. Jesus gave His body, His entire incarnate life, for us who believe in Him.
- Jesus is saying through the broken bread, “I became a man for you; I suffered for you; I died for you.” Our gracious, loving merciful God became incarnate, not for Himself, but for us.

We're not thankful for the little bit of Welch's grape juice and that little bit of unleavened cracker that we eat. We're thankful for what it represents. We're thankful for the body of Christ. We're thankful for the blood of Christ.

C. Proclamation 11:26

“Ye do shew the Lord's death till He come”. The word “shew” means “to proclaim.”

- Every time we partake of communion, we are in effect preaching a sermon. We proclaim that “I am responsible for His death”. Christ is the atonement for our sins.
- Communion also proclaims a future event: “You proclaim the Lord's death till He comes”.

- The Lord's table begins by looking backward at what Christ has done, but it also involves looking forward to the day He will return. One day soon we will be united with Him in perfect fellowship.

D. Examination 11:27-34

We need to observe the Lord's Supper in the proper way. It is possible to observe the Lord's Supper “unworthily”. The word means “to come in an irreverent or improper way”.

- When we do that we become “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” That is, we bring dishonor to what Jesus did for us. How can we observe the Lord's supper in an “unworthily” manner?

- We come “unworthily” when we come with indifference, with an unrepentant heart, with a spirit of bitterness, or any other ungodly attitude.
- To come to the Lord's Table clinging to one's sin does not only dishonor the ceremony, but it also dishonors His body and blood, treating lightly the gracious sacrifice of Christ for us.
- It is necessary to set all sin before the Lord (v.28), then partake, so as not to mock the sacrifice for sin, by holding on to it.
- When believers do not properly judge the holiness of the celebration of communion, they treat with indifference the Lord Himself – His life, suffering, and death. It contaminates the ordinance.

What does it mean to “discern” the Lord's body? Follow me to the Emmaus Road in Luke 24.

- Two of Jesus' disciples, two believers, are walking home after having witnessed the terrible crucifixion in Jerusalem and the events that followed. As they walk along discussing these things, our resurrected Lord joins them and asks what they are talking about that makes them so sad. They tell him about Jesus being condemned to die and crucified and buried and about the report of the women who went to the tomb and found it empty; but Jesus they did not see.

Then Jesus revealed Himself to them as He went to their house. While Jesus was with them, He takes bread, breaks it, and gives it to them. And their eyes were open, AND they knew Him.

- Jesus had eaten the passover meal with His disciples just a few days before that. Now, with these two disciples, for the first time after the resurrection, He is observing the Lord's Supper. He was present with them. They understood; they discerned the body of Christ. You have bread in your mouth, but you have Christ in your heart and

e becomes a reality to us.

What happens when we come to the table unworthily? 11:30-34

- Many are weak – a condition one is left in after a long illness.
- Sickly – without good health.
- Many sleep – we get our word “cemetery” from this word. Many die prematurely because of how they treat the Lord's Table.

We are to take the initiative and deal with the sin in our life. If we do, the Lord will not judge us. But if we don't the Lord will take the initiative and do the judging for us.

There is to be a Personal Examination – Psalm 139:23-24 – and confession of sin. I John 1:9.

I Corinthians 12:1-11 NOW CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I Corinthians 12 begins a new section in the Book of I Corinthians.

- I Corinthians 1-11 has to do with carnality and was corrective; I Corinthians 12 begins a new section which deals with spirituality and is constructive.

• I think Paul was glad to change the subject. I think he heaved a sigh of relief when he got here to chapter 12.

- He was WILLING to discuss their problems with them, but he really WANTED to talk to them about the Spiritualities.

J. Vernon McGee says, “There are so many programs in the modern churches that the young people never get anywhere near the Bible. They have conferences on whatever carnality is the popular issue or the fad for the moment. All of that is a sign of carnality.”

In I Corinthians 12:1 Paul talks about “the Spirituals.” Actually, the word “gifts” is not in the original. The word “gifts” is in italics, which means that that word is not in the original. It was added for the sake of clarity; but adding the word has actually added confusion.

The word “ignorant” implies a condition of not knowing. He wanted them to know about and understand about the Spirituals. He didn't want them to be in the dark. He wanted them to have a proper understanding about the spirituals.

There was a good reason why he wanted them to have a proper understanding of spiritual gifts and he gives an example in verses 2-3.

Many feel that verses 2-3 are out of place, that they really don't belong here. But I remind you that nothing in the Bible is out of place because God put it there. There is a reason the Holy Spirit inserted these two verses here.

- The words “carried away” were often used of prisoners being taken under armed guard to prison or to their execution.
- Before we were saved we were slaves to sin and Satan and were held captive by him. The same devil who led us astray when we were lost is the same devil who tries to lead us astray now that we are saved.
- And the devil doesn't change his strategy after we're saved. He tries to lead us away from truth by deception. He tries to bring us into confusion.

When they were lost, Satan lead them astray by “dumb idols.”

- The word “dumb” means “with no voice.” An idol was not real; therefore, it could not speak or tell them what to do. They were being lead astray by dead, false dumb idols.
- There were some in Corinth who claimed they were “speaking by the Spirit of God” when in actuality, they were calling Jesus accursed. Instead of Blessing the Name of Jesus, they were Blaspheming His Name.

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- The context of what Paul is saying seems to indicate that some who were speaking in tongues, supposedly glorifying the Lord, were actually saying things such as “Jesus is accursed.” Paul says that one speaking by the Spirit of God would not dare say or do anything that would blaspheme the Lord.
- What they claimed was of God was not of God. Because of their perverted understanding of spiritual gifts, they needed a proper understanding. He wanted to remove their ignorance so such blasphemous practices could be eliminated.

The reason Paul writes of “the Spirituals” instead of just Spiritual Gifts is because there are more things connected with the spirituals than just Spiritual Gifts.

The Bible speaks of Spiritual Songs and Spiritual Food and Spiritual Fruit as well as Spiritual Gifts.

We need to make a distinction between the “gift of the Spirit” and the “gifts of the Spirit.”

- The gift of the Spirit” is the Holy Spirit, Himself and is given to the believer at the moment of salvation.
- Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:23; Acts 2:38; John 14:16-17; Luke 11:13

The Gifts of the Spirit are also given at salvation and enable the believer to function in the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit knows which believer is best suited for which gift and He gives the gifts accordingly.

Six important questions about Spiritual gifts:

A. What is a Spiritual gift?

The Greek word translated “gift” (charisma) means “grace gift or a gift of grace”.

- We know grace is “unmerited favor,” so a spiritual gift is something we receive from God that we do not deserve.
- Simply defined, a spiritual gift is “a divine ability given by grace through the Holy Spirit to make each believer and the church more like Jesus Christ. These gifts enable us to serve the Church of the Lord Jesus in the power of divine grace by the Holy Spirit.

We can describe spiritual gifts like this:

1. They are Spiritual Gifts I Corinthians 12:1

The discussion of “spiritual” gifts doesn't interest many people.

- If I were to talk about how you could receive material gifts like a new car or a new home, then most folks would be keenly interested.

- But when I start to talk about spiritual gifts, some are not interested at all; yet, these are far more important than the temporal gifts.

2. They are Supernatural Gifts I Corinthians 12:4

What is the difference between a gift and a talent?

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- Talents are also God-given but are usually derived genetically from parents.
- Spiritual gifts are from the Holy Spirit I Corinthians 12:11

The difference between a talent and a gift is probably best illustrated by the fact that Billy Graham asks for George Beverly Shea to sing just before he preaches. When asked why, Dr. Graham explains that George Beverly Shea never performs; he always ministers. A talent performs; a gift ministers. Spiritual gifts makes us ministers; not performers.

The Holy Spirit may anoint a natural ability, therefore turning and enabling and enacting a natural ability to become a supernatural ability.

3. They are Service Gifts I Corinthians 12:7

The words “to profit withal” means “for the common good.”

- These gifts are not given for our personal edification, but to make us a blessing to others. They are to be invested in the common good of the church.
- They are not given “so you can glory in them.”
- They are not given “so you can compare your gift to the gift of others.”
- They are given “for growth, maturity, and unity within the fellowship.”
- Spiritual gifts are “for employment; not for enjoyment.”

4. They are Sovereign Gifts I Corinthians 12:11, 18

- You do not decide which gift you get; the Holy Spirit discerns which gift is best suited for which believer.
- It is important to realize that all believers have at least one spiritual gift.

5. They are Salvation Gifts I Corinthians 12:13

- The question is often asked, “When do believers receive their spiritual gifts?”
- It is at the point of Salvation that we are baptized by the Spirit, indwelt with the Spirit, placed into the body of Christ, and endowed with our spiritual gift (or gifts) so that we may function

as a part of the Body.

- I remind you again, every believer has a spiritual gift. "You fit into the Body somewhere."
- Note I Corinthians 7:7. The word gift is singular. The emphasis is that every believer has but one primary gift though he may have more than one secondary gift.
- No one believer has all the gifts. We receive our gift at salvation, though it may be later that we discover what our gift is. When we do discover our gift, we should then develop our gift.

6. They are Supportive Gifts I Corinthians 12:14-22

- Because no one believer has all of the gifts, we need each other.
- As the Body of Christ, we are to share our gifts. I am to use your gift and you are to use my gift.
- God has made us different to unite us; not to divide us.
- It should be noted that a hundred believers with the same gift will not all have the same degrees or areas of usefulness of the gift that God has given to them. For example, one may excel in public teaching in the classroom or church. Another teaching gift will be for instructing children, another for teaching one-on-one, and so on.
- Each believer is given the measure of grace and faith to operate his gift according to God's plan.

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Add individual personality, background, education, influences in life, and needs in the area of service and it becomes obvious that each believer is unique.

- Believers' gifts are like snowflakes and fingerprints – each one is completely distinct from all others.

B. Who has spiritual Gifts? I Corinthians 7:7; 12:7; I Peter 4:10

According to the New Testament, EVERY Christian has at least one spiritual gift.

That gift is usually in seed form, and therefore must be nurtured and developed.

All Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 12:11 – The Holy Spirit assigns the gifts as He chooses. The day you become a Christian the Holy Spirit assigned you a Spiritual gift, and through that gift or gifts He wants to make you like Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit gives the gifts by divine choice because He knows what gifts are needed and where they are needed.

- These gifts are not assigned because of a person's Spirituality. Even backslidden Christians have Spiritual gifts. Just because a believer has a Spiritual gift does not mean that person is spiritual, for ALL Christians have a Spiritual gift.

C. How Many Spiritual Gifts are there?

Our God is a God of variety and diversity. Every person looks a little different, each fingerprint is distinctive, and every personality is unique.

- God's love for variety and diversity is also seen in the Spiritual gifts.
- The gifts are listed in five passages in the New Testament. (The number in parenthesis indicates how many gifts are mentioned for the first time in that passage.)
- There are 19 Spiritual gifts listed, but I am convinced that there are more Spiritual gifts given than are mentioned in the New Testament.
- With the time changing and the needs in the body of Christ changing, I believe that God gives gifts as they are needed to help the body function as it should.
- Note the five passages where Spiritual gifts are listed:
 - Romans 12:6-8 (7)
 - I Corinthians 12:8-10 (8) Some prefer to include the gift of hospitality
 - I Corinthians 12:28 (1) with the gift of helps and also include the gift
 - Ephesians 4:11 (2) of celibacy of singleness.
 - I Peter 4:9-10 (1)

These 19 Spiritual gifts may be divided into four categories with some overlapping:

Shepherding Gifts Sign Gifts

- Apostleship - Miracles
- Prophecy - Healing
- Evangelism - Tongues
- Pastor – Teacher - Interpretation

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Serving Gifts Speaking Gifts

- Helps - Apostleship
- Giving - Prophecy
- Government - Evangelism
- Mercy - Pastoring
- Faith - Extorting
- Discernment - Word of Wisdom

- Miracles - Work of Knowledge
- Healings - Tongues
- Interpretation
- Teaching

Shepherding gifts are Support gifts. These are public in nature and revolve around the ministry of the world in equipping the saints for service.

Service or Serving gifts function within the body in a much more Private manner. People with these gifts take on the personal ministry of encouraging, building up, and strengthening the body.

Sign gifts are supernatural manifestations of the Spirit's power. They authenticated God's message and His messenger when the Church, in its infancy, had no complete Bible to guide and instruct its members – Hebrews 2:1-4.

In summary, the Support (Shepherding) gifts Equip; the Service gifts Encourage; the Sign gifts Establish.

We need to understand that God gave gifts to Churches and He gave gifts to Christians.

A. God gave gifts to Churches Ephesians 4:7-12; I Corinthians 12:28

1. To equip the church overall He gives specially gifted men as leaders: "As apostles ... prophets ... evangelist ... pastors and teachers."

2. In I Corinthians 12:28, Paul says, "God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers." That statement adds weight not only to the idea of divine calling, but also to the chronological significance ("first...second...third") in the giving of these gifted men to the church.

3. The first two classes of gifted men, apostles and prophets, were given three basic responsibilities:

- To lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20)
- To receive and declare the revelation of God's word (Ephesians 3:5)
- To give conformation of that word through "signs and wonders and miracles"

(Acts 8:6-7; Hebrews 2:3-4)

I. Shepherding Gifts Ephesians 4:11-13

The gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11-13 are different from most of those mentioned in I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.

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- For the most part the gifts in I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 are gifts that are bestowed on Believers (Christians).
- Here in Ephesians 4 gifted Believers are bestowed on the Church.

The five gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11-13 can be summarized in this way:

1. Those gifted to deal with SITUATIONS

- Those equipped to GUIDE the infant Church in ways it ought to go (Apostles).
- Those equipped to GUARD the infant Church in what it ought to know (Prophets).

2. Those gifted to deal with SINNERS (evangelist)

3. Those gifted to deal with SAINTS

- Those called to TEND the flock of God (Pastors)
- Those called to TEACH the flock of God (Teachers)

A. Apostles

We need to understand that there is both an "office" and a "gift" of apostleship.

- The word "apostle" is found more than 70 times in the New Testament in more than half of the 27 books.
- The Office of Apostle passed away when the 12 died, but the gift continues today.

The Office of Apostle was limited to 12, as we find in Revelation 21:14.

- Judas Iscariot disqualified himself, and Matthias was chosen prematurely.
- God Himself chose the person who would fill the twelfth slot in the Office of Apostle. That person was Paul.
- Therefore, it is obvious no one today can fill the Office of Apostle.

The office requirements of Apostle cannot be met today.

1. An apostle was a man who had seen the risen Lord. Paul said that he had seen the risen Lord as one who was born out of due season.

2. He was one who had to be personally commissioned by the Lord Himself.

3. He enjoyed special inspiration from the Lord and built on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was given the same instructing as the eleven for observing the Lord's Supper

(I Corinthians 11:23).

4. The Apostles received special abilities to authenticate their apostleship through signs and wonders (I Corinthians 9:1-2).

These were the requirements for Primary Apostles. There were also secondary Apostles who were intimately linked with the Primary Apostles; men like Barnabas, Timothy, and Silvanus (Silas).

- When the New Testament was completed, the office of apostle ceased.

The "Office" of apostleship no longer exists, but the "gift" lives on.

- The basic meaning of Apostle is "one sent on a mission."
 - The word "missionary" is not found in the Bible (that may surprise you), but its linguistic equivalent for the word apostle is "missionary."
 - A missionary is one sent forth, usually to one particular area, to win people and establish a
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church so the work will reproduce itself.

- Therefore, missionaries are usually strong on teaching, training, and establishing churches.
- The "gift" of apostleship can be defined as "the God-given ability to share the Gospel, make disciples, and establish churches cross-culturally."

Manifestations of the Gift

- To receive special joy from meeting people from different cultures and races.
- A special ability to learn a different language and adapt to a new culture.
- Very mission-minded and gets a special blessing from giving monetarily to mission causes.
- This person will have a strong desire to share the Gospel with people in other countries.

Strange as it may seem, this very mission-minded person may have little interest in winning people in their own community.

- They want to emphasize missions above everything else in the church.
- They tend to be critical of people who are not as mission-minded as they are.
- They may misunderstand persons with other gifts, thinking others don't care about winning the world to Christ if they don't emphasize missions as they think they should.

B. Prophets

Prophets were also appointed by God as specially gifted men who sometimes spoke new revelation from God, but for the most part just simply expounded revelation already given by God.

- Occasionally New Testament prophets foretold things to come, but usually they were forth-tellers rather fore-tellers.
- The office of Prophecy is different from the gift of prophecy that believers have today.
- The office of Apostles and Prophets died out with the end of the first century and the completion of the New Testament canon of Scripture.

C. Evangelist

An evangelist is a man especially gifted by the Holy Spirit of God to win souls. He is the Church's salesman, so to speak.

- All believers can and should be soul-winners, but not all believers can be evangelist.
- When the evangelist comes to town, sinners turn to Christ in significant numbers. A person either has or does not have the gift of the evangelist.

Nobody can produce fruit like the person with the gift of the evangelist.

- His message and methods may be shallower than those of the pastors and teachers, but he gets the souls because God has given him the gift.
- He has the ability to draw in the Gospel net. He may speak the same words as the pastor does, but the pastor will not see near the spiritual fruit as the evangelist.
- Evangelist are itinerant but they do not usually minister cross-culturally.
- There will be an intense desire to personally win people to Christ.
- There will be a clear understanding of the plan of salvation and will be able to present it clearly

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and persuasively.

- They have a desire to preach evangelistic messages almost exclusively.

However, most with the gift of evangelism are weak on follow-up or discipleship and they are not concerned about learning deeper biblical truths because all they need to know to win people to Christ is the plan of salvation.

D. Pastor/Teacher

Notice in Ephesians 4:11 the word "some" is not repeated before the word "teachers", indicating this is the same gift with two functions. THIS IS THE ONLY DUAL GIFT MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Three words describe a different function of the office of Pastor.

- Pastor means he shepherds the Church.
- Bishop means he oversees or sees that the work of the local Church is done correctly and guards against error or false doctrine.
- Elder means he has the maturity of spiritual experience.

As a shepherd he cares for the weak, the sick, and those who are going astray. He counsels the young, cares for the needy, and comforts the bereaved.

- A person with the gift of pastor usually has several other gifts to a lesser degree, such as leadership, preaching, wisdom, knowledge and teaching.

- He loves to meet people's needs through sharing biblical truths.
- He has a strong desire to see the Church grow numerically and spiritually and will work hard to see that come to pass.
- He is very sensitive to the spiritual needs of other believers and enjoys training others to serve in the local church.
- He has a strong desire to do everything through the local Church, because he knows new believers must be attached to a local Church if they are to grow.
- A person with the gift of pastor may be offended if his flock feeds in other pastures.

Teachers are those who give instructions and share information with others from the Word of God.

- The gift of teaching differs from the gift of preaching in that preaching is proclaiming the Word of God in a way that leads to motivation and decision, while teaching has as its goal instruction that leads to spiritual growth and maturity.
- The teacher has the God-given ability to explain and apply the Word of God so the hearers may understand and grow spiritually.
- A person with the gift of teaching prepares and serves a balanced diet of nutritious spiritual food from the Word of God, resulting in spiritual growth and maturity. One may not be a pastor without being a gifted teacher.
- A person with this gift has strong convictions that the Bible is the Word of God and believes Bible study is foundational to all areas of the Christian life.
- The teacher enjoys presenting biblical truth in a logical, systematic way, using hermeneutics, making the hard to understand, simple to understand.
- He enjoys teaching others how to divide the Word of truth for themselves and opens their eyes to the wonders of Scripture.

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The pastor/teacher has a great responsibility:

- He is to Love God; Listen to God; Lean on God; Lead for God.
- He is to Love his people; Lead his people; Feed his people.

But the Church also has a responsibility to its pastor:

1. Pray for your Pastor: It's the greatest thing the Church can do for its pastor.
2. Pursue your Pastor (Follow him): Joshua 1:2, 5, 16-18; Hebrews 13:7, 17
3. Provide for your Pastor: I Corinthians 9:13-14; I Thessalonians 7:12-13

I Corinthians 12:1-11

SERVING GIFTS

SERVING GIFTS

I Corinthians 12:1-11

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Service or serving gifts function within the body in a much more private manner.

People with these gifts take on the personal ministry of encouraging, building up, and strengthening the body.

A. Helps I Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:7

The gift of helps is sometimes called service or ministering gifts. It comes from the same word that we get the word deacon or servant from.

The gift of helps can be defined as the God-given ability to help, assist and support others in the family of God in practical ways with faithfulness, delight, joy, and love; for the purpose of ministry in the body of Christ. It means to care for or to wait upon.

- A person with this gift has a built-in "need-detector" and is happiest when helping others or working with their hands for the Church. This person is quick to spot needed repairs and maintenance around the church building. Someone with the gift of helps does not like to be in the spotlight and is much more comfortable serving behind the scenes.
- They receive a special joy and blessing from taking care of things that will make it easier for those with the speaking gifts to concentrate on their gifts. I Peter 4:11

Because this gift is so needed in the Body of Christ, most believers possess this gift to some degree.

The church could not function if it were not for the ushers, nursery workers, custodians, flower committee, baptismal committee, Lord's Supper committee, etc.

The twelve often took the burden of responsibility off Jesus.

- In John 4 they went into town to get food, for the Lord Jesus was tired. It was while they were gone into town that He met the woman at the well.
- Jesus sent some of His disciples to make ready for the Lord's Supper.
- John 13:3-5
- Tabitha (also called Dorcas) is an excellent example of a person with the gift of helps – Acts 9:36-39.
- Paul was constantly thanking his fellow-laborers. In Romans alone 26 are named (Romans 16). I doubt if we could name two of

them, but without them, much would have gone lacking.

Some characteristics of the gift of Helps:

1. An alertness to detect and meet practical needs (Someone is in the hospital, so he cuts the grass, rakes the leaves or cares for home needs for them).
2. The willingness to use personal funds to avoid delay.
3. The desire, not only to start, but to complete a task.
4. A greater enjoyment of short-range goals over long-range goals.
5. The seeming inability to say "No" when someone asks them to do something.
6. Again, many have this gift because it is so needed in the Body of Christ.
7. The tendency to emphasize physical needs over spiritual needs.

Menace of the Gift:

A person with this gift has a tendency to be critical of others who do not help out with what seems to be an obvious need.

Probably the best illustration of this fact is found in Luke 10:38-42.

B. Giving Romans 12:6-8

Before examining the meaning of this gift, let me point out that the absence of a particular gift in the life of a believer does not mean one can fail to obey a command in that area.

All believers are to give. I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7

The Bible specifies that a tithe is the minimum every believer is commanded to give. However, a person with the gift of Giving gets a special blessing from giving more than the tithe.

- Again, we need to make a distinction between the GIFT of giving and the GRACE of giving. All those in Christ's Body are Encouraged and Expected to give Consistently

(I Corinthians 16:2), Liberally (2 Corinthians 9:6), Sacrificially (2 Corinthians 8:3), and Cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7).

- The person with the gift of Giving, however, has a special God-given capacity to give, an inner drive and longing to provide for the needs of the saints.

A simple definition of this gift is the ability to be sensitive to and to provide for the needs of the saints with great joy and generosity.

Paul exhorted the one with the gift of Giving to exercise that gift with liberality and to do so with a purity of motive.

Five reasons every Christian should tithe:

1. Honesty – Malachi 3:10. Really, we don't give the tithe, we pay the tithe.
2. Obedience
3. Love – you may give without loving, but you can't love without giving.
4. Gratitude – Psalm 116:12 "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"
5. Faith – If you don't tithe, it is a lack of faith and love. It doesn't COST to tithe, it PAYS to tithe.

Notice the motivation in the gift of Giving: Romans 12:8

1. With simplicity means no wrinkles; nothing hidden.
2. Some give out of guilt; some for gain.
3. Mark 12:41-44 is a portrait of a beautiful giver.

Some characteristics of the gift of Giving:

1. God gives some a special ability to make money and to handle money – Deuteronomy 8:18. They are hard-working and believe God blesses their hard work so they can give more to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. God also gives some the ability to evaluate real needs. They are not deceived by con-artists. They are not gullible.
3. They have the ability to make wise investments.
4. They will not give in a "show-off" way.
5. They will use their gifts to motivate others to give. Example: matching funds.
6. They get enjoyment out of giving; especially when they see that what is given is an answer to prayer.
7. One does not have to be rich to have this gift.

Menace of the gift of Giving

All the gifts are perfect because they come for a Perfect God, but they are bestowed on imperfect people who can become menaces.

- For example, if he or she tries to manipulate how contributions are used.
- Or, they may feel their opinions should carry more weight than others who do not give as much.
- Persons with this gift may also use the amount of money given as an excuse to get out of others responsibilities in the church. They believe since they have given their money, they have done all they should do.
- People with this gift must also be careful not to judge others by the amount of money they give.

C. Mercy Romans 12:8

The gift of Mercy is unique because it involves feelings more than speaking or deeds, as in the gifts of helps or giving.

- A person with the gift of Mercy often has the gift of helps to a lesser degree because the Emotion provoked in a person with the gift of Mercy often results in deeds of service.

- The Greek word translated mercy means “pity” or “compassion”.

The gift of Mercy is not just sentiment:

- not just pity, but pity with performance.
- not just caring, but caring with sharing.
- It is the ability to identify with and share in misfortune and comfort those in distress, and to do so with cheerfulness and to do so without expecting anything in return.

I believe that we need to give greater emphasis to the less dramatic and spectacular gifts. Showing mercy or loving kindness is a beautiful example of personal care needed by thousands of hurting people in our congregations.

Many people feel uncomfortable when they are around those who are ill or weak or afflicted or poor or needy or bed-bound.

As is true in the gift of giving, there is both a gift and a grace of Mercy.

- All who are saved are to exercise the grace of Mercy.
- Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful.” All who have been given mercy or all who have received mercy from God should exercise Mercy toward others.
- The story of the Good Samaritan is the classic model of a person with the gift of Mercy.

There is a three-fold purpose for the gift of Mercy:

1. To reveal the character of God – Psalm 103:8 – “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.”
2. To relieve the children of God; those who are hurting and need help.
3. To teach the called of God. This is an evangelistic tool. People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care.

Characteristics of the gift of Mercy

1. The person with the gift of Mercy is quickly perceived as caring and loving, with a divine ability to show compassion. Such a person also has a good listening ear and therefore is someone we want to talk to when we have a need or problem.
2. A desire to remove hurt and bring healing to others.
3. One who feels called to devote themselves to the visiting of the sick and afflicted.
4. They have a cheerful, up-lifting spirit and attitude. Romans 12:8 “with cheerfulness.” Matthew Henry writes: “A pleasing countenance in acts of mercy is a great relief and comfort to the miserable; when they see that it is not done grudgingly and unwillingly, but with pleasant looks and gentle words.”

D. Governments, Leadership, Ruling, Administrations – I Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:8

This gift is necessary for those in the places of leadership within the church, such as pastors, teachers.

- The Greek word is very colorful. The word means “helmsman or one who steers or guides a ship through a storm, missing all the rocks and reefs, and brings it safely to its destination”
- The term describe one as calm, clear-thinking and practical. From this information we can conclude that the person with the gift of Administration has the ability to steer committees or even churches – to keep them on course, on schedule, and off the rocks.
- Here is one who has the spiritual ability given by God to visualize, to analyze, and to organize spiritual matters and to take leadership in the administration of the same. The gift may be used at church, at home, or on the job.

The gift of leadership could be defined as “the God-given ability to plan, organize, and motivate with such efficiency that a project is harmoniously completed to the glory of God.

God always links ruling with character. If a man cannot lead with his life, he has no right to think he can lead with his lips.

Some manifestations or characteristics of the gift of ruling:

1. They will have a sense of Direction:
 - The word “lead” literally means to “Stand in front of,” or “to stand before.”
 - The gift of leadership is the ability to evaluate, coordinate, motivate, mobilize and administrate spiritual matters in an orderly way so that common goals are achieved in the most productive fashion possible.
 - You have heard people referred to as “born leaders.” I prefer “born again leaders”, those who have the gift of leading and supervising.
 - They are the visionary types. They can see the big picture; the overall picture and to clarify long-range goals. (The person with the gift of helps is more interested in short-range goals. Both are needed in the Body of Christ.
 - The gift of leadership is not the gift of dictatorship. This gift leads, not pushes.
 - Worldly leadership is domineering, selfish, and dictatorial, but the gift of leadership is characterized by being willing to be servant of all.
 - Everything rises and falls on leadership, but leadership also rises and falls on follow ship. That’s why the Bible says, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account (Hebrews 13:17).
 - Just as a pastor is going to give an account as to how a church is led, so the church is going to have to give an account as to how it follows the pastor.

2. They will have a sense of Delegation:

- Leaders are not afraid to let others have responsibilities. As a matter of fact, they don't care who gets the credit as long as the job is accomplished and done well. (In some ways this is just the opposite of the gift of service.) Someone with the gift of helps or service is frequently a poor delegator. A servant doesn't want to delegate work, but wants to do work. That's why the gifts of service and leadership are so complementary.

- A person with this gift may appear lazy because of his ability and eagerness to delegate and oversee work rather than doing it himself. He realizes that it's better to get ten people to work than it is to do the work of ten people.

- He also has the ability to know what can and what cannot be delegated.

- There is a motivation to organize that which needs to be done.

3. There will be a sense of Determination:

The one who leads is to lead with diligence or determination.

- A leader is not a quitter, and a quitter is not a leader. A leader has a stick-to-it attitude.

- Leaders ought to have tender hearts, but tough hides (The hide of an elephant and the heart of a lamb.). They can take the heat and handle criticism. They can withstand opposition and know how to weather the storm.

Like all the gifts, this gift has its pitfalls because it is given to imperfect human beings.

1. There is often the tendency to get upset when others in the church do not share his goal of vision.

2. He will try to avoid involvement in anything for which he has no leadership responsibility.

3. A major weakness of this gift is that the person doesn't like to admit mistakes. He is a perfectionist and therefore hard to please.

E. Faith I Corinthians 12:9

The Bible clearly teaches faith is required by every person to become a Christian. You cannot be saved apart from faith – Ephesians 2:8.

• All believers have what we call saving faith, but there is a gift of Faith – I Corinthians 12:9; 13:2.

• Matthew 17:20 – Jesus is not talking about Little faith, but Living faith.

All believers must have faith, but not all believers have the gift of Faith.

The gift of Faith is a unique ability to trust God in the midst of overwhelming circumstances. They live their lives on the cutting edge of faith with such daring trust that their lives would not make sense if God did not exist.

What if faith? Hebrews 11:1

• Biblical faith is a future hope that is so real it gives absolute assurance in the present. Faith gives present assurance and substance to what is yet future.

• The gift of faith may be defined as “the God-given ability to discern with assurance the will and faithfulness of God in the future, regardless of present circumstances.”

1. People with this gift do not become easily discouraged nor give up easily.

2. They are people with visions of what God can do in their churches and in the world.

3. They are almost always progressive and believe their church will grow, thus they see future needs for new buildings, parking, property, programs, etc. They see beyond the present to what God will do in the future.

4. People with this gift believe God will keep His promises in spite of circumstances. They are of great encouragement to the church.

A modern day example of a person with the gift of Faith is Jerry Falwell.

F. Discernment I Corinthians 12:10

The word “discern” means “to see through.” It refers to someone who can see through false spirits. It is almost like having spiritual “x-ray vision”.

• By this gift you can see whether a person's spirit is genuinely of the Lord.

• This gift is a kind of policeman of the gifts. It is the God-given ability to discern between the things of God and the things of Satan.

• The believer with the gift of discernment can quickly detect false teachings or preaching.

• This gift is like a “counterfeit-detector” for discerning whether another believer does something from spiritual or selfish motives.

The devil is a great imitator. This world is filled with false spirits and demons of deceit –

I John 4:1.

In our world there is a continuous battle raging between God and His forces and the Devil and his cronies. Satan's opposition is almost always subtle rather than direct. For every real thing God offers, Satan offers a fake or counterfeit – 2 Corinthians 11:14-15.

Some examples:

• Acts 5:1-5 Peter discerned that Ananias and Sapphira kept back part of the proceeds of the land they sold and faked their spirituality to impress others.

- Acts 16:16-18 When a slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination followed Paul and Silas around saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation”, Paul commanded the Spirit in her that Paul discerned to be unclean to come out of her in the name of Jesus Christ.

- John 13:21-28 Jesus discerned that it was Judas Iscariot who was going to betray Him.

One menace of the gift of Discernment is when a person with this gift becomes a self-appointed “heresy-hunter,” finding fault in almost everything.

They may also have a difficult time listening to good biblical teaching and preaching because if even the slightest thing is said with which they disagree, they may become judgmental and critical.

G. Hospitality I Peter 4:9-10; Romans 12-13

The gift of Hospitality is not included in any of the passages where spiritual gifts are listed. However, it is mentioned twice in the same chapters where the gifts are listed.

- Those who have the gift of Hospitality and uses it is more like the Lord Jesus individually and makes the church as a whole more like Jesus collectively.

- The word “hospitality” means “love of strangers”. It refers to – not to merely entertaining one’s friends – entertaining strangers.

- In New Testament times, travel was dangerous and inns were evil, scarce, and expensive. So the early believers often opened their homes to travelers, especially to fellow believers and traveling preachers.

Notice that hospitality is to be shown “without grudging, grumbling or murmuring.

The gift of Hospitality could be defined as “the God-given ability to entertain other believers joyfully in your home with a warm welcome, food, and fellowship.”

Those with the gift of Hospitality receive joy and fulfillment from having people in their homes for meals and overnight stays.

- When guest speakers come to the church services, those with the gift of Hospitality are among the first to ask if they could provide a meal or other accommodations for them.

- Rather than looking at the visit of other Christians as an inconvenience, they see it as a time of fellowship and getting to know another believer, which brings immense joy. They are happiest when guests are in their homes and do not seem relieved when they leave.

Example: Peter stayed with Simon the tanner in Acts 9 and Paul says Gaius was his host in Romans 16:23.

There are restrictions placed on this gift – 2 John 10 – “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine (false teachers who campaign to destroy the basic, fundamental truths of Christianity), do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

All believers should be modern examples of the gift of Hospitality – Matthew 25:35-40.

I Corinthians 12:1-11 -2

SPEAKING GIFTS

Speaking gifts are public in nature and revolve around the ministry of the Word in equipping the saints for service.

I. The Gift of Prophecy I Corinthians 12:10; Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:6

The word “prophecy” is often misunderstood in our day. Most people think it has to do with predicting the future or foretelling. That has never been the primary meaning of the word.

The word “prophecy” literally means “to speak forth; to speak forth the mind and counsel of God.” It is forth-telling.

The person with the gift of prophecy in the Bible means “a proclaimer of a divine message.” He is “one who speaks for another.” He is God’s spokesman.

- He is “one who proclaims the truth in authority to bring about repentance unto salvation.”

- He is able to bring a clear and fresh application of the old, old story to his day.

There are three functions of the gift of Prophecy – I Corinthians 14:3

1. Edification - to build one up or to strengthen; the promotion of spiritual growth.

2. Exhortation - to fire you up. He inspires others to serve the Lord.

3. Comfort – to cheer you up. He takes the truth of God and applies it in such a way as to bring comfort in the time when comfort is needed.

Some characteristics of one who has the gift of Prophecy.

1. He will have the need to express his message verbally.

2. He has the ability to identify, define, and expose sin.

3. He depends heavily upon the Word of God.

4. He is very sensitive to sin in his own life and therefore, chooses to live by a very high standard of conduct.

5. He has strong convictions and is very driven, working long hours doing what he believes to be God’s will.

6. He is broken over the sins of the one he is proclaiming to.
7. He calls for outward evidence to demonstrate inward conviction.

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II. The Gift of Teaching Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11

One with the gift of teaching has the ability and calling of God to give instruction and share information from the Word of God, To clarify truth, and to apply the Word of God to human needs.

One with the gift of Teaching has the ability to take the deep things of God and make them simple. Someone has said that the one who says it most simply, knows it best. That's why Jesus was and is the Master-Teacher.

Here is the difference in the gift of prophecy and the gift of teaching: The prophet helps to bring people into spiritual life; the teacher helps to bring people into spiritual likeness (growth).

- A person with the gift of Teaching prepares and serves a balanced diet of nutritious Spiritual food from the Word of God, resulting in Spiritual growth and maturity.
- It is not enough to Birth folks into the kingdom of God, we need to Build folks who are in the family of God.
- Colossians 1:28-29.

Paul stated that he had the spiritual gift of Teaching – I Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11.

Some Characteristics of the spiritual gift of Teaching:

1. A delight in biblical research (details, word studies)
 2. Presents truth in a systematic way (expository Bible book study or series study).
 3. Avoids using verses out of context.
 4. Delights to share his gift with others – Romans 1:11 "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong."
- One with the gift of teaching has a burden to see others learn and grow through Bible study.
 - A strong conviction that the Bible is the Word of God and believers Bible study is foundational to all areas of the Christian life.

III. The Gift of Exhortation (Encouragement) Romans 12:8

The term "exhortation" means "to call alongside with the intent of helping and encouraging others. They have the ability to drive home specific truths of Scripture.

- Even when the words are firm and forthright, an exhorter comes across as a friend. This person has the ability to tell you the truth about yourself, yet with a comforting arm around your shoulder.
- People with this gift are known for accepting people, faults and all, so people do not fear

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telling them everything. They are often found helping people through difficult times and then encouraging them not to give up.

Proverbs 27:5-6 paints a warm picture of this type of person: "Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

Examples:

1. Priscilla and Aquila Acts 18:24-28
 2. Barnabas, son of Encouragement Acts 4:36
- Barnabas came to Paul's side to comfort him when all the disciples in Jerusalem shunned him - Acts 9:26-27.
 - Later, when Paul rejected John Mark, Barnabas was there to pick up the shattered young man and glue the pieces of his life back together so he would be useful for service once again. Acts 15:37-39; 2 Timothy 4:11

Characteristics:

1. The ability to sense when someone is down and needs encouraging. They do little things to assure others that they care about them and that they are appreciated by others. They are thoughtful people who visit others or call to check on others or send cards to encourage them or to let them know they are appreciated or buy them gifts.
2. The ability to be a cheerleader. They enjoy working with older people or those who are less fortunate or those who are lonely or needy. People will delight to be around people with this gift because they are positive and cheerful.
3. The ability to encourage others to DO better or to BE better or to BETTER themselves in some way.
4. One who sees the good in others, as Barnabas did.
5. Works best on a one-to-one basis rather than with the masses.
6. The ability to see how trouble in the life of a person may be a means of growth in the life of a troubled person (applies Romans 8:28).

IV. The Gift of Knowledge I Corinthians 12:8

The gift of Knowledge is the God-given ability to discover biblical truth, summarize and explain it. It is the ability to understand and speak God's truth, with insight into the mysteries of His Word, that cannot be known apart from God's revelation.

The principles for obtaining spiritual knowledge are expressed in Proverbs 2:1-5.

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- This gift is a prime example of how all spiritual gifts must be developed through Bible study, research, and patience.
- Solomon has taken God's law and made it his own by faith and obedience.

Those with this gift love to research, investigate and study the Bible. They are not satisfied with a shallow knowledge of the Word of God and will spend hours searching and discovering deep biblical truths.

They can discover biblical truth FOR THEMSELVES and can explain difficult Bible passages.

V. The Gift of Wisdom I Corinthians 12:8

The gifts of Knowledge and Wisdom are “cousins”, but they do differ greatly.

Knowledge is the ability to accumulate and understand information, while Wisdom is the ability to use and apply that spiritual truth and biblical knowledge to everyday life.

How do you get Biblical wisdom? James 1:5-8

The person with the gift of Wisdom has the ability to eliminate confusion, disagreement, and envy – James 3:17.

The first recorded conflict in the early church centered around a claim of discrimination among the Greek-speaking widows in the daily distribution of food. The church appointed seven men to take care of the problem and one of the qualifications for these first deacons was the gift of wisdom – Acts 6:3.

A biblical requirement for a deacon is to have Wisdom so he can help solve problems in the church.

How can we know if we have biblical wisdom? James 3:15-18

I Corinthians 12:1-11

THE SIGN GIFTS

The Sign gifts are supernatural manifestations of the Spirit's power. They authenticate God's message and His messenger when the Church, in its infancy, had no complete Bible to guide and instruct its members – Hebrews 2:1-4.

Jesus made use of the Sign gifts of miracles and healings throughout His ministry.

- John tells us why – John 20:30-31; 10:37-38.
- The Greek word translated “sign” (semeion) means “that which gives authenticity.” Prior to the completion of the New Testament, the Sign gifts were necessary to confirm the teaching and preaching of the apostles and early prophets. It appears no one in the New Testament had the sign gifts other than the apostles and those on whom they laid hands.
- 2 Corinthians 12:12 The purpose of miraculous signs was to authenticate the apostles as God's messengers.

In Romans 15:18-20, Paul explains he preached the Gospel “not where Christ was named,” meaning at a place where people had never heard of Jesus Christ.

- To convince the Gentiles who had never heard of Jesus, Paul says his preaching was accompanied by “mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.”
- Paul is stating his use of the Sign gifts was not to dazzle or entertain believers, but rather to convince unbelievers of the authenticity of the gospel message (Romans 15:19 – From Jerusalem to Illyricum or the former European country of Yugoslavia, a span of some 1,400 miles).

Before the completion of the New Testament, the only way to confirm whether or not a person's message was from God was through accompanying signs.

When someone finishes preaching or teaching today, we do not need for them to perform a miracle to prove this message is from God. Today we can verify their message by seeing if it corresponds with the complete written Word of God.

I. The Gift of Miracles I Corinthians 12:10

Understand that Miracles was a temporary sign gift for the working of divine acts contrary to nature, so that there was NO explanation for the action except that it was by the power of God. Also, the person had the gift for a very definite purpose.

A careful study of the miracles in the Bible will reveal they cluster around three critical eras of biblical history, just as a new era was about to begin.

1. Moses

The first record of Miracles in the Bible was during the time of Moses.

- In fact, the word “miracle” is not even recorded in the Bible until the time of Moses.

God gave him power to perform miracles in Egypt for a specific purpose.

- Exodus 7:2-5; Deuteronomy 11:2-8

2. Elijah and Elisha

After the time of Moses, centuries passed before another crucial era arose when Miracles were needed to authenticate a messenger of God. That was during the time of Elijah and Elisha.

- Of all the prophets in the Old Testament, they were the only two who performed Miracles.

- See I Kings 18:36-39 Based on the Mount Carmel experience, we are told why

God allowed them to perform Miracles.

3. Jesus and the Apostles

The third critical period when miracles were needed to confirm God's messengers was during the life and ministry of Jesus, God's incarnated Son.

- Indisputable evidence was essential for Jesus to be received as the Son of God and for the new message of salvation by grace to be accepted, especially among Jews.

Then after Jesus' death, who would have believed the apostle's fantastic story of His being raised from the dead without the accompanying miracles to validate they were messengers of God.

- Notice Acts 9:36-43 Peter raised Dorcas from the dead.

Why did Jesus perform miracles? John 2:11; 3:2

On the night before Jesus was crucified, Jesus said that ALL who followed Him would be able to do greater miracles than He performed – See John 14:12.

What greater miracles was Jesus talking about?

- Nowhere in the Bible do we find the apostles performing Miracles that surpass those of Jesus, except in one area – the number of people who came to believe in Him as Savior through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel.

- The greatest Miracle of all is when, through the preaching of the Word of God, people are convicted of their sin and are born again.

- A transformed life produced by the Word of God is the greatest of all miracles. It is the power of the Gospel to change lives that validates it as the Word of God.

The power of the Word of God is described in Hebrews 4:12 and I Peter 1:23.

- In a sense all born again believers are examples of God's miracle-working power because they are new creatures in Christ.

- Those involved in winning souls to Christ are a part of this greater work Christ spoke about to His disciples in John 14:12.

I would point out that not all supernatural power comes from God.

Satan has his ministers and the Antichrist will possess "All kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders." 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Revelation 13:14

II. The Gift of Healings I Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30

Again the Sign gifts were used to confirm God's messenger and their message before the completion of the New Testament.

Notice that the plural is used each time the gift of Healings is used.

It is GIFTS of healings of gift of HEALINGS.

The Greek word for healing means "to heal or restore to health."

- It serves as a base for our English words "therapy" and "therapeutic."

- The gifts of Healing carries the idea of more than physical healing. The emotional, mental, and spiritual ills are often greater than the physical and often take longer to heal.

- That is one reason there is such a great need for Christian counseling.

Note carefully the features of our Lord's healing ministry:

1. His healing was not dependent upon the faith of the one healed – John 9:25.

2. His healing was always instantaneous – Mark 1:42.

3. His healing was always complete – Matthew 14:36.

4. He did not heal for the purpose of relieving people of their pain and suffering, but rather to make known the power of God and validate Himself as God's Son – Luke 5:15-16.

5. The supreme test of this gift is the ability to raise the dead – John 11; Acts 9:40. Those who claim to have the gift but whose ministry does not have these features should be discredited.

God does not change, but His methods do.

- James 5:14-15 makes it clear that the gift of Healing had already ceased to exist before the completion of the New Testament.

- James explains that healing is to be a private matter with church leaders praying over the sick person.

- Also, while the elders of the church are praying over the sick person, they should be

anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. Oil was one of the few medicines available in Jesus' day as is seen in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It was used for its soothing effect.

- Wine was used as a disinfectant. Both Jesus and James taught the advantages of medicine combined with prayer to receive God's healing.

God is far more interested in our Spirits healing than in healing our bodies. A sick soul is worse than a sick body.

III. The Gift of Tongues

IV. The Interpretation of Tongues

Probably no gift has caused more debate and confusion, both in the first-century church and today, than the gift of tongues.

- Some believe the gift ended when the New Testament was completed.

- Others, some of God's finest, do not believe the gift ceased but still exist today.

Tongues are referred to three times in the Book of Acts; again in I Corinthians 12:14; then again in Mark 16:17.

- To understand this gift, we must look at tongues in the early church.

- The first time we see tongues being demonstrated is in Acts 2.
- Paul writes in I Corinthians 12 and 14, not to Condemn the use of tongues, but to Correct the misuse of tongues and to Control the use of tongues – I Corinthians 14:39-40

The gift of Tongues in the New Testament is:

1. A scriptural Gift I Corinthians 12:10, 27-31; 14:39-40

There IS a spiritual gift of Tongues. Personally, I think there are three reasons why some have been lead into the tongue heresies:

- a. Some were raised in the movement or they grew up being taught they must speak with tongues.
- b. Others, who have been raised up in cold, dead, formal churches and they want something “more” in their spiritual life so they go to tongues, hoping to find more spiritual reality for themselves.
- c. Others because of ignorance. They have listened to false teaching or have misunderstood or misused certain passages of Scripture.

Harper Shannon said, “It’s no wonder to me when our choirs sing in Latin and our preachers preach in Greek, that our people speak in tongues. People in dead, cold, formal churches are looking for reality. Sometimes because there is no real fire, they go after wild fire or false fire.

We need to see what the Bible has to say about tongues and without any preconceived ideas: Just let the Bible speak to the issue.

- The only New Testament Greek word used for the gift of tongues is “glossolalia.”
- When the Bible uses the word “tongues”, it is referring to intelligible language; not some type of esthetic, emotional utterance. It may not be intelligible to the one speaking, but it will be to someone and it will be to someone present. It would be his or her native tongue or known tongue.

The first time we find the gift of tongues being demonstrated is in Acts 2:4-8

- Notice that they spoke NOT with “unknown” tongues, but with OTHER tongues. God never does anything for mere excitement or entertainment; He always has a reason. So, the question is, “Why did God want the disciples to speak in other tongues on the Day of Pentecost?”
- Acts 2:6, 8, 11 – In 2:9-11 sixteen different languages are represented. The disciples were speaking in languages they had not learned and, yet, those who heard them understood in their own language.
- The reason God caused them to speak in tongues was because Jews from all over the Roman Empire needed to hear the Gospel. These were not just any Jews, but faithful Jews who were “devout men, out of every nation” (2:5) who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost.

Two things were clear in Acts 2:

- The tongues were languages, uniquely directed to devout Jews.
- The tongues were to be a sign of fulfilled prophecy to convince these dedicated Jews of the Gospel – Acts 2:15-21.

The second occurrence of tongues in the New Testament is in Acts 10:44-48.

- Up to this point in the Book of Acts, only Jews were being saved or speaking in tongues.
- Peter makes it clear that the same gift of tongues that became evident to the Jews was now made evident to the Gentiles so the Gentile believers were to be accepted just as the Jewish believers were. This is often referred to as the Gentile Pentecost – Acts 11:15-17.

- Note: The miracle is in the hearing; not in the tongues.

2. A Sign Gift I Corinthians 14:18-21

Where did Paul speak with tongues? On the mission field (14:18); Not in the church (14:19); He did so as a sign to unbelievers (14:22).

- Paul may have spoken these different languages through natural ability, for he was a learned man (14:18).

Suppose I’m an unbeliever and someone comes up to me, starts speaking in a “mumbo-jumbo” way. Would that make a believer out of me when their natural language was English and when they could have spoken to me in English? No. I’d say, “Get the butterfly net, this fellow is mad.” But, if I went to Russia and a rough unlearned Russian who could speak only Russian, started to speak to me in flawless English, I would know that he was not doing so in his own ability and power. It is then that tongues would become a Sign.

3. A Secondary (lesser) Gift

Notice where Paul places tongues in this list of spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12:7-10.

- In I Corinthians 12:31; 14:5 Paul says that if he had to choose between the two gifts – the gift of Tongues and the gift of Prophecy – he would choose the gift of Prophecy.

- Many make major what God calls secondary.

4. A Selective Gift I Corinthians 12:11

One of the greatest heresies today is that speaking in tongues is an evidence that one has been baptized with the Holy Spirit or that one is filled with the Holy Spirit.

- That is not so. Look what that would do. It would make some a second class citizen of the Kingdom of God.

- It is rank heresy to say that before a person is filled with the Spirit, he must speak with tongues.

- What about a deaf mute? Are you going to tell me that a person who is deaf and cannot speak cannot be spirit-filled. Listen: you can be deaf, blind, dumb, missing both arms and legs and still be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- It is interesting to notice that Jesus never spoke in tongues. He used three languages: Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic.

5. A Safe-guarded Gift

There is a spiritual gift of tongues, but Paul gives some corrective and some control relating to the gift.

- There must be an interpreter present – I Corinthians 14:5, 11, 28

- There must be no more than three in any one service speaking. Anything more than three who speak in a service in an “unknown tongue” means somebody has transgressed the Word of God – 14:27.

- Only one at a time may speak in a service, and that by course – 14:27 (progression in order)

- No woman may speak in tongues in a service (Note: the subject is tongues; not singing or teaching) 14:34

- There should Never be disorder – 14:32-33

- Tongues should not be for one's edification. Spiritual gifts are given for employment and Not for enjoyment – 14:4-5

There are four problems with tongues, then and now.

1. Spiritual pride had developed

People were being judged by the gift they received. Now here is the problem: They were making a secondary gift into a major gift. Now all of the members of my body are important to me. I'd hate to lose any of my members. But, if I had the choice of losing my little toe or my right arm, I'd choose to keep my arm. But suppose I began to magnify my little toe and it began to grow out of proportion and got as long as my right arm. I'd be an odd looking fellow. That's what happens when the body of Christ begins to magnify a secondary gift.

2. The harmony of the church was hurt and its witness was affected.

The basis of unity is the blood of Jesus; not tongues.

3. The order of spiritual gifts had been reversed.

4. The focus of attention was shifted from the cross to tongues.

How are we to respond toward charismatics?

a. Not by condemnation, but care and love.

If you condemn them as being Satan controlled, you have shut the door of ministry to them. At the same time, I don't think you should be deceived by tongues. I don't think we should attribute the work of God to Satan; nor do I think we ought to attribute the work of Satan to God.

b. Don't let tongues divide your fellowship.

We ought to be able to disagree without being disagreeable.

c. Remember, the priority of the Church is to serve Christ.

Let me share a word of caution because you may be saying, “Well, I know someone whom I believe really spoke in tongues.”

****Never attempt to bring the Bible up to your experience: always bring your experience up to the Bible.**

I think the closest thing to the gift of tongues today is God's aiding the missionary in his ability to learn foreign language easily so they can share the Gospel.

It is important to realize that as a child of God, you are a gifted child.” You fit somewhere in

the body of Christ.

- Nothing can make the Christian life more exciting and fulfilling than the discovery of our spiritual gifts. The reason: more than any other single thing, discovering our spiritual gifts helps us find God's will for our lives.
- To know our spiritual gifts is to have concrete and specific direction in life. Finding our spiritual gift is like a road sign to a lost and weary traveler. It shows us the direction we should take to reach our destination in the Christian life.

If you are looking for purpose and excitement in life; discover your spiritual gift and use it. Most believers who are discouraged and find the Christian life dull are those who have not found or are not using their spiritual gift.

It takes time, effort and discipline to find your gift or gifts.

You and I need to do three things:

1. Discover your Gift

Here is a helpful thought: your spiritual gift is usually found in the things you enjoy doing.

Fulfilling the desires of our hearts is one way God reveals our spiritual gifts.

2. Develop your Gift

Once a spiritual gift is discovered, it must be cultivated. Gifts are like seeds that grow and produce fruit when properly cultivated through use. Work to make your gift more useable.

3. Deplore your Gift

If you do not use your spiritual gift, it will become like a dormant seed. But, as you use your gift, you will learn to exercise it proficiently, and it will become more and more of a blessing to you and to your church. Your gift is your ministry, not your monument, so use it.

I Corinthians 12:12-31

THE CHURCH: A BODY

When God wanted to show believers in Corinth how the Church is to function, the Holy Spirit directed Paul to use the illustration of a body with Jesus Christ being the head.

The concept of the Church as a body is found throughout the New Testament.

- Colossians 1:18 "And He is the Head of the Body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."
- Ephesians 1:22-23 "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body."
- Ephesians 4:15-16 "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

The use of the physical body to describe the spiritual body is tremendous because the human body is such an amazing and wonderful thing. The God who made the physical body wants His Church to function like a body.

The church at Corinth looked like everything but a body. There were divisions within the congregation that were damaging both the fellowship and the witness of that congregation.

The Holy Spirit had Paul address this church regarding the fact that a Church is a body and is supposed to function like a body.

In this chapter on spiritual gifts Paul emphasizes the importance of teamwork in the body of Christ – each one using their spiritual gifts to minister to others in the body.

- I Peter 4:10 "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

- I am to share my spiritual gifts with you and you are to share your spiritual gifts with me. We need each other!

In I Corinthians 12:12-31 Paul explains the hard-to-grasp truth about the unity and diversity of the Body of Christ using an analogy of the human body.

I. The Construction of the Body 12:13, 18

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Paul points to the process by which God is building His body.

- God constructs His Church only one way. It is not constructed with steel and cement, but it is constructed with the Holy Spirit.
- The only way one can become a part of the Body of Christ, the Church, is through a work of the Holy Spirit...not reformation or education or walking down an aisle and becoming a member of the local church, but it is only through the Holy Spirit that one becomes a member of the body of Christ.

The work of the Holy Spirit is the same in every life regardless of one's background. The setting and circumstances may be different, but the work of the Holy Spirit is always the same

1. The Holy Spirit Convicts

Conviction is simply the Holy Spirit making one aware of their spiritual condition.

Mankind is lost because of sin. He is without God and without hope.

2. The Holy Spirit Convinces

He convinces a person that Jesus, His death, burial, and resurrection, is the only solution to the sad condition of every life.

3. The Holy Spirit Calls

He calls for each person to repent, to turn from self and sin and to turn in faith to Jesus Christ.

4. The Holy Spirit Converts

When one realizes their condition, recognizes Jesus as the answer, and receives Him into their life by faith, the Holy Spirit converts that person into a child of God. They are saved and secured for all eternity.

- When the Holy Spirit does His work in the life of any person, that person instantly and eternally becomes a part of the body of Christ.

II. The Connection of the Body 12:12, 14-25

The theme of these verses is that although spiritual gifts provide diversity, differences, there is to be unity in the body of Christ.

All believers have at least one gift, but no believer possess all the gifts.

• No gift is possessed by all believers, but in the midst of diversity there is still to be unity in the body of Christ.

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• All of us have many members within our body, but it's one body.

• The same is true spiritually. In the body of Christ, there are many different kinds of Christians – old, young, rich, poor, educated and self-taught. They all have different kinds of talents and abilities. But there is to be unity.

What is unity?

What it IS NOT!

• It doesn't mean we all look alike or all act alike.

• It doesn't even mean we all believe alike on every issue.

• I don't know of anybody that believes exactly what I believe about everything that happens.

What is unity? Unity in the body of Christ means that while there are issues about which we may differ, there are some things that all Christians share in common.

• We share a common salvation.

• We share a common Scripture. There's only one Bible.

• We share a common hope; the hope of going to heaven.

• We share a common Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts.

All members of the body are connected. No part can function apart from the other parts.

• From the tops of our heads to the soles of our feet, each part of our bodies, though diverse, is united as a whole. Likewise, every member of Christ's Church is part of the same unit.

• I Corinthians 12:13-14 Because of the Holy Spirit's ministry, we are all part of the same body.

Paul uses imagination and humor to illustrate the significance of each believers in the body – 12: 15-17.

Suppose that our Feet and Ears and Eyes could talk:

A. Foot: "I'm in the dark most of the time – usually in a sock and shoe or boot. And often I smell. Compared to the hand, I can't do much. I've never heard anyone say, ' Let's shake feet on it.' "

B. Ear: "Ears aren't really attractive. Sometimes they are too big or stick out too far. That's why folks often try to cover us up ... or they hang things on us."

Note 12:17 – Picture it: A body that's one huge ear – no sense of smell, no sight, no taste. It would probably hear great! But without the other members, it wouldn't be of much use.

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C. Eye: It may be able to see a hurt child, but it could never reach out to comfort as a hand could.

As one body has many members performing different functions, so the members of the Church needs to perform different functions.

III. The Co-operation of the Body 12:18-20

A. There is no room for a Spirit of Independence 12:21-24

In a healthy body of believers, ALL the members depend on each other, lean on each other, and help each other function at their best.

The sad fact is that we sometimes feel that to act like we don't need to depend on others somehow makes us more mature or spiritual and, yet, Paul says that the healthy body sees their need for each other and that we need to care for each other.

B. There is to be no spirit of Comparison 12:23-24

C. There is to be no spirit of Division 12:25-26

When the members of the body of Christ co-operate with one another, they will console those who hurt and they will rejoice with those who are blessed.

True co-operation, in the Spirit God expects, leaves no room for selfishness, or superiority.

If one member suffers, ALL the parts share the suffering;

If one member is honored, ALL the members share in the enjoyment of it.

There is to be the spirit of co-operations, concern and commitment to one another.

I Corinthians 12:31-13:33

THE EXCELLENCE OF LOVE

Noted psychiatrist Dr. Karl Meninger said, "Love is the medicine for the sickness of the world. Love cures. It cures those who give it and it cures those who receive it."

• Love truly is good medicine. It has been said that the three most powerful words in the English language are "I love you."

• I know that our society sometimes confuses love with lust, sex, money or gifts. Though many people don't really understand love and with all our counterfeits of love, and even in spite of the abuses committed in the name of love, it is still true that what the world needs now is love, sweet love. And not just the word "love", we need the real thing. We need to SEE love and HEAR love and to FEEL love and to EXPERIENCE love in our lives. And we need to know how to PASS IT ALONG to others.

Love should mark every action of the believer, for without love, nothing else matters.

Let me remind you of why love holds such importance:

1. Love is Commanded I Corinthians 16:14 "Let all that you do be done with love."
2. Love is our Possession Romans 5:5 "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
3. Love is Learned I Thessalonians 4:9 "But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another."
4. Love is Put On Colossians 3:14 "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."
5. Love is to be Pursued I Corinthians 14:1 "Pursue love"
6. Love can be Increased I Thessalonians 3:12 "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all."
7. Love must be Fervent I Peter 4:8 "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins."
8. Love must be Stimulated Hebrews 10:24 "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works."
9. The whole Old Testament Law is summed up by the one word, "love" Matthew 22:34-39; Romans 13:9-10
10. Love is the goal of Paul's instruction to Timothy and the Church. I Timothy 1:5.
11. Love is the distinguishing mark of the true Christian John 13:35
12. Love is greater than any of the spiritual gifts and is even greater than faith and hope I Corinthians 13:13

For the Christian there can be no substitute for God's "agape love" in our life, nor is

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their any excuse for not having it in our life – Romans 5:5; I John 4:8-16.

Christians ought to be committed to this maxim in everything we do: "If you cannot do it in love, then it shouldn't be done at all!"

I Corinthians 13 is introduced in I Corinthians 12:31 – "And I will show you a more excellent way"

The focus is on the word "way." Love is not simply an ACT of a FEELING for a moment, it is a Way of life.

I. The Types of Love

The Greeks have four words for love:

1. Eros: It is the word from which we get our English word "erotic". The word is never used in the New Testament. This type of love should actually not be defined as "love" at all, but rather "lust", for it is used mainly for love between the sexes and related to physical love, usually for a form of self-gratification. It is sexual love.
2. Storgee: A special kind of love; used mainly for the love between a parent and child.
3. Philio: A friendship type of love. This love is strong when two people have many things in common and they have strong feelings of friendship toward someone.
4. Agape: occurs 106 times in the New Testament
 - a. This is supernatural love. It is sacrificial love.

- b. A self-giving kind of love where we give of our self for the sake of others, even if others, care nothing for us.
- c. It is a willing, joyful desire to put others welfare above our own.
- d. It is God's love (Romans 5:5) "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us."
- e. This love is not worked up, but sent down from heaven.
- f. It involves the WILL of a person; not their EMOTIONS.
- g. Agape love is not primarily a feeling, but rather it is reflected in our actions.

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II. The Testimony of Love

1. Love is the Priority commandment – Matthew 22:36-40

In the New Testament alone, Christians are commanded 55 times to love.

- 2. Love is the Perfect spiritual Gift. I Corinthians 12:31
- 3. Love is the Preeminent Grace Galatians 5:22-23; I Corinthians 13:13
- 4. Love is the Permanent Virtue I Corinthians 13:8

Eros will fail; Philo will fail; but Agape will never fail.

- 5. Love is the Proof of Sonship John 13:35
- 6. Love is the Path upon which Christians must Walk Ephesians 5:1-2
- 7. Love is the Prescription for Happy Homes Ephesians 5:25

III. The Triumph of Love

Without love:

A. Speech without love is nothing 13:1

Paul named five spiritual gifts in verses 1-3: Tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and giving (sacrifice). He pointed out that, without love, the exercise of these gifts is nothing.

Notice that Paul begins verses 1, 2, and 3 with the word, "though" (or if). Paul uses hyperbole. To make his point he exaggerates to the limits of imagination. Paul is saying, "If I could – no one ever did, no one ever does, but if I could and didn't do it in love, it would mean nothing."

Without love our words are meaningless. No matter how moving our prayers, how compelling our sermons or how beautiful our songs, without love they are only so much noise.

- "as sounding brass" is a resounding gong and refers to a loud noise created by striking a large metallic dish. You may remember the "Gong Show" where folks

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were "gonged" if their talent didn't measure up. Our speech without love is gonged.

- "clanging cymbals" are brass plates used in pairs and struck together, used as a percussion instrument, sometimes struck with a drumstick.

The number one complaint to marriage counselors is that couples can't seem to communicate. The basic reason is found in Ephesians 4:15 – "speak the truth in love."

Communication with a spouse, child, friend, co-worker, or whomever is not so much what we say as how we say it. No relationship can survive very long without speaking in love because in relationships, without love, when we speak all we say is just noise.

B. Spiritual Gifts without Love are Nothing 13:2

1. Notice the word ALL before the listing of these gifts:

- a. Though I know ALL mysteries – divine spiritual understanding
- b. All knowledge ...to have all knowledge is to be OMNISCIENT ... in other words, if somehow one could comprehend all of the creator and all of the creation, he would be Zero without love.
- c. All Faith: Paul is not speaking of saving faith here, but of the confidence and expectancy in the Lord. Even with this wonderful gift from God – of making the IMPOSSIBLE possible – Paul says a Christian is nothing if he does not have love.

2. Jonah had great faith. It was because of his great belief in the effectiveness of God's Word that he resisted preaching to Nineveh. He was not afraid of failure but success. He didn't want them to be saved. He had no love for them, not even after they repented. The preaching wrought a great miracle, as he believed it would, but the preacher was nothing.

C. Sacrifice Without Love is Nothing 13:3

Such an ultimate act of benevolence, giving ALL one's possessions to feed the poor, would not be a spiritual deed if not done out of genuine love, no matter how great the sacrifice or how many people were fed.

The people who received such generosity would be benefited by full stomachs, but the giver would be benefited by nothing.

The loveless person produces nothing, is nothing, and gains nothing.

What happens when you don't have love: Note the end of each verse:

I am become verse 1 Communication is Ineffective

I am verse 2 Spiritual understanding is Incomplete

It profits me verse 3 Giving is Insufficient

Everything minus love equals nothing. Whereas men put emphasis on What a person does and offers praise on that basis, the Lord looks at Why a person does what he does and then accepts or rejects the service on that basis.

I Corinthians 13:4-7

The Expression of Love

These four verses gives us the face of love. These 14 traits tells us what Agape love looks like. They are the nature of love.

-Remember that Paul is talking about Agape love.

In I Cor. 13:4-7, Paul declares that Love is Expressive. Love is Active, not Passive.

-The focus is not on what love IS so much as on what love DOES and DOES NOT DO.

-Love does not simply FEEL patient, It PRACTICES patience. It does not simply have kind feelings, it does kind things. It does not simply recognize the truth, it rejoices in the truth. Love is agape love only when it acts.

-I John 3:18 "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Paul describes love with seven positive statements and eight negative statements. There are two positive statements followed by eight negative statements and ending with five more positive statements.

Actually, Paul is painting a portrait of love and Jesus Christ is sitting for the portrait. He lived out in perfection all of these virtues of love. This beautiful picture of love is a portrait of Him.

A. Love is Patient – 13:4

The words "suffereth long" means to have loving patience.

Why did Paul put patience first?

-Patience is an interesting quality in that, when I don't need it, I want it. It's when things start to irritate or frustrate me that I need patience, but usually at that point, I don't want to be patient!

The Greek word comes from two words meaning, "long-tempered."

-If you're patient, you're slow to anger, you endure personal wrongs without retaliating. You bear with other's imperfections, faults, and differences. You give them room to make mistakes without coming down hard on them.

-Prov. 19:11 "The discretion (judgment) of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression."

Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate. It is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy.

-It describes the person who has been wronged, who has it within his power to get even, but chooses not to use that power.

-It is the ability to be patient WITH PEOPLE, rather than with circumstances or events.

-The Christian who acts like Christ never takes revenge for hurt or insult or abuse. He refuses to "pay back evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17).

God is described by the term "longsuffering."

-EX. 34:6 "Then the Lord passed before him (Moses) and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth'..."

-Rom. 2:4 "or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"

-2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning His promises, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Four things we must do if we are to mature or grow in patience:

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1. We must remember how patient God has been with us.

God has had to be patient with us all. Patience puts up with a lot of things.

-Robert Ingersoll, the famous American orator and atheist of the late 1800's, would stop in the middle of his lectures about the non-existence of God, and say. "I'll give God five minutes to strike me dead for the things I've said." Then, he would use the fact he was not struck dead as proof God did not exist. The great preacher Theodore Parker said of Ingersoll's claim, "Did the gentleman think he could exhaust the patience of the eternal God in five minutes?"

-God was not only patient with Ingersoll, but He has also been patient with you and me.

-Developing patience requires divine help because our natural tendency is to be impatient with people.

-Prov. 14:29 "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly."

2. We must be willing to forgive

Unwillingness to forgive is the greatest enemy of patience. All of us are prone to lose our patience at times, even with people we

dearly love.

-Peter wanted to know how many times he should forgive. When Jesus answered "seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22), He did not just mean 490. He meant however many times it takes because there is to be no limit to our forgiveness.

-Love never says, "I've had enough."

To the Greeks, the BIG MAN was the one who went all out for vengeance because he was Big! If he was wronged or injured, he would avenge himself any way he could.

-To the Christian, the BIG MAN is the man who, even when he could "get even," refuses to do so.

Steven's last words were ones of patient forgiveness: "Lord, do not hold this sin to their charge (against them)" (Acts 7:60). As he lay dying under the painful, crushing blows of the stones, his concern was for his murderers rather than for himself.

3. We must be willing to overlook the faults of others

None of us are perfect, and we all have some weird personality traits or idiosyncrasies that must be overlooked.

-We are all different; we are each one of a kind. We need patience with people because our differences create misunderstandings.

-We all have bad days when we are not very likable. We should be loving enough to overlook people's bad days.

4. We must be willing to listen.

Most of us have a real problem listening because we would rather talk.

-We earn the right to be heard by listening. People are not going to listen to us until they have said all they want to say. While we are speaking, they are simply trying to think of what they want to say next.

-The only way to understand a person is by listening, especially if tension is involved.

-James 1:19 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

I Corinthians 12:31-13:33

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A. Speech without love is nothing 13:1

Paul named five spiritual gifts in verses 1-3: Tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and giving (sacrifice). He pointed out that, without love, the exercise of these gifts is nothing.

Notice that Paul begins verses 1, 2, and 3 with the word, "though" (or if). Paul uses hyperbole. To make his point he exaggerates to the limits of imagination. Paul is saying, "If I could – no one ever did, no one ever does, but if I could and didn't do it in love, it would mean nothing."

Without love our words are meaningless. No matter how moving our prayers, how compelling our sermons or how beautiful our songs, without love they are only so much noise.

• "as sounding brass" is a resounding gong and refers to a loud noise created by striking a large metallic dish. You may remember the "Gong Show" where folks

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were "gonged" if their talent didn't measure up. Our speech without love is gonged.

• "clanging cymbals" are brass plates used in pairs and struck together, used as a percussion instrument, sometimes struck with a drumstick.

The number one complaint to marriage counselors is that couples can't seem to communicate. The basic reason is found in Ephesians 4:15 – "speak the truth in love."

Communication with a spouse, child, friend, co-worker, or whomever is not so much what we say as how we say it. No relationship can survive very long without speaking in love because in relationships, without love, when we speak all we say is just noise.

B. Spiritual Gifts without Love are Nothing 13:2

1. Notice the word ALL before the listing of these gifts:

a. Though I know ALL mysteries – divine spiritual understanding

b. All knowledge ...to have all knowledge is to be OMNISCIENT ... in other words, if somehow one could comprehend all of the creator and all of the creation, he would be Zero without love.

c. All Faith: Paul is not speaking of saving faith here, but of the confidence and expectancy in the Lord. Even with this wonderful gift from God – of making the IMPOSSIBLE possible – Paul says a Christian is nothing if he does not have love.

2. Jonah had great faith. It was because of his great belief in the effectiveness of God's Word that he resisted preaching to Nineveh. He was not afraid of failure but success. He didn't want them to be saved. He had no love for them, not even after they repented. The preaching wrought a great miracle, as he believed it would, but the preacher was nothing.

C. Sacrifice Without Love is Nothing 13:3

Such an ultimate act of benevolence, giving ALL one's possessions to feed the poor, would not be a spiritual deed if not done out of genuine love, no matter how great the sacrifice or how many people were fed.

The people who received such generosity would be benefited by full stomachs, but the giver would be benefited by nothing.

The loveless person produces nothing, is nothing, and gains nothing.

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What happens when you don't have love: Note the end of each verse:

I am become verse 1 Communication is Ineffective

I am verse 2 Spiritual understanding is Incomplete

It profits me verse 3 Giving is Insufficient

Everything minus love equals nothing. Whereas men put emphasis on What a person does and offers praise on that basis, the Lord looks at Why a person does what he does and then accepts or rejects the service on that basis.

I Corinthians 13:4-8b

The Expressions of Love

In this Love Chapter we see:

- The Excellence of Love – 12:31 – 13:3
- The Expressions of Love – 13:4-8a

C. Love does not Envy – 13:4

There are two words that are often used interchangeably in the N.T. But there is a subtle difference between the two words: Envy and jealous.

Envy stands at the bottom of the pile, breathing ill-will at anyone and everyone who is above it;

Jealousy stands at the top of the pile, afraid that somebody will replace it.

Envy is angry at what everyone else has that it does not possess;

Jealousy is afraid that what it owns will be taken away by someone else.

Envy begins with empty hands, mourning its lack, but joying when others lose what they have;

Jealousy begins with full hands, fearful of losing what it has already achieved to someone else.

Envy wants what someone else has, while jealousy is afraid what one has will be taken by someone else.

The Greek word for "envy" means "to boil". Try to picture a seething, boiling jealousy that grows within the heart of a man.

-Envy and jealousy are polar opposites of love. They are like two weeds in the garden of love; they will choke our relationships.

Jealousy has been called "the green-eyed monster." Jesus spoke of it in Matt. 20:15 as having an eye that is evil. In reality, envy takes two forms:

First, envy is the desire for what someone else has.

-When a brother is blessed with something good like a new job, a raise, a new car, home or whatever, the spiritual response is to rejoice with him and be glad for God's blessings on his life. The carnal response is to wish you were in his place.

Second, envy is the desire that someone else didn't have what they have.

-What is more evil than to look upon someone else and wish them evil?

-Have you ever thought, "He doesn't deserve that salary." or "Who do they think they are driving a car like that?" or "His position has gone to his head."

(1) Envy makes us mean

Envy makes us want to take what belongs to someone else. Envy is the effect of ill-will.

-Solomon uncovered envy in the women who pretended to be a child's mother. When she killed her own infant by laying on him during the night, she secretly exchanged him for the baby of a friend who was living with her. The real mother discovered what happened and brought their dispute before King Solomon. In order to discover who was the real mother, here is what Solomon did (I Kings 3:24-25), "And the King said, Bring me a sword. And thy brought a sword before the King. And the King said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other." The real mother pleaded, "Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!" But the other said, "Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!" (I Kings 3:26). Then Solomon ordered the baby be given to his mother. It wasn't the fact the other woman wanted a baby that caused her to steal and lie;

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it was her envy. She didn't want the other woman to have what she didn't have.

James 3:16 "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

-We envy other people's spouses, wealth, success, good looks, personality, friends, homes, ect.

-When we envy we open the door to all kinds of sin. Envy leads to such sins as gossip, bitterness, stealing, adultery, and even

murder. Envy makes us mean.

Envy has been around since the fall of Satan – Isa. 14:12-15

-Eve envied the knowledge the serpent promised.

-Cain murdered Abel out of envy for his accepted sacrifice.

-Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery because of their jealousy.

-Daniel was thrown into the lion's den because of the envy of the Babylonian Court officials.

-The older brother was envious of his father's affection for the prodigal son. "Lo these many years..."

Prov. 27:4 "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?"

-Relationships can survive anger because it is an emotion that usually goes away after being vented. But jealousy hangs on and won't go away, even after it is vented. It is vicious without restraint.

-A jealous wife or husband may get his or her way in the short term, but it plants the seeds of distrust that will destroy relationships.

-People are attracted by trust but repelled by jealousy.

Prov. 6:34 "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance."

-When people sense jealousy, they are angry and often driven away from the jealous person. Sometimes in an act of revenge against jealousy a spouse will become distant or even commit adultery. Love trusts instead of trying to control.

One of the biggest killers of marriage relationships is jealousy. When we try to keep someone through jealousy, we are really driving him or her away.

-Jealousy is just another way of saying, "I don't trust you." And without trust there can be no meaningful relationship.

Envy has a way of pushing someone else down so you can lift yourself up. That's why people often gossip about others.

-Rather than seeing our own weaknesses in a certain area and working to strengthen those areas, we often become envious of that person who has worked to achieve what he has.

-If you live long enough, you'll probably find someone who does what you do better than you can do it. You'll meet people with your talents and your gifts – only much more of them. You'll find people who surpass you in every way. What will you do then? This is one test of love.

-And if you live long enough, you are certain to encounter people who are less talented and less gifted than you in every way, yet they seem to catch all the breaks and end up ahead of you in the great game of life. How will you respond when an inferior person passes you by? This is an even sterner test of love.

Jealousy was quite prevalent in the church at Corinth. The Corinthians were jealous of the gifts and ministries of their fellow believers. Some despised their own gifts and calling and wished to have the gifts and ministries of others.

-Sadly, Christians today manifest the same kinds of jealousy. We are jealous of the apparent success of churches.

-I see a great deal of jealousy in the ministry. We may be jealous of the success of others in ministry, the opportunities they have to preach in the Bible Conferences or the size of the church another pastors or the salary one receives.

-Love does not envy.

In stark contrast to the many accounts of jealousy in scripture is the story of Jonathan's love for David. David

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was not only a more popular and greater warrior than Jonathan, but was a threat to the throne that Jonathan normally would have inherited. Yet, we are told of nothing but Jonathan's great respect and love for David, for

whom he would willingly have sacrificed not only his throne, but his life. "He loved David as he loved his own life" (1 Sam. 20:17).

(2) Envy makes us miserable

You cannot be happy and envious or jealous at the same time.

-Prov. 14:30 "Envy is rottenness to the bones." Envy will cause inner suffering like a painful, incurable condition.

The sad thing about jealousy is that it does not so much destroy the object of its jealous heart, it really destroys the jealous person himself.

-The jealous person is so wrapped up in himself that he cannot lovingly see anyone else. In the process, he loses his ability to function.

-No matter how much jealousy does to the other person, it always boomerangs on the one who is jealous.

- It was Haman who was hanged on the gallows originally built for the object of his envy.
- Daniel's "friends" who threw him into the lion's den were crushed by the mouths of the lions before they could ever hit the floor.
- Joseph was far better off sold into slavery in Egypt than his brothers, who were left with guilty consciences to deal with.
- David in the wilderness with his psalms of confidence in God was far better off than was Saul who could not sleep at night.

On the wall of a chapel in northeastern Italy, hangs a painting by the Renaissance artist Giotto. The painter depicted envy with long ears that could hear every bit of news of another's success. He also gave Envy the tongue of a serpent to poison the reputation of the one being envied. But if you looked at the painting carefully, you would notice that the tongue coils back and stings the eyes of the figure itself. Not only did Giotto picture Envy as being blind, but also destroying itself with its own venomous evil.

If you have a jealous, envious heart, you are of all men most miserable. Your spirit does not hurt the one over whom you are jealous, but it is even now like a cancer, eating away your own heart. Jealousy destroys. And where the jealous heart is, love cannot endure.

In this chapter we see:

- The Excellence of Love – 12:31 – 13:3
- The Expressions of Love – 13:3-8a

D. Love is not Prideful – 13:4d,e

(1)The KJV says “Charity (love) vaunteth not itself”. The word “vaunteth” means “to boast or brag, to show-off, especially in public, to parade itself, is not pompous, does not sing its own praises.” It means to talk with conceit or to behave as a windbag.

Paul has just said that love does not envy and is not jealous.

-Bragging is the other side of jealousy. Jealousy is wanting what someone else has. Bragging is trying to make others jealous of what we have.

-Jealousy puts others down; bragging lifts us up.

-Bragging puts ourselves first. Everyone else, including God, must therefore be of less importance to us.

-As much as most of us dislike bragging in others, we are so inclined to brag ourselves.

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

(2)The KJV says, “is not puffed up” or “does not put on airs, is not arrogant, does not over-estimate its own importance, does not seek attention for itself, is not inflated.

The words boast and inflated refer to the same problem: Pride.

Boasting is the outward manifestation of pride on the inside. Boasting is what a proud person does. We promote ourselves and parades our abilities, assets, accomplishments, or acquaintances.

-Boasting is the revelation of pride in our hearts

“Puffed up” pictures a blacksmith’s bellows filled with air.

Love does not make us swell-up. When I think of someone puffed up, I think of a frog that swells itself before it croaks.

-Prov.27:2 “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.”

Muhammad Ali was never known for being a modest kind of person. He was riding on a plane one time, and you he often said, “I’m the greatest.” One of the stewardesses walking up the aisle of the plane, looked at him and saw he didn’t have his seatbelt fastened. He said to him, “Mr. Ali, you’ll have to fasten your seatbelt.” Ali responded, “Superman don’t need no seatbelt.” The stewardess then replied, “Superman don’t need no airplane either.”

Now, compare Ali with William Carey, often referred to as the father of the modern missionary movement.

He was a brilliant man but came from a very humble place. In his early manhood, he worked as a cobbler, a shoe repairman. At a dinner party one evening a snob said to Carey, “I understand, Mister Carey, that you once worked as a shoemaker.” “Oh, no, your lordship,” Carey replied, “I was not a shoemaker, only a shoe repairman.”

When Jesus began to preach He soon overshadowed the ministry of John the Baptist. Yet, John spoke of Him as “He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie” (John 1:27). When John’s disciples later become jealous of Jesus’ popularity, John rebuked them saying, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). 157

Again I remind you of Prov. 27:2 “ Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.”

Sometimes we would be better off saying nothing at all. Once upon a time a turtle wanted to spend the winter in Florida, but knew he could not walk that far. He convinced a couple of geese to help him, each taking one end of a piece of rope, while he clamped his vise-like jaws in the center. The flight went fine until someone on the ground looked up in admiration and asked, “Who in the world thought of that?” Unable to resist the chance to take credit, the turtle opened his mouth to shout, “I diddddd...”

-Sometimes it’s a good idea to keep your mouth shut.

A third-grade science teacher asked one of her students to describe Salt. “Well, um, its...” he started, then stopped. He tried again. “Salt is, you know, its...” Finally he said, “Salt is what makes French fries taste bad when you don’t sprinkle it on.” Many foods are like that...incomplete without a key ingredient. Imagine pizza without cheese, strudel without apples, a banana split without bananas.

-The Christian life also has an essential element : Love.

A loving person does not brag on himself; yet, we have all done it. We brag about our accomplishments, our possessions, our children, and of course, our grandchildren.

-Almost all of us struggle with this sin. Read O.T. And the N.T. And you will find many different catalogs of sin, but the sin of pride finds its way to the top of the list.

Prov. 6:16-19 lists seven things God hates. At the top of the list is a “proud look.”

Pro 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

Pro 6:17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

Pro 6:18 A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

Pro 6:19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

-Pride is the only sin that specifically invites God’s judgment.

-James 4:6 "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Pride wants to give advice, but seldom wants to receive it.

-It is very difficult for proud people to admit they are wrong.

-When there is a problem between two people, pride prevents them from taking the first step to work it out.

-There are no problems too big to solve, only people too small to solve them!

Mark Twain said, "Temper gets us into trouble, but pride keeps us there."

-The three most important words in a relationship are "I was wrong," and it is pride that prohibits us from saying them.

Prov. 16:18 "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

-Pride almost always precedes the destruction of a relationship. However, humility, which makes us willing to confess our mistakes, is the greatest builder of relationships.

Prov.29:23 "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit."

-Many children never hear their parents say, "I was wrong, I'm sorry, please forgive me." There is no one to whom it is more difficult to admit we are wrong than a family member, and yet these are the confessions that add the most to our happiness.

One of the best ways to promote a good relationship is to brag on the strength or accomplishments of a family member or friend. It cannot be artificial or cheap flattery, but if it is natural and sincere, it is a great relationship enhancer. Few things can make someone feel appreciated and accepted like compliments given in front of others.

-An important principle in all relationships is to compliment in public, and correct in private. Never criticize someone in front of others. Public criticism is deadly poison to any relationship.

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One thing I always emphasize in counseling is that parents should never correct or criticize their spouse in front of their children. This is especially true when it involves disciplining the children. The tendency is for you to take up for the child, seeming like an angel to that child but making your marriage partner look like a devil. This is nothing but pride. True love for children never lets them see their parents divided, which leads to insecurity and encourages the children to try to divide parents to get their own way.

As I close, let me say that the worse form of pride is found in the spiritual show-offs. Some put themselves down in front of others so that they will build them up. It is a subtle form of boasting. It's manipulating others to do your boasting for you.

-I see this sometimes among pastors. At denominational meetings some pastors boast of their accomplishments since they came as pastor. They like to brag about how much their church has grown under their leadership; how many baptisms they've had; or what their budget is.

-Jesus said that we are not to do our charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, we will have no reward from our Father in heaven.

True love will always be far more impressed with its own unworthiness than its own merit.

Ask God to help you grow in love until it flows from your heart to others.

I Corinthians 13:5

The Expressions of Love

In this chapter we see:

- The Excellence of Love-12:31-13:3
- The Expressions of Love-13:4-8a

E. Love is not Rude – 13:5a

Have you ever been treated rudely? Have you ever been rude to someone else?

-All of us have experienced rudeness and probably all of us have passed it on. However, the Bible says that Agape love is NOT Rude.

-Love reveals itself through courtesy. Courtesy is the opposite of being rude and will improve all our relationships.

Four things I want to share with you about courtesy:

1. The Meaning of Courtesy

Again, the opposite of courtesy is rudeness. The KJV says that love "does not behave itself unseemly." Love doesn't behave itself in an ugly, indecent or unbecoming manner. It does not needlessly offend. It does nothing that would raise a blush. Love is not ill-mannered. It does nothing of which it will be ashamed of later. It does not act rudely, bluntly or crudely. Love does not behave gracelessly. Rudeness acts without common courtesy. Is not irritable or moody.

-Have you ever heard anyone say:

(a) "Well, they mean well. They just come across in a bad way, but that's just their way." If so, they need to change their way!

(b) "Oh, you know me – I just speak my mind." Well, don't!

(c) "Oh, so and so is just frank spoken. They are just rather straight forward and blunt." No, they're rude and untactful.

Someone who says, "I'm just straight forward and blunt. I'm the kind of person that, when something needs to be said, I say it."

-They do it in pride. It really makes them feel like a big man or big woman to be blunt or harsh or rude to others. -Bottom line: A person who is rude or treats folks in an ugly disrespectful, crude way is a bully. They really enjoy running ruffshod over folks by

talking down to them.

-Many people blame their temperaments, but it has nothing to do with that.

I have been shocked to see Christians walk up to a brother or sister in Christ who is suffering deeply, maybe through divorce or terrible rebellion of one of the children or some kind of physical illness, and the Christian walks up as if he were Nathan the Prophet and says to them, "What you need to do, my friend, is to examine your life to see what sin is causing this tragedy to come upon you."

-Let's be honest: It could be that sin was at the root of the problem. But how unkind and unloving it is for someone who claims to be representing God's love to walk into a situation like that and be so insensitive as to say and do something like that.

-THERE IS NEVER AN EXCUSE FOR A CHRISTIAN TO BE RUDE TO ANYONE!

-Being rude means you don't care about the feelings of others. Think about your attitude, actions and speech this past week. Did you behave rudely or with courtesy?

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Love is true courtesy. It is polite, considerate, and careful for the needs and feelings of others. Love is quick to make others feel at ease. Love has good manners! Love always uses tact.

-The reason we are not courteous, of course, is that we are thinking only of ourselves and not of others.

Courtesy is love in little things.

-The little things make a big difference in a relationship. When you love someone, you will go out of your way to do little loving things that no one else would do.

-Love thinks of little ways to express itself.

-I read of a man who was generally lacking in manners. He never opened the car door for his wife. "She doesn't have two broken arms," he would say. After many years of marriage, his wife died. At the funeral, as the pallbearers brought her casket out to the hearse, the husband was standing by the car door. The funeral director, who knew the husband by name, called out to him and said, "Open the door for her, will you?" He reached for the car door and then, for one second, froze. He realized that he had never opened the door for her in her life; now, in her death, it would be the first, last, and only time. A lifetime of regret came crashing down around him. Love is not rude.

Rudeness expresses itself when we make too many jokes at the expense of others and then try to laugh it off as cheap humor and then try to cover ourselves by saying, "I'm just kidding." Truth is, you weren't kidding or you wouldn't have said it in the first place.

We should use tact even when correcting someone. John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher, was once traveling by train with an army officer who was intelligent and agreeable in conversation, but committed to profanity. When they came to the station where they were to change trains Wesley took the officer aside and, after telling how much he enjoyed his companionship, said, "I would like to ask you to do me a simple favor if you would for me please." The young officer said, "I would take great pleasure in doing so because I think you are a very pleasant man and wouldn't ask me to do anything I could not do." "Then," said Wesley, "we have a long way to go. We are going to be traveling together for the next several days, and I would like for you to promise me that if I should so forget myself as to begin to swear, that you would kindly reprove me." The officer got the point and never said another word of profanity for the rest of the trip.

-How would you have done it? I've watched people go up to someone who grew up in the context of using bad language and asked him, "Where did you learn words like that? From the pig pen?"

-They may quit cursing, but you have cut yourself off from any spiritual help for that person.

Many of us would give anything if we could recall that blunt, insulting, or offending word. But, if we have been rude, we ought to at least apologize for our rudeness. It's the Christian thing to do.

2. The Motivation for courtesy

Why should we treat everyone with courtesy?

a. God created everyone

Every person is God's creative work and should be treated as such.

b. God commands us to be courteous – Phil 2:3-4

c. God will compensate us for our courtesy

-It never pays to be rude because in life we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7)

If we want to be treated with courtesy, we must treat others with courtesy.

-If you want people to smile at you, what do you need to do? Smile at them.

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Prov. 11:17 "The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh."

-Being crude and rude brings trouble on ourselves because in God's economy we get what we give.

-A waitress brought a man the coffee and doughnut he ordered. The man asked the waitress, "Why is my doughnut smashed flat?" The waitress replied, "You said, 'Bring me a cup of coffee and a doughnut, and step on it.'" It never pays to be rude.

3. The Manifestations of courtesy

Courtesy manifests itself in good manners. When we really want to improve a relationship, we need to exercise good manners.

The real test of courtesy is in the marriage relationship and the home.

-Remember when you were dating your spouse? Good manners and courtesy were routine.

-How easy it is for us to forget the common kindnesses and courtesies with which we treat each other. The way we treat one another in the early stages of our relationship can deteriorate unless we make a conscious effort to be courteous.

-Little things make a big difference in marriage – helping each other around the house, cooking a special meal, fixing things that need fixing, surprise gifts for no other reason than to express your love, picking up after yourself around the house.

Love expresses itself by using certain expressions, like:

a."Please", which means you are not demanding or commanding, but asking in love.

Courtesy also means being considerate and respectful of your spouse's needs, opinions, and feelings, which includes not interrupting and correcting when they are speaking.

b."Thank you", which means I appreciate you and what you do for me. Nothing can improve relationships like letting people know you appreciate them and what they do. In our homes, things are so often done for us that we begin to take them for granted and forget to say "thank you."

c."Excuse me", when we interrupt our spouse or kids or accidentally bump someone.

d."I'm sorry", Not only does rudeness damage our relationships, but it is a sin.

Courtesy always speaks the truth in love.

4.The Model of Courtesy

Jesus is the model of courtesy. The love of God shows up in our lives in the little things we do every day at home, at work, at school, or wherever we encounter people.

-Courtesy is simply being willing to be a servant as Jesus demonstrated in John 13 when He washed the disciple's feet.

As we think about our own spirit, here are some questions for us to consider: Do you snub or ignore others? Do you respond with a grunt when spoken to? Do you make others feel important? Are you sensitive to the needs and feelings of other people? Do you do little things that make it easier for other folks? Do you crowd in front of others in line?

Replay some of the recent tapes in you mind of your conversations with your wife, husband, or parents.

-Courtesy is the better way. May God help us apply it to our hearts.

I Corinthians 13:5

The Expressions of Love

In this chapter we see:

- The Excellence of Love – 12:31-13:3

- The Expressions of Love – 13:4-8a

F. Love does not insist on its own way – 13:5b

The reason we are not patient and kind and the reason we are envious, boastful, arrogant and rude is because we think of ourselves first and foremost. We want our way. We like the people who agree with us.

Few things create problems in relationships like selfishness. -The Corinthian believers were the epitome of selfishness. They did not share their food with the poor at the Agape love feasts, they were suing each other in pagan courts, and they wanted what they thought were the most prestigious spiritual gifts. Because of this, Paul writes that love is not self-seeking.

(1)The Problem of Selfishness

Love does NOT seek its own; does not grasp for its own rights; its own advancements, its own interest at the expense of other people.

-Love never says, "It's my way or the highway." We cannot love someone else if all we care about is ourselves.

-The root of all evil in human nature is the desire to have one's own way. Self-centeredness is the exact opposite of agape love. Agape is love that seeks the best interest of the one loved.

-R.C.H. Linski, the well-known commentator, has said, "If you can cure selfishness, you have just replanted the Garden of Eden." It was selfishness that caused Adam and Eve to reject God's way in favor of their own desires. Self replaced God in their hearts and they determined to go their own way. Love, on the other hand, is not interested in its own way, but is preoccupied with the interest of others.

Selfishness is our national disease. We live in a "me-centered" generation and a "Me-First" society.

-Bill Haybels summarizes the situation. Well, we have been taught the lesson over and over again: More for me is better for me. The Me First mindset has led our society to the verge of internal collapse. Escapism, perversion, AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, violence, political scandal, and family breakups are all symptoms of our modern-day madness, our obsession with me.

Our society seems to believe a man has a right to do whatever he pleases, regardless of how it affects others, just as long as he gets his own way and his goals are accomplished.

There are whole industries which cater to this Me First mindset.

- Advertisers encourage us to "find the real you" or to "indulge yourself...because you deserve it."

- Credit card companies make a fortune by getting people to buy now and then pay forever and ever.

- Publishing houses crank out book after book that contains the "Assert yourself" message.

Self-centeredness has doomed marriages, split churches, divided families, and brought countries and empires to ruin. Self -

centeredness will kill a marriage.

-One woman said, "My marriage has survived for 20 years. I think it is because my husband and I are in love with the same man." Everyone has a natural tendency to be selfish, which is destructive to relationships.

Most of us did not see selfishness in our mates when we were dating and thinking about getting married.

-Ladies, when your husband came to pick you up for a date, were you usually ready to go when he came? Probably not! Why? You spent too much time dressing, doing your hair, putting on makeup, etc. When you

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dated, you wanted to look great. But what do you look like now when he comes home? Many wives look like the totally wrecked woman.

-Men, when you were dating, you couldn't do enough to please your wife. You would open doors for her and spend a lot of time doing whatever she wanted to do, including shopping.

-We try to cover up selfishness when we are dating. Why? We know selfishness will a relationship.

Selfishness strangles the life of a person. There is an inscription on a small tombstone in an English village that reads:

Here lies a miser who lived for himself.

He cared for nothing but gathering wealth.

Now, where he is or how he fares,

Nobody knows and nobody cared."

That's what happens to self-centered people.

(2)The Prevention of Selfishness

The Greek phrase translated "seeketh not her own" means love does not seek things for itself.

-I Cor. 10:24 "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being."

-Phil. 2:3-4 "Let nothing be done through selfish ambitions or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look not only for his own interest, but also for the interest of others."

Selfishness always wants the credit and the spotlight, while love sincerely praises and appreciates others. Because God wants to teach us to be unselfish and improve our relationships, He gave us this command in Eph. 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

-Love does not care who gets the credit. It does not push and shove and trample on others to get ahead in this world.

In order for us to be selfless we have to be involved in the lives of other people, giving ourselves, ministering to others, giving up our own rights on other's behalf.

The story is told of a chauffeur who drove up to a cemetery and asked the minister who served as caretaker to come to the car because his employer was too ill to walk. Waiting in the car was a frail old lady with sunken eyes that showed years of hurt and anguish. She introduced herself, and said that she had been sending five dollars to the cemetery for the past several years to be used for flowers on her husband's grave. "I have come in person today," she said, "because the doctors have given me only a few weeks to live, and I wanted to see the grave one last time."

The minister replied, "I'm sorry you have been sending money for flowers." The woman was taken aback. She said, "What do you mean?"

"Well," said the minister, "I happen to be part of a visiting society that visits patients in hospitals and mental institutions. The dearly love flowers. They can see them and they can smell them. Flowers are therapy for them because they are living people."

Saying nothing, she motioned the chauffeur to leave. Some months later, the minister was surprised to see the same car drive up, but this time, the woman herself was at the wheel. She said, "When I was here the last time, I was resentful at what you said to me. But as I thought about it, I decided you were right. Now, I personally take the flowers to the hospitals. It makes the patients happy and it makes me happy, too. The doctors can't figure out what made me well, but I know. I now have someone else to live for."

Selfishness causes us to think everyone should be like us, having the same desires and dreams.

-Many selfish parents try to live out their dreams in their children.

-Selfishness thinks that if everybody is not just like me, something is wrong with them. But, God made each of us to be one of a kind, and therefore, we must learn to accept our differences.

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The opposite of this self-seeking spirit is a gracious spirit. A gracious spirit is seen in the person who:

- Is content to Listen to what others have to say
- Sees the bigger picture and realizes they are not the focal point.
- Is in tune to the people around them. They notice the tear, the grimace, the smile and respond accordingly.
- Is willing to give up what is best for self for the benefit of another
- Doesn't look at others for what they can get from them but cherishes them because of who they are.

(3)The Pattern of Unselfishness

Jesus is our Pattern, our Model, our Example of unselfishness.

-Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

I love the true story about a guy named Joe who was a soldier during WWII. Joe was the kind of Christian who took his faith

seriously. He began and ended every day with prayer beside his bunk. Because of his faith, he faced a lot of persecution from the other soldiers in his barracks. One big guy bullied him the most and gave him the name "Holy Joe." One night this particular soldier came into the barracks drunk. When he saw Joe kneeling beside his bed in prayer, he became very angry. He took off his muddy boots and beat Joe with them. The next morning, when he awoke in a hangover, he found his muddy boots had been carefully cleaned and polished. God used Joe's selfless act to eventually open this man's heart to his own sinful condition that he might be saved.

I Corinthians 13:05

The Expressions of Love

In this Chapter we see:

? The Excellence of Love – 12:31-13:3

? The Expressions of Love – 13:4-8a

G. Love Does Not Lose Its Temper – 13:5c

Have you been angry with someone in the last year? What about the last month? The last week? What about today?

-Anger is one of the most persistent enemies in relationships.

-In America about four million women are battered each year, and about one million children are abused by their parents.

-According to research, domestic violence may be the most common crime in America. Why? Many people do not know how to master their anger.

There are few things more destructive than anger out of control.

-Churches have been split because of anger out of control.

-Marriages, friendships, and individual lives have been wrecked because of anger out of control.

-There are men and women in prison today because of anger out of control and they wish they could recall some words that were spoken in anger, but they cannot.

You don't have to go far in the Bible to see anger and temper at work.

-In the opening pages of Genesis you find Cain getting angry with his brother and killing him.

-Read on: God gives Moses the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. In anger he throws the tablets off the side of the mountain and breaks them because of his anger with the people.

-Moses was kept from the Promised Land because he became provoked at the people of Israel.

-Jesus gave nicknames to two of His disciples, calling them "Sons of Thunder."

We have given names to people who can't control their tempers:

Hot-heads One with a short fuse One who is hot under the collar

Spit fire One who flies off the handle

Paul says that anger out of control grieves the Spirit of God.

There is a difference between anger and aggravation. Everybody gets aggravated, but we need to be careful about getting angry.

-A little girl was doing her homework and had to do a report on anger. She asked her dad, "What's the difference between anger and aggravation?" He said, "Honey, that's simple. Watch this."

He dialed a number at random and asked, "Is Marvin there?" The man said, "No, and look up the number next time before you call."

The dad hit redial and said, "Is Marvin there?" The man said, "I told you Marvin isn't here; don't call this number again." The dad hit redial again and asked, "Is Marvin there?" "No, he's not here and you'd better hope I never find out who you are." The Dad said,

"Honey, that's anger. Let me show you what aggravation is." He hit redial again and said, "This is Marvin. Have there been any calls for me?"

It may surprise you to know that not all anger is wrong. In fact, God commands us to become angry. You can be good and mad.

Eph. 4:26

-Let me give you a rule of thumb when anger is right and not wrong: The way to be angry and not sin is to be angry at nothing but sin.

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I. The Definition of Anger

Let me give you three definitions of anger: One from the dictionary, one from the Greek, one from the Hebrew. Then we'll look at I Cor. 13.

Dictionary: A feeling of displeasure resulting from injury, mistreatment, opposition, usually showing itself in a desire to fight back at the supposed cause of this feeling. A feeling of resentment, revenge showing itself in sudden outburst through acts, words, and looks in which self-control is lost.

Hebrew: Prov. 29:22

? angry: flaring of nostrils, rapid breathing

? furious: hot passion within; a poison within

Greek: Two words

? Thumos: refers to an uncontrolled outburst of blazing anger. It is a sudden outburst of anger; a flying off the handle; rages like a fire out of control. This kind of anger is never used of God.

? Orge: is less sudden in its rise than Thumos, but more lasting in its nature. The word means a slow-burning heat. It takes a lot to get to the boiling point. It is a controlled anger, which is also called "righteous indignation" or "holy anger".

-There are some things that ought to make us angry, such as, injustice against the helpless, the poor, or elderly, perversion of right and wrong or desecration of the name or worship of God.

-In Orge, Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple because of His holy anger. But His anger was never directed toward people; it was directed toward sin.

The word used in I Cor. 13:5 refers to being provoked by an offense or being angry with people. The reason that we should never get angry with people is that we cannot love folks and be angry with them at the same time.

The KJV misses the idea here with the translation "not easily provoked." There is no basis in the Greek for the modifier "easily."

-The translators of the KJV were wonderful men, but they were men. So many of us are easily provoked and so they added the word easily.

-It has been suggested that it was added because King James had such a violent temper. Paul says it is never provoked or exasperated, even if you are the king.

Let me give you other shades of meanings from I Cor. 13:5c:

-Love is not quick – tempered, does not blow it top. Love does not blow its cork, lose its cool, or blow a fuse. Love does not have a chip on its shoulder, looking for some tiny straw of offense so it can vent all its anger and hostility. Love is not irritable, incensed, touchy or over reacts when things don't go your way. Love doesn't make everyone around them walk on eggshells. Love is not thin-skinned, quick to be resentful or offended or easily wounded.

By contrast love is good-natured, easy-going, and quick to forgive.

II. The Devastation of Anger

Anger can ruin your life faster than most anything. Anger is not just weakness; It's wickedness.

-Yet, I know folks who boast about having a quick temper. That's nothing to be proud of.

What can anger lead to in your life?

A. Anger leads to stupidity

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Prov. 14:17 "A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of wicked intentions is hated."

-Your words and actions while angry will be foolish. Someone who flies off the handle will say things he doesn't normally say and is subject to over-reactions.

Prov. 14:29 "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.

-You never know what a hot-head is going to do; neither does the hot-head.

Prov. 19:11 "Good sense makes a man restrain his anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression or an offense."

-The question is not are you big enough to do something about an offense, but are you big enough not to do something about it.

Prov. 15:1 "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but a harsh word stirs anger."

B. Anger leads to more sin

Prov. 29:22 "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious (hot-tempered man) aboundeth in transgression."

-An angry man will shoot off his mouth, become impatient with others, become judgmental, nurse a grudge, won't forgive others, become harsh and hyper-critical, and self-centered.

C. Anger leads to strife

Prov. 15:18 "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms contention."

-An angry person is a trouble-maker, looking for somewhere to strike. Nothing divides friends and marriages more than a hair-triggered angry person.

Prov. 20:3 "It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel."

D. Anger leads to self-destruction

Prov. 19:16 "A man of great wrath will suffer punishment, for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again."

-If you rescue him. You'll just have to do it over and over again. He never learns his lesson.

-He loses his friends because they can't stand to be with him.

He loses his job because folks can't work with him.

He loses his wife because she can't live with him.

He loses his children because they can't respect him.

He loses his health because anger tears his body down.

E. Anger leads to Satanic activity in your life. Eph, 4:26-32

If you don't learn to control your anger, your anger will control you.

-Will Rogers used to say that people who fly into a rage never make a good landing.

F. Anger leads to severe judgmental

Matt. 5:22 "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

III. The Defusing of Anger

A. Don't nurse it

Eph. 4:26-27 "Don't let the sun go down on your wrath" Why?

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The longer you nurse anger, the more likely you are to hold grudges.

-Anger is like cement: Before it hardens it's easy to get out of, but after it sets up and dries, it turns into the cement of bitterness.

-People don't lose their temper, they find it.

-Prov. 29:11 "A fool vents all his feelings, but wise man holds them back." We have a choice whether to get angry or not. We can control it. Have you ever been in a "loud discussion" with your mate and the phone rings and you answer with a soft, sweet voice, "Hello?" Anger is a choice that can be controlled.

-Prov. 14:29 "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly." Sometimes we stir ourselves up by going over and over a situation rather than dropping it.

B. Don't rehearse it

Have you ever been around folks who love to tell you how mad they are about something? Every time you rehearse it, you drive the screws of bitterness deeper into your mind.

-Prov. 22:24-25 "Make no friendship with a man given to anger, and with a wrathful man do not associate, lest you learn his ways and get yourself in a snare."

C. Don't disperse it

Nothing cooks your goose quicker than a boiling temper.

D. Reverse it

Prov. 19:11 "Good sense makes a man restrain his anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression or an offense."

-Eph. 4:32 If I know someone is angry with me, I try to kill (cover) them with kindness.

-David Jeremiah said that he was going to McDonald's and a lady thought he cut her off going to the drive through window. In his mirror he saw her giving him a piece of her mind. When he got to the window, he asked how much the lady's order was behind him and told her he wanted to pay for it. He said his carnal side watched as the lady at the window told her that the man in the car ahead of her had paid for her order. He said that the lady was no longer angry – just confused.

I Corinthians 13:5

The Expressions of Love

The Expressions of Love

I Cor. 13:5d

Return to 1st Corinthians Main Menu

In this chapter we see:

? The Excellence of Love – 12:31 – 13:3

? The Expressions of Love – 13:4-8a

H. Love Does Not Keep Records of Wrong Done To It – 13:5d

Record keeping is very important in our culture.

-We keep tax records, bank records, credit card records, and even health records.

-But there are some records we as Christians should never keep – records of people that have wronged us.

Paul has just said, "Love is not angered." The main reason we are angered is because of the records we keep.

-The Greek word translated "records" is an accounting term that means to keep an account. It is the idea of keeping a permanent record one refers to and adds to each time someone is wronged.

A. A Contrast That is Implied

The KJV says, Love ... "thinketh no evil". It does not have evil thoughts against those who hurt them.

(1)Negatively: Love does not keep records of wrongs; does not keep records of wrongs; does not keep score; does not cherish the memory of grievances, hurts, and injuries done to us. Love does not let the mind dwell on resentments toward others, because love does not permit evil done toward us to become embedded in our memory. Love does not brood over injury, store up grievances, or count up wrongs that have been done, or keep an itemized list. Love does not make a permanent record of hurts that can be consulted whenever needed.

(2)Positively: Love forgives, lets go of hurts, pardons, love has a bad memory.

A young married man told his friend, "You know, every time my wife and I have a fuss, she get historical." The friend said, "Don't you mean hysterical?" He said, "No! Every time we get in a fuss, she reminds me of everything I have ever done wrong."

B. The Command That is Issued

What is forgiveness? What does it mean to forgive?

-We are told what forgiveness is when God forgives our sin. We are to forgive others the same way God has forgiven us.

(1)Forgiveness means Sin Removed

-Ps. 103:12 "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

-We should never ask God to forgive us; for that would mean to remove us from God. We should ask God to forgive OUR SINS.

-Psa 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Psa 130:4 But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

-Isa 38:17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

(2) Forgiveness means Sins Remembered No More

-Jer 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

-Notice that God does not say that HE FORGETS our sins, but that He chooses not to remember our sins in that
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He will not bring our sins up against us any more.

(3) Forgiveness means Sin Released

-Psa 25:18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

-When the woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus, He forgave her and released her from her sin.

(4) Forgiveness means Sin Blotted Out or Erased

-Isa 44:22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

(5) Forgiveness means Sins Pardoned

-Mic 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy.

In God's mercy, He pardons.

(6) Forgiveness means Sin Covered

-Psa 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

(7) Forgiveness means Sin Cleansed

-1Jo 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

-Isa 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Forgiven people are to be Forgiving People. We are commanded to be forgiving people.

-Luk 6:37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

-Mat 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

Mat 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

-Eph 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

-Col 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

-1Pe 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

C.S. Lewis said, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive.

-The moment someone tells us we need to forgive someone, the mind begins to argue:

- "But you don't know what he did to me."
- "If you knew what this has done to my family, you would be angry, too."
- "They deserve to suffer like they've made me suffer."
- "I'm going to make them pay."
- "I will never forgive them. Never!"

Let me tell you what forgiveness does not mean:

- It does not mean making excuses for other people's bad behavior.
- It doesn't mean overlooking abuse.
- It does not mean letting others walk all over you.
- It does not mean refusing to press charges when a crime has been committed.
- It doesn't mean forgetting the wrong that was done. 171
- It doesn't mean pretending that you were never hurt.
- It does not mean that you must tell the person that you have forgiven them.
- It does not mean that all negative consequences of sin are canceled.
- It does not mean pretending that the evil never took place.
- It does not mean that you approve of what someone has done.
- It doesn't mean you must feel the same way about them as you did before.
- It doesn't mean to forgive and forget. We cannot forget. We can't just snap our fingers and forget a matter. So many have heard

forgive and forget and they live in guilt because they can't forget and they say, "I must not have forgiven." There is not a verse in the Bible that tells us to forgive and forget.

What IS forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a word that occupies a large and conspicuous place in the Bible, both O.T. And N.T.

-Forgiveness comes before us in the form of a Doctrine to be Believed, as God's Divine mercy comes through the blood of Christ to sinful man, and in the form of a precept to be obeyed as a command to man to forgive his erring brother.

-A forgiven man must be a forgiving man. Forgiveness is not an optional part of the Christian life. It is a necessary part of what it means to be a Christian.

What is forgiveness?

(1) Forgiveness is a willingness to absorb the pain, the hurt, and the wrong done to us and to do so without bitterness.

(2) Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Forgiveness is not about your feelings. If you have been deeply hurt, you will probably never "feel" like forgiving someone. Forgiveness is a choice, a decision you make in your heart. It is a choice to release others from their sins against you. Love does not keep records of wrong.

-Forgiveness is a choice, a decision. Forgiveness does not mean we somehow wipe out of our mind the record of what happened. Forgiveness means we choose not to remember.

-There is a big difference between remembering something and dwelling on it. We can all remember things in the past that have hurt us deeply. Forgiveness means we choose not to dwell on those things. It also means we choose not to hold a grudge against someone who has wronged us.

-Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, was talking with a friend one day. The name of a person they both knew came up. Years before that person had done some very mean things to Clara. The friend asked Barton, "Don't you remember when she did that to you?" "No," she replied, "I distinctly remember forgetting that."

-Forgiveness is not forgiving and forgiving – for us or God. There is not a verse in the Bible that says God forgives and forgets our sin. The Bible does say that God does not remember our sins any more.

-How could a God who knows everything forget anything. Instead, the Bible says that He has not "counted" our sin against us (2 Cor. 5:19). He has chosen not to remember them against us (Heb. 10:17), not to bring them back up, never again to accuse or condemn us with them.

-Forgiveness is remembering but forgiving anyway.

(3) Forgiveness is treating others the way God treats us.

(4) Forgiveness is a promise – a promise never to bring up that sin against that person again – Not to God, not to the person who committed it, not to anyone else, and not to ourselves.

(5) Forgiveness means letting our hurt go and letting our anger, resentment, and bitterness toward the person who hurt us, go.

C. The Collapse That is Invalid

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The choice not to forgive is itself a serious sin. We must deal with the fact that our unforgiveness is a sin, just as the original offense was. No worse of a sin, but certainly no less of one.

-If not confessed and repented of, sooner or later it will affect our entire person – our physical and emotional well-being, our demeanor, our whole outlook.

Some has said that unforgiveness is the accumulation of unexpressed anger.

-We are a generation of wounded people. And wounded people tend to wound other people. You may have heard it said that the most dangerous animal in the forest is the one that's been wounded.

-When we refuse to forgive, we give Satan an advantage in our lives. The Devil always wins when we fail to forgive.

-If we fail to forgive, the offended becomes an offender in his response to the offense.

If we fail to forgive, bitterness will fill our hearts. We think of something that is bitter as being a sharp, sour, or unbecoming in taste.

-Bitterness in our hearts will find its way into our speech and our tone of voice.

How can you tell if you have bitterness in your heart and life? See if you relate to any of these statements:

I often replay in my mind the incident(s) that hurt me.

When I think of a particular person or situation, I still feel angry,

I have a subtle, secret desire to see this person pay for what he or she did to me.

Deep in my heart, I wouldn't mind if something bad happened to the person(s) who hurt me.

I often find myself telling others how this person has hurt me.

D. The Cancellation that is Imperative

How do we know we have truly forgiven?

We no longer think or talk about it all the time or dwell on it.

We no longer feel the need to seek revenge.

We pray for them and ask God to bless them.

We do good and not evil to them.

E. The Celebration that is Included

The outcome of our lives is not determined by what happens to us, but by how we respond to what happens to us.

-D.L. Moody said: "The most difficult sin to deal with in the life of a Christian is the sin of an unforgiving spirit."

There is one final step to total Forgiveness – Luke :27-36

-"Love your enemies" This may be the most difficult thing Jesus ever said. Why should we live this way? Jesus gives two answers to that question: (1)You will receive a great reward – in heaven as well as on earth; (2)You will demonstrate that you are a true child of God.

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Who are my enemies?

We have national enemies, but the enemies Jesus talks about are not restricted to those far away enemies that we may never face. Jesus is talking about personal enemies that tend to be much closer to home. In fact, home is the first place to look for your enemies.

-Mat 10:36 "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Sooner or later people we love will hurt us deeply, and at that point and for at least that moment, they have become our enemies. Jesus instructs us to love people very close to us who have hurt us deeply – a husband, a wife, an ex-husband, an ex-wife, a parent, a child, a brother, a sister.

How do we love our enemies?

(1)Greet them. This is a simple step we often overlook. The truth is, most of us would be perfectly happy if we didn't have to mess with our enemies at all. Just leave them alone and they leave us alone. Just avoid them. Some of us have been quite adept at looking the other way, ducking them, or even using caller ID to keep from greeting those who hurt us. But, if we only greet our friends, what benefit is that? Do not even sinners greet each other?

(2)Disarm them. You disarm them by doing the very thing they least expect. Cover them with kindness.

(3)Do good to them. "Doing Good" means that you do what will promote their healing despite the way they treat you. The idea is, you make the first move.

(4)Refuse to speak evil of them. "Bless those who curse you." It means you refuse to think evil thoughts and you refuse to speak evil words against those who have wronged you. Forgiveness in many cases is not possible because we will not stop talking. At some point we must stop talking and start forgiving.

(5)Thank God for them.

(6)Pray for them. Do you know anyone who needs your prayer more than your enemies?

(7)Ask God to bless them. Let the past be the past. Work toward reconciliation.

Love does not keep records of wrong done to it.

I Corinthians 13:6

The Expressions of Love

In this Chapter we see:

? The Excellence of Love – 12:31-13:3

? The Expressions of Love – 13:4

I. Love does not Delight in Evil – 13:6

Paul presents this expression of love in a negative and then a positive way: "Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

Love is never glad when others go wrong. Love does not delight in exposing the weaknesses of other people.

- Pro 24:17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth

-To rejoice in unrighteousness is to justify it and make wrong appear to be right.

-Isa 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Bad news travels quickly, so you can get much more press coverage for something sick, sinful, or sordid than you could ever get for something that is beautiful and lovely.

-What is there about sinful man that makes us enjoy exposing the sins of others? Remember, when Ham, Noah's son, saw the naked body of his drunken father in his tent. He told his two brothers, but the other two brothers took a garment, went backward into the tent and covered the father's nakedness. Because of exposing his nakedness, Noah placed a curse on his son Ham.

We rejoice in iniquity when we accept worldly standards of entertainment. How inconsistent is it when the church condemns adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, drunkenness, foul language, ect., but at home we allow these sins and more to enter into our family life via the television set. We seem to think that though it is wrong to do these things, it is not wrong to merely watch others doing them on TV.

-I am not against Christians having TVs. We have them in our house. What does trouble me is , Christians who exercise no restraint or discernment when it comes to entertainment. Beyond television, the same truth applies to books, magazines, music, and all other forms of media.

Finding out what a person enjoys – what gives them pleasure and causes them to rejoice – may be very revealing about the character of that person.

-Sometimes rejoicing in unrighteousness takes the form of hoping someone will make a mistake or fall into sin.

-I have known Christians who wanted to be rid of their marriage partners or were already divorced. But because they did not believe in remarriage unless the other party was unfaithful, they actually hoped their spouses would commit adultery so they themselves could be scripturally free to remarry.

Rejoicing in iniquity is an insult to God. When we delight in sin, we are delighting in that which most offends and grieves our heavenly Father. Jesus suffered upon the cross for the sin in which we revel. Isn't it interesting that in our culture we've become super-sensitive about offending anyone. We've gone to silly extremes in this politically correct society. Yet, how often do we offend God without even considering it. If we are concerned about what offends God, we won't have to be concerned about what concerns about what offends man.

The most common form of "delight in evil" is gossip. Gossip is always rooted in the enjoyment of sharing rumors or the private problems of others.

-Gossips would do little harm if they did not have so many eager listeners. Most gossips rejoice in evil.

If we gossip, we cannot have close relationships with anyone because people cannot trust us with their problems, hurts, and failures.

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-Everyone wants to have someone with whom they can share their problems and pain without having to worry about that information being broadcast.

– Pro 11:13 A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

When a confidence is shared in a relationship, whether it is with a spouse, friend, co-worker, or whoever, we should never betray their trust. The quickest way to ruin a relationship is to reveal a confidence.

-Pro 17:9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

Gossip is a very allusive sin. I know a lot of folks who know OTHERS who are gossips, but THEY are not gossips.

-It's amazing to me that some folks have the scoop on everything and everyone. They make it their business to know the business of everyone else.

-Gossip is a sin that we make light of; we make jokes about; we make fun of, and we act as if there is nothing wrong with gossip or evil talk, with talk that hurts and destroys.

What is gossip? The dictionary says it's something like idle talk, revealing personal secrets and indiscretions, revealing things that you know, to people who are not a part of the problem and who cannot be a part of the solution and have no business knowing about it in the first place; it is the revealing of things that should not be revealed to others.

Some Characteristics of gossip:

A. Gossip is always Sensational

-Pro 26:22 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. (something sweet in the mouth).

-It is taking the story or tale and blowing it up, making it bigger than it really is and add spice to what is being told. You have no need and no right to pass it on, but you do.

B. Gossip is always Slanted

-Gossip is characterized by being slanted downward; slanted to hurt someone. We want the juicy details.

Nobody's Friend

My name is gossip. I have no respect for justice.

I maim without killing. I break hearts and ruin lives.

I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age.

The more I am quoted the more I am believed.

I flourish at every level of society.

My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves

against me because I have no name and no face.

To track me down is impossible. The harder you try,

the more elusive I become.

I am nobody's friend.

Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.

I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights,

heartache and indigestion.

I spawn suspicion and generate grief.

I make innocent people cry in their pillows.

Even my name hisses. I am call Gossip.

Office gossip. Shop gossip. Party gossip. Telephone gossip.

I make headlines and headaches.

Before you repeat a story ask yourself, is it true?

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Is it fair? Is it necessary? If not – SHUT UP.

C. Gossip is always Secretive

-Pro 11:13 A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

It is the abuse of privileged information.

-There are things that you know and you know to be true, that if you are a person of faithful spirit, you will keep them to yourself.

D. Gossip is always somewhat Spiritual

-Pro 11:9 A hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

-A hypocrite is a play – actor; a pretender. He pretends to be your friend to your face, but he will knife you when your back is turned in an attempt to cover up the sin in his life.

-Potipher's wife brought false charges against Joseph to cover up her own sin.

There are two participants in gossip: A long, loose Tongue and a longing listening Ear.

-Pro 20:19 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

-The word “meddle” means don't give your ear to such a thing.

Love is never glad to hear bad news about another person.

Love never says, “Well, they finally got what they deserved.” Love is never happy to hear that a brother or sister fell into sin. Love does not enjoy passing on bad news. Love turns away from cheap gossip and takes no pleasure in the misfortunes of others. It takes no joy in hearing evil openly discussed.

Love gets excited when it hears of spiritual victories. Love encourages by expressing joy over little evidences of growth.

Pro 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

-The tongue has the power to kill, but also the power to give life.

Only a word of kindnesses

But it lightened one heart of its grief;

Only a word of sympathy

But it brought one soul relief.

Only a word of gentle cheer

But it flooded with radiant light.

The pathway that seemed so dark before,

And made the day more bright.

What tragedy that we often leave unspoken those words which have the power of life.

It seems easier to condemn than to commend; to point out a person's failures than his faithfulness.

I Corinthians 13:7

The Expressions of Love

In this Chapter we see:

? The Excellence of Love – 12:31-13:3

? The Expressions of Love – 13:4-8a

J. Love always Protects, always Trusts, always Hopes, always Preserves – v – 7

Paul gives us four very strong verbs in 13:7 to express the characteristics of Agapa love, but did you notice that each verb is followed by the words “all things.”

-The Greek speaks of the consistency of love and the comprehensiveness of love.

-Love is not just isolated to a few things, but touches every part of life and everything we do.

-Yet, in saying that, Paul is not saying that “all things” is all inclusive. Love does not, for example, believe everything. It is not “love” for a mother to believe her child when he denies getting into her fresh made chocolate pie, when the chocolate has formed a mustache around his mouth. Paul has just written that love “does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.”

By “all things” Paul means “all things” that are acceptable to God.”

-“All things” is not all inclusive. For example, love rejects envy, boasting, arrogance, rudeness, selfishness, ungodly anger, resentfulness, lies and hearsay.

All four of the main verbs in this verse are present tense, indicating these attitudes are to be one's lifestyle.

The word picture used here describes a roof that doesn't leak.

-Love is solid; it bears up under all things, or shelters all things. Paul says that love provides a shelter from the storms of life for the one it loves. It is like a roof which completely protects that person from exposure, ridicule, or harm.

(1) Love Bears all Things – 13:7a

The word “bears” means “to protect”; “to guard”; “to shield”.

-It is the idea of protecting others from ridicule, gossip, from being belittled or misunderstood by others.

-Love does what is necessary to help a person. True love is eager to protect a person from harm, ridicule and embarrassment.

-Love guards a person's reputation.

Love BEARS; it doesn't BARE!

The world "bares" all things. It exposes it, puts it out there where everybody can see it. There is nothing that is more sensational than baring the sins of famous people. If you walk through the grocery store, and you stop at the checkout lane, you'll see tabloid papers dedicated to exposing the sins of prominent movie stars.

-Our world loves sin. It loves the sensational dirt about people. Our sinful human nature finds pleasure in exposing the faults of others.

-Children play "tattle-tale." Adults often gossip about each other.

Love doesn't broadcast another's problems to everyone. Love doesn't run down others with jokes, sarcasm or put-downs.

-Love defends the character of the other person as much as possible within the limits of truth. Love won't lie about weaknesses, but neither will it deliberately expose and emphasize them. Love protects.

Love doesn't justify sin or compromise biblical principles.

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-Love will warn, exhort, rebuke, and discipline, but will do so in as private a manner as possible. Love always corrects in a way that is least embarrassing and hurtful.

-Love doesn't criticize in public. That's why I cringe whenever I hear a husband humiliating his wife in public or a wife making snide remarks about her husband. I always think, if they do that in public, what do they do in private.

-The same is true about parents belittling or talking down or screaming in anger at their children in public.

-Eph. 6:4 - "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath..." Don't rule your family with rigid and domineering authority. It may drive his children to anger, despair, and resentment.

Prov. 17:9 "He who covers an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."

-I Peter 4:8 "...for love will cover a multitude of sins"

-I John 4:10 "Jesus is the propitiation for our sins". The word "propitiation" means "atoning sacrifice" or "covering". Jesus is the covering or protection from the consequences of our sin. At the cross, God threw his great blanket of love over all our sins. At the cross, God protected us from the consequences of our sins.

There is a great story about the days of England's Oliver Cromwell. A soldier had been convicted of a serious crime and was sentenced to die. The man's fiance' came and plead for the life of the one she loved. Cromwell declined her appeal and said the man would be executed when the curfew bell sounded. The Sexton pulled on the rope again and again, but nothing happened. The fiance' had climbed up into the belfry and wrapped herself around the clapper so it would not sound. Her body was smashed, bloodied, and bruised but she didn't let go until the clapper stopped swinging. She managed to climb down, bruised, and bleeding, to meet those awaiting the execution. When she explained what she had done to Cromwell, he was so impressed by her love that he commuted the sentence.

(2)Love Believes all Things – 13:7b

This does not mean that Christians are to be gullible and are easily deceived and believes every falsehood that is told him.

-It does mean that love always trusts. It means that love is not suspicious and is not quick to misjudge others and is not always ready to believe the worse about another.

-Love always wants to believe the best about people instead of the worst.

-When love hears something bad about someone, it says, "I can't believe that about _____." A lack of love says, "That sounds just like something he would do."

Love gives the benefit of a doubt. In the O.T., Job's three friends showed few signs of love and trust in him when they came to console him. Job lost his children, his wealth, his health. His friends mistakenly told Job that God rewards good people and causes sinners to suffer. Therefore, if Job was suffering, he must be guilty of some sin.

-Yet, Job 1:1, says Job was perfect (mature), upright, feared God, and turned away from doing evil.

-Few things can enhance relationships like letting people know you believe in them, especially when they are suffering or discouraged.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, the younger son wanted his inheritance before his dad died. Dad reluctantly gave him the inheritance. The boy left and squandered everything in reckless living. Eventually, the boy ended up homeless, forced to eat pig food. Finally, broke and humiliated, the boy decided to go home, humble himself and ask his dad if he could work as a hired hand. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him and ran to his son, hugged him and kissed him." How did the father see him afar off? I believe it was because the dad believed his son would return and was looking for him. Think what it must have meant to the boy to see his father running toward him.

(3)Love Hopes All Things – 13:7c

Love never gives up on people because if it does, it gives up on the power of God to change lives.

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-Hope sees the beauty in another person. It sees not only what a person is, but what that person can become.

Look at the people that others gave up on that Jesus did not give up on as hopeless: the woman caught in the act of adultery,

Zacchaeus, the Dying Thief, and most of us.

-We cannot give up on our spouses or our children.

-Discouragement, or losing hope, is the primary weapon the Evil one uses to cause us to give up on people and stop praying for them.

-God has given us His Word, the Bible, to give us examples of folks whose lives were transformed by the power of God.

When Paul says that love “hopes all things,” he means we never give up hope. Sometimes, we run short of faith, but we should never give up hope. We must keep loving a lost person and never give up the hope that he or she might someday come to know the Lord and be saved.

-We must never give up loving a prodigal child and hoping and praying that someday he or she might return and truly walk with the Lord.

(4) Love Endures All Things – 13:7d

Love hangs in there. Love is long suffering under pressure. It does not weaken under stress or strain.

There is an epidemic among Christians of bailing out of tough situations.

-People don't like something that happens in a church. They go find another church more to their liking.

-They run into problems or disagreements in their marriage, grow tired of the effort and bail out.

Love never sees anything as beyond despair. It has confidence in God. It knows that “God can do exceeding abundantly beyond all we can ask or imagine.”

-This kind of love will not give up on people. It refuses to get discouraged. It is willing to pay whatever price is necessary. It will hold ground at any cost. It refuses to hang it all up.

These people keep loving, they keep praying, they keep believing that love can win out in the end.

Are you near a point of despair in your life? Is there some problem that seems overwhelming or some situation or person that makes you want to give up? May I remind you of some key truths?

1. God is bigger than any crisis. His strength is sufficient for your needs.

2. God can transform any heart.

3. God can use any circumstance for His glory.

4. And even though you may be ready to give up, God will never give up on you. He will continue to pursue you, to love you, and to see past where you are to where He can take you.

I Corinthians 13:8-13

The Endurance of Love

The theme of the final section of I Cor. 13 is that “love never fails.” That's why we are to express love to each other daily.

-Just as the presence of “love covers a multitude of sins” (I Peter 4:8), the lack of love causes a multitude of sins.

It is difficult for us to read the first words, “love never fails,” without a sense of confusion. Many of us have witnessed the apparent failure of love. Marriages have ended in divorce. Friendships have been destroyed. Children have disowned parents. Siblings have become like strangers. Churches have split.

When Paul says that “love never fails”, it is important to note that he is not referring to success.

-Love does not always win, at least not in the usual sense. Jesus Christ was love incarnate, yet He did not by His perfect love succeed in winning every person to Himself. He was ridiculed, maligned, denied, rejected and crucified.

-Because love doesn't overpower the human will, we cannot always accomplish our purposes, no matter how loving, spiritual, and self-less we may be. But no godly work can be accomplished without love.

The word “fails” here means: love never becomes obsolete; it never decays; is dateless; is tireless; is not movable; love never ceases to be in existence; never falls into ruin, is never without effect; will always abide; and will always be exercised.

-Love will continue to abide, even throughout eternity – 13:8,13

-John 13:1 “Having loved His own, He loved them to the end.”

Love is more important than spiritual gifts because spiritual gifts will fail.

-To put it another way: Gifts are Temporary (13:8), Gifts are Partial (13:9-10), Gifts are Elementary (13:11-12), Love is Eternal (13:13).

13:8

a. “Prophecy will fail”

Paul does NOT mean that the prophecies that are given are not true, BUT that prophecies will be fulfilled. Once they are fulfilled, they are no longer prophecies, but history.

b. “Tongues will cease”

There will be a time when the gift of tongues will be no more. The primary use and gift of tongues ceased after the first church age.

c. “Knowledge will vanish away” or be obsolete.

Knowledge is progressive. Much of what was knowledge, a few years ago, is already out of date (such things as science and medicine). Knowledge will vanish away.

13:9-12

Two words are important to the understanding of these verses- "NOW" and "THEN"

- "NOW" deals with the present and deals with the earth; "THEN" deals with the future and deals with heaven.

No godly work can be accomplished without love. Success will not always be a part of love, but love will always be a part of true spiritual success.

Let me illustrate: Jesus loved perfectly and yet the crucifixion makes it appear that His love failed. However, as we have gained a measure of perspective over the years, we see that Jesus' love did not fail. It is still changing

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and transforming people.

When we feel that love has failed, here are two things to keep in mind:

(1) We Don't Yet See Clearly

As I have gotten older, going to the Eye Doctor has been more and more of an adventure. He will ask me to take my glasses off. He will cover my eye and ask me to read from the chart on the wall. I want to read the fine print but I am finding that I can read less and less of that chart because the rest of it is blurry. When the Doctor says, "What do you see on the bottom line?" I have to answer, "I only see a blur of black and white." Paul says our life in this world is like that eye chart, we only see in part.

When you look through a dark glass, you can make out some things, but not others. If you have to drive in a snowstorm or a driving rain, sometimes you can't even see the car in front of you. If you drive in the fog, there are times when it is difficult to see the center line, much less other cars or hazards in the road.

Paul says this is the way we are in this life. We don't see clearly. We don't see all the factors and issues of life.

- We don't see how God is using trials or difficulties to mold us or to enrich someone else.
- We don't see how a warm greeting toward someone today could open the door for a life-changing opportunity tomorrow.
- We don't understand why God allows the tragedies that strike the world.

We only see in part.

(2) We don't see correctly

We don't fully recognize our sinfulness and the consequences of it.

-We don't understand what holiness means so we aren't able to grasp what an offense to holiness our sin is to God.

Think about a child. They know they are in trouble and have committed an offense. They know they shouldn't have been playing with matches, but they don't understand the danger and destruction they could have caused.

They know that they weren't supposed to go near the street, but they don't grasp the devastating consequences their actions could produce.

-Children may think their parents are mean and cranky because they don't see the wider consequences of what they do.

13:13-14:1

How often these three words – Faith, Hope, and Love – are found in the N.T.

(1) Rom. 5:1-5 - "Being justified by FAITH...we rejoice in HOPE...because the LOVE of God is shed abroad in our hearts."

(2) Col. 1:4-5 - "We heard of your FAITH in Christ Jesus, and of the LOVE which ye have to all the saints, for the HOPE which is laid up for you in heaven."

(3) Thess. 1:3 "Remembering without ceasing your work of FAITH and labour of Love, and patience of HOPE in our Lord Jesus Christ."

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Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God.

Hope is our confidence in the future.

Love ties faith and hope together.

Will there be any need for Faith, Hope, and Love in Heaven?

-The word "abideth" means to continue to grow. These will be complete – THEN!

I Corinthians 14:1-40

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM PUBLIC WORSHIP

In I Corinthians 12-14 Paul addresses the importance of spiritual gifts as they relate to the Body of Christ and how these gifts are to be used in public worship.

Paul has discussed the Gift of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit Himself), the Gifts of the Spirit, the Graces of the Spirit, and now he concludes this section by explaining the Government of the Spirit.

Students of Practical Theology will tell you that there are five major functions of a New Testament church.

1. Worship: A New Testament church has the responsibility to worship God.
2. Proclamation of the Word of God: To proclaim the whole counsel of the Word of God.
3. Discipline: That's why we have Sunday School teachers.
4. Ministry: Both to its members and to the people of the community. Ministry is a vital part of what a church is. That's why we have

a music ministry, and a men's ministry.

5. Fellowship: Times of celebration, praise and just times of being together. We draw strength from each other as we fellowship one with another.

Then Paul gives us six things we are to do in public worship.

1. Prophecy 14:1 - not fore-telling; forth-telling

2. Pray 14:14

3. Sing 14:15 singing is a part of worship. Did you know you are living in disobedience to God if you do not sing when you come to church?

- The Bible says, "Come before His presence with singing." Now sometimes people will say, "Well, Preacher, I just can't carry a tune in a bucket. I don't sing well. So therefore, I don't sing."

- I've said it before; I'll say it again, as a Christian you don't sing because you can sing. You sing because you have a song! And God loves to hear you sing. Singing is a part of public worship.

4. Bless 14:16 The word "bless" literally means praise. When we say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," we're saying, "Praise the Lord, O my soul" and it is to be a part of public worship – the adoring of the Person of God.

5. Giving of thanks 14:16 How do we do that? We express thanks to the Lord when we receive the offering. We express thanks to the Lord when we give joyfully, obediently, and with a sense of gratitude to God for what He had done on our behalf.

6. Evangelism 14:23 Every time we gather for public worship there ought to be an

appeal to lost people to come to Jesus Christ and be saved.

Let me point out that Satan has one goal in mind. He loves to destroy public worship.

It was the gift of speaking in tongues that Satan got hold of and twisted it and abused it and, instead of being something good, he twisted it into being something bad. It became a tool for Satan to destroy public worship.

Every time Paul seems to encourage tongues, he turns right around and discourages it – 14:5, 18-19.

Paul says tongues are of little value (verse 19); that tongues are not understood by people (verse 2), that tongues do not edify the church (verse 4), that tongues do not profit; no benefit, encourage, or comfort (verse 6).

A pastor had a lady who jumped up and spoke in tongues in his service. It happened several times and of course, there was no one to interpret. He got a little frustrated with it. One day she jumped up and spoke in tongues and again no one there to interpret and the pastor said, "I have the interpretation of that. That means God wants you to sell your house and give it all to the Church!" She never did it again.

Paul asked that his readers examine honestly and with open mindedness what the misuse of tongues was doing to their public worship:

1. They were making a superior gift (prophecy) inferior, and an inferior gift superior 14:5.

2. They were seeking recognition from man rather than from God 14:2

3. Rather than building up the body of Christ, they sought only self-edification 14:18-19.

4. They were creating confusion and disorder 14:33, 40

5. Those speaking in tongues seemed to think they were spiritually superior to others who did not have the same gift 14:5

Some say their speaking in tongues is an angelic or heavenly language, a language not known to man.

• They say tongues is a prayer language that man doesn't understand, but God does; a special way of communicating with God.

• I Corinthians 14:14 Paul says it is "unfruitful" which misses the whole purpose of spiritual gifts.

What do you have a right to expect from public worship? 14:3

A. Edification To Build you up

Strengthen the inner manifestations

B. Enlightenment To Stir you up

To give insight and inspiration

C. Encouragement To Cheer you up

I Corinthians 15:1-11

THE GOSPEL

The word "Gospel" appears some one hundred times in the New Testament.

The word "gospel" is often referred to as "good news," but it is not just any piece of good news. The gospel is a particular message.

The gospel is not a broad, general message. It is a very narrow and specific message.

Sometimes two people will be gossiping and one will say, "Now that's the gospel truth." Well, what they are saying may be the truth, but it is not the gospel truth.

There is all kinds of good news:

- You may be ill and go to the hospital. The doctor runs some test and when he gets the results he may say, "I have good news for you. There's nothing major going on." That's good news, but it's not the gospel.
- Maybe you've been without a job and finally you get the call, "You can report for work in the morning at eight o'clock." That's good news, but it's not the gospel.

Again, the gospel is a message, but not just any message. Let me give you some examples of messages in the church that are NOT gospel messages.

- The gospel is not a message on stewardship.

As important as stewardship is, stewardship is not the message of the gospel. Stewardship is a biblical message, but not a gospel message.

- The gospel is not a message on holy living.

As important as holy living is, it is not the message of the gospel.

The message of the gospel centers in Jesus Christ and what He did for mankind on the cross.

- The primary function of the Church is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- People ought to pass by our churches and say, "That's where the gospel is proclaimed."

When Paul begins I Corinthians 15, he starts off with a word of rebuke.

- The word "moreover" literally means "but". "But, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel."
- The rebuke came because the believers in Corinth had come to the point in their church where they were emphasizing spiritual gifts, especially the gift of speaking in tongues, over the gospel.

Most of the material in I Corinthians deals with the problems of Disorders in the Corinthian

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church. Now I Corinthians 15 deals with the Problem of Doctrine.

The problem of Doctrine has to do with the Doctrine of the Resurrection. It was not so much that they denied the resurrection of Christ, but many doubted their own resurrection. See 15:12

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the foundation stone of Christianity. It is also the heart of Jesus' teaching and the central message of the Church.

- I Corinthians 15:19: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable."

- Romans 10:9 : "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

No wonder the resurrection has been the target of Satan's greatest attacks against the Church.

Paul ties the gospel and his teaching on the resurrection together.

I. The Substance of the Gospel

What is the Gospel? It is the good news that:

A. Christ Died for our sins 15:3

Why did Jesus have to die for our sins?

1. It was a Demonstration of God's Love Toward Us.

Some think that God is mean and cruel and vindictive, but God is a God of love.

John 3:16

2. It Provided Forgiveness of our Sins Hebrews 9:22

The word "remission" means "forgiveness." God has not forgiven us on the basis of our merits or our service, but on the basis of the shed blood of Christ.

3. It Provided Redemption for our Souls.

There is no other way for us to be redeemed or saved than through the death of Christ .

4. He Had to Die for our sins Because ALL of us are Sinners.

Romans 3:23; 6:23, Isaiah 53:6

5. To Reconcile us to God Romans 5:8-10

6. That He Might Bring us to God I Peter 3:18

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B. Christ Was Buried 15:4

- I've had to go to many funerals as a preacher and I've never been to one that I enjoyed. And, yet, the Bible tells us that the funeral, the burial of Jesus, was part of God's good news.

- What is a funeral? Why do we have funerals? What's their purpose? The purpose of a funeral is to provide finality or closure to that person's life.

Jesus was buried because that's what we do with dead people.

- There was going to be some who said that Jesus didn't really die. It was just a plot.
- Jesus was buried to demonstrate the end of His earthly life. They not only buried Him, they sealed the tomb and rolled a stone before it.

C. Christ was Raised from the Dead 15:4

I've been to funerals, but I've never been to a resurrection. Have you?

The Bible says that He was dead, but is alive for ever more.

II. The Sharing of the Gospel

How is the gospel communicated? Through music, through the writing of books, through one-on-one witnessing, through puppetry.

The primary way is through preaching the gospel.

Everybody needs to hear the gospel: the rich and the poor; the Jew and the Gentile; the uppity ups and down and outs, those in prison and the keepers of the prison. Everybody!

III. The Source of the Gospel

Where did the gospel come from? Paul said that he Received it and then he Delivered it to them.

- "I received it"... from another source. I didn't just dream it up.
- Paul didn't Design the gospel; he simply Delivered it.
- The origin of our gospel is from the heart of a loving God, manifested in the person of Jesus Christ.

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IV. The Singleness of our Gospel

It is the exclusive gospel Galatians 1:6-10; Acts 4:12

V. The Supply of the Gospel 15:1-2

What does the gospel do?

It Saves Instantly

No person is saved in degrees. It is not something that takes place over a period of time. It happens instantly.

- The moment a person places their faith in Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for salvation, they are saved.
- The process of one coming to that moment of trust and belief may extend over a period of time, but the salvation experience is instant.

The Gospel Saves Eternally

Notice the word "stand" in 15:1 and the words "hold fast" in 15:2.

- We were not just saved in the past. Rather, salvation is on-going. We are in the state of Being saved. That's what 15:2 means.
- This does not mean that genuine believers lose their salvation if they fall into sin or have moments or even seasons of doubt.
- Rather it is a warning against false profession. Phillips translates it like this: "If you remain faithful to the message I gave you, your salvation is being worked out – unless, of course, your faith had no meaning behind it."

We are saved because God holds to us; not because we hold to God – John 10:28-29

- We can no more maintain our salvation than we can earn our salvation. That fact that we "hold fast" to God is the EVIDENCE that He is holding fast to us.
- A true believer may stumble or struggle with doubts, but his salvation is evidence in that through it all he holds to Christ.
- John 8:31 "If you abide in my Word, you are my disciples indeed."

VI. The Surety of the Gospel 15:12, 5-11

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The resurrection gives life to every other part and area of the gospel.

- If Satan could produce the body of Christ, Christianity would be finished.
- The resurrection was the message of Jesus:
- Mark 8:31 Jesus taught that "the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priest and scribes, and be killed and after three days be raised again."
- John 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in me shall live, even if he dies."
- Jesus appeared to Peter alone.
- Then by the twelve – this is a title. Judas was dead; Thomas was not there, but the ten that were there were called by the title.
- After that He was seen by over 500 at once.
- Then He was seen by James, our Lord's half-brother.
- Then by all of the Apostles – by all but Judas.
- Then by Paul.

One day He will be seen by every saint.

I Corinthians 15:12–34

THE RESURRECTION PLAN

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is unquestionable the most important event in all of history. And it is the most significant event in the life of Jesus Christ.

- His life was an eventful one. His life was no ordinary life. Jesus was born of a virgin; He lived life without sin; He died on the cross to provide salvation for those who would trust in Him; He arose from the dead; He bodily ascended into heaven; He now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High; one day Jesus Christ will return and rule and reign on planet earth as its Sovereign Lord.

- All of that means nothing apart from His resurrection. Because He was resurrected, we too shall experience resurrection.

The oldest book in the Bible is the Book of Job. Job asked a question that was pertinent then and it is pertinent today ...”If a man dies, shall he live again?” Is there life after death?

The only place you find the answer to that question is in the Word of God, and the Scripture gives an unequivocal “yes”.

Though obscure, the bodily resurrection of believers is presented in the Old Testament.

- Psalm 17:15 “As for me, I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”

- Psalm 49:15 “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me.”

- Psalm 73:24 “You will guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

- Job 19:26 “And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.”

- Daniel 12:2 “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The New Testament fully explains what the Old Testament hinted at.

- John 6:44 “No one can come to me unless the Father Who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

- John 11:25 “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live.”

- Luke 20:37-38 “But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead
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but of the living, for all live in Him.”

- Acts 13:15 “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accepted, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”

- I Corinthians 15:12

In 15:13-19, Paul list seven consequences if there is no resurrection of Believers.

1. If the Dead do not Rise, Christ is not Risen 15:12-13

- I Corinthians 15:2-4

- Luke 24:39 When Jesus first appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, they thought He was a spirit or ghost. He said to them, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bone as you see me here.” Notice: not flesh and “blood” we will have flesh and bone for structure, but not blood. It was the precious blood of Jesus that redeemed us.

- Revelation 1:17-18 Jesus appeared to John on the Island of Patmos and said, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and Death.”

2. If the Dead do not Rise, the Gospel is Meaningless 15:14a

3. If the Dead do not Rise, Our Faith is Worthless 15:14b

4. If the Dead do not Rise, the Testimonies of the Witnesses are lies 15:15

5. If the Dead do not Rise, We are Unsaved 15:16-17

6. If the Dead do not Rise, Dead Believers have Perished 15:18

7. If the Dead do not Rise, Believers are to be Pitied 15:19

If Christ has not been raised: We are all Deceived 15:15

We are all Doomed 15:17

We are all in Despair 15:19

Without the resurrection we have no Savior, no forgiveness, no gospel, no meaningful faith, no life and no hope of any of these things. Without the resurrection, the Bible is a lie. Without the resurrection, the church is pointless, close it down, sell the property, and send the money to cancer research or something that will help us live longer because without the resurrection there is no hope in the afterlife.

Without the resurrection there are no absolutes. We might as well do whatever our hearts desire. We should "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." Because we have no hope of tomorrow we should indulge in every desire of the flesh. We should lie, cheat and steal without regard for consequences because this life only lasts for a while and then it is over.

To live for Christ in this life only is complete foolishness. Without the resurrection to teach, preach, witness, give, suffer, sacrifice and work is entirely for nothing. Our lives would be

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wasted on empty promises.

Yet because Christ is raised, we are not to be pitied. We are not to be pitied because by His grace we will not be doomed to hell; rather we will spend eternity in heaven. Romans 8:1 says,

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

What is God's Resurrection Plan?

A. The Resurrection of the Redeemer 15:20-22

Jewish readers would be very familiar with the word "firstfruits." It came to us from the Mosaic Law. A Hebrew farmer would offer as a sacrifice to God the "firstfruits" from his field.

The firstfruits of the harvest represents the first of the harvest to come in; the best of the best is offered; the promise of more to come.

The firstfruits were a first installment of the harvest with the promise of more to follow. Jesus is the first of a great harvest.

Note 15:21-22. At Christ's resurrection He reversed what Adam did to the race.

Just as Adam was the forefather of everyone who dies, Christ is the forefather of every saint who will be raised to life.

In Adam all have inherited a sin nature and will therefore die; in Christ all who believe in Him have inherited eternal life, and shall be made alive in body and in spirit.

Romans 5:19 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

B. The Resurrection of the Redeemed 15:23

The second resurrection that Paul discusses is one that will take place when Jesus returns. It is the resurrection of those who have died in faith, having placed their trust in the provision of God which is Jesus Christ.

- The Lord will return to raise (resurrect) and to rapture His people and set up His kingdom.

- Christ was raised first and the resurrection of His saints will follow His coming – BUT

the harvest will not be all at once, but will have its own order or sequence.

1. Believers who have come to saving faith from Pentecost to the Rapture who have died –

I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

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2. Believers who are alive at Christ's coming will not taste death, but will be caught up or raptured and will be transformed in the air and ascend to heaven.

3. Those who come to faith during the Tribulation, with the Old Testament saints as well, will be raised up to reign with Him during the millennium – Revelation 20:4; Daniel

12:2.

4. Those who die during the millennium kingdom may well be instantly transformed at death into their eternal bodies and spirits.

The only resurrection remaining will be that of the unrighteous, who will be raised to damnation and eternal punishment at the end of Christ's 1,000 year reign. They will stand at the Great White Judgment of God, which will be followed by eternal hell.

C. The Restoration 15:24-34

"Then the end" This will be a time of restoration.

After this, after the final resurrection, Jesus "delivers the kingdom to God the Father." All things will be restored to the way they were designed by God to be in the sinless glory of the new heavens and the new earth. God's rule will be unopposed.

Jesus will turn over a fully restored world to the Father who sent Him. His mission will be fully accomplished.

At that time Jesus will put down and destroy "all rule and all authority and power."

I Corinthians 15:25 – In ancient times, when a king conquered another kingdom or army, he would literally put his foot on the neck of his conquered enemy to symbolize his enemy's total subjection. In much the same way, Christ will rule on the earth until He has put all His enemies "under His feet."

I Corinthians 15:26 – Death will never affect us again at the end of the millennium for Christ broke the power of death on the cross. Jesus will one day cast death and hell into the lake of fire and death will be no more – Revelation 21:4.

I Corinthians 15:28 – There are some 40 interpretations of this verse. It does not teach that a dead person can be saved by another person's being baptized on behalf of them; because baptism never has a part in a person's salvation.

A reasonable view seems to be that “they...who are baptized” refers to living believers who give outward testimony to their faith in baptism by water because they were first drawn to Christ by the exemplary lives, faithful influence, and witness of believers who had subsequently died. Paul's point is that if there is no resurrection and no life after death, then

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why are people coming to Christ to follow the hope of those who have died?

I Corinthians 15:33-34 – Knowing that Jesus is alive and coming again should have an effect upon every person's life. Paul leaves us a plea to live a life of purity.

The folks we hang around with have a lot to do with the way we live.

If we are backslidden Christians, we have never considered the implications of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is a hereafter, there will be a judgment seat of Christ, and we will give an account of our lives. This life is preparation for the next life, and so its important how we live.

In the resurrection, we will be more alive There than we ever could be Here!

I Corinthians 15:35-49

NEW BODIES!!

When it comes to the resurrection of our bodies, it seems that we have more questions than answers – questions that nag and boggle our minds.

For example:

- What about babies ...will they be raised as infants or adults?
- What about the brain-damaged or deformed persons?
- What about those who have experienced violent, tragic deaths, like those who have been blown-up, crushed, dismembered, or lost at sea?
- What about people who have been cremated; some whose ashes have been carried away in the wind.

How will God resurrect these people?

Roger Williams, the founder of the Rhode Island colony: when they were going to rebury him, they discovered a strange thing had happened to him when they dug his body up. They had buried him under an apple tree. The root of the apple tree had penetrated the head of his coffin, and, in fact, Williams' head. The root had driven its way through the spine, wrapping itself around the vertebra. When it got to the hips of the skeleton, it separated and one root went down one leg and one root went down the other, right to the ankle.

Well, it got even more complicated than that. The chemicals and minerals of his body and bones were absorbed by the roots, which were transferred to the fruit of the tree, and the people who ate the apples, without realizing it were eating

How is God going to handle that?!?

This passage begins with two questions: “How are the dead raised up?” and “With what body do they come?”

- Sometimes people ask me questions concerning the future and the after-life. They ask because they really want to know the truth.
- But these questions were not being asked by sincere believers in Christ who wanted to know the truth. These questions were being asked by people who were trying to undermine the Christian faith.

• They were asking the questions like this: “Oh, you believe in the resurrection, do you? Well, tell me, how are the dead raised up? Why that's silly. In fact, it's impossible!”

• You say, “Preacher, how do you know that's the way they asked the questions?” Notice 15:36 “Thou fool” means “without mind” or “mindless”. These folks asked those

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questions because they did not have a mind to understand the things of God. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned.

Three things I want us to look at:

I. The Illustrations of Resurrection Bodies 15:35-41

Let me begin by sharing a statement from Warren Wiersbe: Resurrection is not Reconstruction! No where does the Bible teach that at the resurrection, God will “put together the pieces” and return us to our former bodies. There is continuity (it is “our” body), but it will not be the “same” body.

Paul uses three illustrations to teach about our resurrection bodies. He uses Seeds, 15:37-38; Flesh, 15:39; and Planet.

The “How” part of the “How are the dead raised” is developed the same way in all three illustrations – Seeds, Flesh, Planets – so we will look at only one illustrations – Seeds.

Three words describe the resurrection process: Death, Different, and Distinctiveness.

A. Death 15:36

The word “die” literally means “to die off.” Somewhere, sometime, Someday, and somehow we all die off. Life will cease to exist as we know it in this body.

- The word does not speak of someone that has ceased to exist. It speaks of those who are not living in this present world, as you and I are now living. The implication being that they are still living. They live, but live in different conditions than we do on earth.
- It is the Soul of our loved ones that is in heaven at the present. From all I can understand, their soul possesses a BODILY FORM and they still retain their individuality and identities.
- They are known by others, walk, talk, have emotions, etc., except they are spirit-beings. They left their body behind on earth. If you were to open their grave you will find the remains of their body still there. They continue to live but in different conditions and in a different environment.
- Paul tells us that one day, at the resurrection, they will once again indwell their bodies.
- The word “quicken” (verse 36) means “to make alive.” Paul is talking about the body being made alive. To put it simply, one day our bodies will live again.

A seed appears to be a dead thing. It is hard and inanimate.

A seed does not breathe or have a heartbeat.

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- John 12:24 “most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.
- Our physical body must die to give life to our spiritual body.

When a seed is planted in the ground, it decomposes as a seed. It must cease to exist in its original form as a seed before it can come to life in its final form as a plant.

God says of man in Genesis 3:19, “For out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

B. Different 15:37

Both in the growing of crops and in the resurrection of bodies, there is a difference in the original and the final forms.

The seed loses its identity as a seed and becomes more and more like the mature plant.

When you plant corn seeds, the plant that comes from the seed is very different from the seed itself.

- When Jesus was raised from the dead, His resurrection body was quite different. He looked somewhat the same. He was recognizable, but He was no longer limited by time, space, or material objects. He appeared and disappeared. He came into rooms without opening doors.
- When we are raised from the dead, we will be the same, yet very different too.
- I John 3:2 “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Springtime is a wonderful testimony of the future resurrection. We put flower bulbs in the ground and in a few weeks, up comes the plant that produces a beautiful flower. The flower comes from the seemingly dead bulb; it is the same but different.

Every spring we see things that seem so dead, begin to sprout new life. Trees that were bare, now are beautiful. Grass that was brown, now is green. Flowers that seem to have died, now are blooming. This is His design.

C. Distinctiveness 15:38

Though a seed changes radically in becoming a mature plant, it remains the same life form. A wheat seed does not become a stalk of corn. It is a different form, but has the same life.

- When Jesus was raised from the dead, He was very different, but He was still Jesus. His disciples knew Him. They recognized His Voice. His face, hands, and feet were identifiable to them.

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- In the same way, our bodies will die and change forms, but they will still be our bodies.

II. The Improvements of Resurrection Bodies 15:42-44

The second question; “With what kind of body do they come forth?”

The human body is described by Paul in some vivid words:

“Perishable” – verse 42; “Dishonored” – verse 43; “weakness” – verse 43; “Earthly” – verse 48; “Mortal” – verse 53.

None of these are pleasant words. None give gracious descriptions of our natural bodies.

From the moment we are born, we start the journey toward the perishing of the body. It is just a matter of time until the body of every person dies. It is perishable because it has been stained with sin’s pollution.

Paul then uses a series of words to describe what the resurrection body will be like and to show how different it will be from the natural.

“Imperishable” – verse 42; “Glory” – verse 43; “Power” – verse 43; “Heavenly” – Verse 48; “Immortality” – verse 53.

Paul gives us four sets of contrast in which our glorified bodies will be different from our earthly bodies.

A. Our bodies are sown in corruption; raised in Incorruption 15:42

Pertains to Durability

The word “corruption” describes “decomposition.” It is also translated “Perishable.”

- We understand what that means. We buy products that are perishable. Milk is perishable. After a few days it turns sour. Fruit and

vegetables are perishable. If we don't use them they will spoil or rot. Bread will mold.

- Many products have an expiration date. So it is with the human body. It is corruptible, perishable. We have a build-in expiration date.
- Psalm 90:10 "The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years ..., yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away."
- From the moment we are born we begin a process of wearing out, deterioration, and breaking down.

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- Let's see how many of us are already beginning to fall apart: How many of you wear glasses...are losing hair...have false teeth...wear hearing aids?
- Many of us are cursed by the four B's: Baldness, Bulges, Bifocals, and Bunions.

Our new body will never break down, wear out, or deteriorate. The process of decomposition will be no more and throughout the ages of eternity they will remain the same.

Our new bodies will know no sickness, decay, deterioration, or death.

B. Our bodies are Sown in Dishonor; Raised in Glory 15:43a

Pertains to Value and Potential

The word "dishonor" indicates the present sphere in which our bodies now exist. This world we live in is in a fallen state and the evidence is all around us.

Each of us live in an environment and atmosphere of corruption. We are born in sin; we all struggle with sin all the days of our life; we die in sin.

One day our imperfect, dishonored body will be raised in glory. Throughout eternity our new immortal bodies will be honorable bodies, perfect for pleasing, praising and enjoying the Creator who made them.

C. Our Bodies are Sown in Weakness; Raised in Power 15:43b

Pertains to Ability

We are weak not only in physical strength and endurance, but also in resistance to disease. Our earthly bodies are fragile.

Our new bodies will be raised in power. No longer will we have to say, "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak". Matthew 26:41

D. Our Body is Sown a Natural Body; Raised a Spiritual Body 15:44

Pertains to the Realm of Existence

Our natural bodies are suited for and limited to the physical world.

The new body of the believer will be raised a spiritual body. Our spirits now reside in earthly bodies, but one day they will reside in spiritual bodies. In every way we then will be spiritual beings. In both spirit and body, we will be perfectly suited for heavenly living.

III. The Image of Resurrection Bodies 15:45-49

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Paul compares Adam to Jesus. Jesus is the prototype, the first edition, the earlier version of the resurrected body!

Adam became "a living being," but Jesus is a "life-giving spirit".

Through Adam we inherit sin and physical death. Through Jesus we inherit righteousness and eternal life.

These bodies that are born perishable, dishonored, weak, and natural will be raised as bodies that are incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual.

Philippians 3:21 Christ "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself."

I John 3:2

I Corinthians 15:50-58

VICTORY OVER DEATH

Someone has written,

There is a preacher of the old school, but he speaks as boldly as ever. He is not popular, though the world is his parish and he travels every part of the globe and speaks in every language. He visits the poor, calls upon the rich, preaches to people of every religion and no religion, and the subject of her sermon is always the same. He is an eloquent preacher, often stirring feelings which no other preacher could, and bringing tears to eyes that never weep. His arguments none are able to refute, nor is there any heart that has remained unmoved by the force of his appeals. He shatters life with his message. Most people hate him; everyone fears him. His name?

Death. Every tombstone is his pulpit, every newspaper prints his text, and someday everyone of you will be his sermon.

Every one of us will one day experience death with the exception of those Christians who are alive when Jesus returns.

- Not every Christian is going to have to die to go to heaven. The fact is that more Christians live with the blessed hope that they will be alive when Jesus comes and because of that will not have to taste of death.
- But – only two believers have escaped death – Enoch and Elijah. Only two out of millions and millions and millions. So our chances of going out like that are not very good. But Paul says there is going to be a generation of Christians that go to heaven

without dying to get there.

- Our Christian hope boils down to the truth of I Corinthians 15. If this chapter is not true, then the Christian faith is a farce.
- The hope of the Christian is in the ONE who said, "Because I live, you also shall live." (John 14:19)
- Christians have hope IN death and OVER death because of the victory of Jesus Christ in His own resurrection.
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is woven throughout I Corinthian 15. Because Jesus Christ is alive, Paul declares that we who have trusted Him will also live again in Him.

Paul concludes I Corinthians 15 with a victory song:

I. The Great Transformation 15:50-53

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Every genuine born again Child of God lives in anticipation of the sounding of a trumpet. It is identified in Scripture as "THE LAST TRUMPET", because it will bring to an end this world as we know it.

Not only is it a LAST TRUMPET, it will also be a LOUD TRUMPET, for even the dead shall be awoken by it. Then it is also THE LORD'S TRUMPET. In I Thessalonians 4:16 Paul speaks of it as "the trump of God."

It's good to know that this world as we know it is not going to be brought to an end by the devices of the devil but by the design of the Son of God.

- The world Belongs to Him. The Bible says, "All things were created by Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16:18; John 1:103).
- This world does not belong to the enemy of God. This world belongs to Jesus. It's His and one day He shall reclaim His own.

When the trumpet sounds it will be to announce that the resurrection is at that very moment taking place.

A. The Truth Presented 15:50-51, 53

Some have pointed out that 15:51 is the theme of the church Nursery!

The word "must" in 15:53 is in the emphatic and means that something is absolutely necessary.

- Note 15:50 It is not possible for our natural bodies to enter into heaven. They are totally unsuited for heaven.
- God is going to change our bodies and give us new ones suited for heaven.

That word "change" is a very important word. It means to transform into something that is totally different; to be changed into a different kind.

In 15:51 we should not miss the phrase: "Behold, I show you a mystery."

- The word "mystery" means something that has been concealed, but now is made known at this time. It is a revealed secret. It is a secret that was known in the mind of God that man would have never known if God had not revealed it unto him.
- Man would not have stumbled across it accidentally; would not have discovered it intentionally. No man has ever lived or ever could have lived that would have ever discovered the secret of God. The only way this secret was ever known is because God chose to reveal it.
- Paul says, "Behold I show you a revealed secret God."

What was that mystery or that revealed secret or truth? It is the truth that all will not die. Those who are alive at His coming (the rapture) will be changed into their spiritual bodies without tasting death.

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The word "sleep" is one of Paul's favorite terms to describe death. Death is described as sleep in that it implies awaking. When we go to sleep at night, we anticipate working up in the morning.

Death may take our bodies, but death cannot take our hope because our hope is in Him. Death has already been conquered by Him. I may sleep, but I will rise again.

The beauty of this verse is that whether we are those who are alive or those, who are already dead, we still have the same hope. It doesn't matter. When Jesus comes, we will either go to be with Him or we'll rise to meet Him. Either way, it's good.

B. The Time Proposed 15:52

1. "In a moment"

The Greek word for "moment" is the word we get our word "atom." It describes that which cannot be divided. In relation to time, it means that time is narrowed down to the most narrow moment of time that cannot be reduced any further.

2. "The twinkling of an eye"

- The eye can move faster, much faster, than any other visible part of our bodies. Paul's point is that the change will be extremely fast; instantaneous.

- The twinkling of an eye is not the same as a glance or a blink. The twinkling of an eye is a term used to describe the amount of time it takes for our eye to respond to light.

3. "At the last trumpet"

In the Old Testament two sounds were made with the trumpet. One meant to get ready to move out. That was the first sound of the trumpet. The last sound of the trumpet meant to move out. It is this sound along with the Voice of the Lord to "come up hither" (Revelation 4:1) that the saints are anticipating.

C. The Transformation Promised 15:52b-53

The word "corruptible" refers to those already in the grave who will be raised and changed ...

The word "mortal" refers to those who are alive and will be changed without tasting death.

II. The Great Triumph 15:54-56

Christ's resurrection broke the Power of death for those who believe in Him, but death is still the enemy of man.

Even for Christians, death breaks love relationships, disrupts families, and causes great grief in the loss of those dear to us. We no longer fear death, but it still invades and torments us while

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we are mortal.

"Death is swallowed up" is an interesting picture. It is not just wounded or defeated; it is swallowed up.

• One might recover from a wound or a defeat, but when something is swallowed up, that's all she wrote. It's over. It's done. Death is swallowed up in victory.

• When is that going to happen? When Jesus comes.

I Corinthians 15:55 There's a sting in death. The sting is not death, it is sin. There is no sting in death. The sting comes because of sin.

• Why do people die? You say, "Well, people die because of cancer or heart attacks or killed in some accident."

• That's not WHY people die; that's HOW people die. Why do people die? "The wages of sin is death." And every time a person dies, the sting of sin is there.

III. The Great Thanksgiving 15:57-58

"Thanks be to God who gives us the Victory". What is the victory?

Death has no more sting. The grave is no longer final. All of that has been swallowed up. We have victory; and it comes through our Lord Jesus.

That encourages us to:

A. Be Firm (Steadfast)

The word means to remain strong in faith; fixed in purpose. We are not to waiver in our commitment to Christ.

B. Be Faithful (Unmovable)

Don't be pulled away from. Don't deviate in any way from God's chosen paths; don't allow yourself to be influenced by the temptation of our day.

C. Be Fruitful (Always Abounding in the Lord)

It means to do more than enough; never be satisfied to do only what is necessary to get by.

Our labor for the Lord will never be in vain; it will accomplish what He wants accomplished.

Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with Me, to give to every one according to what he has done."

I Corinthians 16:1-4

CONCERNING THE COLLECTION

I Corinthians 15 is one of the greatest chapters in all the Bible. It starts out by talking about the resurrection of our Savior and it ends up talking about the resurrection of the saints that is yet to come.

• What would the Holy Spirit lead Paul to write about after such a great chapter? Maybe some great doctrinal truth like sanctification; or a treatise about heaven; or the importance and power of prayer.

• After 58 verses of talking about the resurrection, he begins to talk about THE GIVING of money!

Could it be that the Holy Spirit wants us to understand that if the resurrection has not reached our pocketbooks, maybe it hasn't reached our hearts?

In 15:58 Paul talked about resurrection living. He says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." That's resurrection living!

• This verse gives us great responsibility today. If we really believe that when we die we will live again, that Christ is coming to rule and reign, that our bodies will be transformed into wonderful heavenly bodies; then we ought to want to lay up treasures in heaven.

• Verse 15:58 says that we are to be "always abounding (over flowing) in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

• In Chapter 16 we are told some specific ways to abound in God's work, by how we give, how we plan, and how we work with others.

In I Corinthians Paul lifts us high into heavenly places talking about the resurrection; and, now, in I Corinthians 16 he talks about the collection. That may sound anti-climatic, but not so!

• Our Christian lives are in two worlds: we are citizens of Heaven and citizens of this world.

• The Bible shows us how to keep our hearts in the clouds and how to keep our feet firmly planted on the ground.

Whenever God gives us a glimpse of the end times or of heaven, it is always for the purpose of helping us live more faithfully on earth.

• After Peter gives a sobering picture of the last days, he says, “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless, and blameless.” (2 Peter 3:14,11)

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• As we live right, walk right, talk right, and serve Him right on earth, we lay up treasures in heaven while we are on earth (Matthew 6:20).

The phrase “now concerning” (16:1) is a familiar one in I Corinthians. The Church asked Paul several questions and he answered each questions by saying, “Now concerning... the things whereof you wrote me.”

1. I Corinthians 7 – Concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage

2. I Corinthians 8 – Concerning meat sacrificed to idols

3. I Corinthians 12 – Concerning spiritual gifts

4. Now – I Corinthians 16:1....Concerning the collection.

The Greek word for “collection” means “to say something.” In a real sense the collection says something about a church and its members.

• Our giving says volumes about our love for God; our faith in God; and our obedience to God.

• A good measuring stick of a church's commitment and spiritual depth is the offerings on Sunday. A growing people are a giving people. If people are growing spiritually, the offerings will grow numerically.

• On one occasion, R. G. Lee was baptizing. The candidates for baptism were always instructed to leave their valuables in the dressing room so the water wouldn't damage them. One fellow got into the baptistry with his billfold. He said he wanted his billfold baptized too.

• Many believers need their billfolds baptized. On any given Sunday in any given service there will be many that will not participate in the giving. Paul tells us that giving is an inclusive matter. Everyone is to give. When you come to church on Sunday you should bring your checkbook. None of us is excluded. All are included. Each individual is to give.

A black preacher once said, “There are three books necessary in carrying on the work of the church. The Good Book, the Bible; the Hymn Book, through which we sing praises to God;

the Pocketbook, through which we carry on the activities of the church.”

Three things I want to share:

I. God's Plan for the Collection 16:1

Resurrection giving and the resurrection giver must first have something to happen IN THEIR HEART FIRST.

• 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 The word “liberality” means “grace”.

• God's church is to be supported by God's people. God's command is that ALL of God's people give. Paul speaks with the authority of the Holy Spirit.

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Why are God's people to give – All of us?

A. Because there is a Need to Give 16:3

• A famine had come to Jerusalem, the mother church, and they were in great need.

• We give so that others might hear the gospel and be saved.

B. Because we have been Instructed by the Word of God to Give

Malachi asked, “Will a man rob God?” How can we rob God? He said, “You've robbed me in tithes and offerings.”

II. The Principles of the Collection 16:2

A. The Period

“On the first day of the week” our worship is to include regular and systematic giving.

• The point is that giving is to be a part of our worship and fellowship every Sunday.

• Our giving should not be based on periodic, emotional appeals or if we feel like it or on bonus income, but each week we are to consider our stewardship in sacrificial giving.

Moms and Dads, listen: You need to see to it that all your children bring an offering to the Lord each week. You say, “Well, Preacher, I give and I cover my whole family.” I understand that. But your children need to grow up understanding the importance of giving to the work of God. Otherwise, when you pass off the scene, the churches will find themselves in want and need. When I was small, my Dad would give each child a dime or quarter or dollar, depending on our age, each Sunday to give which allowed each of us to participate weekly.

B. The Participants

“Each one of you” is all-inclusive. No Christian is excused. We are all stewards of whatever the Lord has given us.

C. The Place

We are to give TO the Lord through His Church. We don't give to the Church, but to the Lord.

D. The Proportion

As God prospered him – Deuteronomy 16:17

• Obviously, everybody doesn't make the same income. Some make more than others; some less. Is it right for the person who makes a little to give the same dollar amount as the person that makes much? No!

- One makes \$30,000 a year and his tithe is \$3,000 a year. Another makes \$300,000 a year and his tithe is \$30,000 a year. The guy who makes \$300,000 says, "Well, you made ten times as much as that guy, so hush! Do you want to swap salaries? It is to be prosperity giving proportionately as God has prospered you.
- I Corinthians 16:2 – "That there be no gathering when I come." "Don't wait until I come and then give. I don't want to have to be a fund raiser."
- Don't manipulate or coerce people into giving. That's no fun and it's not of God.

Allen Redpath told the story of a lady who complained that the Church cost too much. The lady she was talking to said, "Yes, much like children." Then she told of her son. "When he was born, he cost ...When he started to school, he cost... When he was in high school, he cost... When he started dating, he cost... and when he got to college, did he ever cost! Then in his third year of college, he died. He has not cost us a cent since. But, Oh, if he were just here to cost us more! The Church cost; but what if we had it no more?"

III. The Protection of the Collection 16:3-4

The Lord's gifts are to be used legitimately and wisely. The Church has a great responsibility to use all of the Lord's money for His honor and glory.

The Church should always be good stewards with the money entrusted to them through its members.

An offering needed to go to the church at Jerusalem. Paul was very careful not to handle or be in charge of the money. That is a lesson every pastor needs to learn. The pastor should never handle the money of the church. If the pastor never handles the money, he will never be accused of mishandling the money.

Those who do handle the money should be "fit" to do so. They should be honest people with the highest integrity.

One of the surest signs of a saved, redeemed person is their willingness to give!

I Corinthians 16:5-24

PAUL'S PARTING WORDS

As we come to this final chapter in I Corinthians, we are still moved by the great teaching of Chapter 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

- "Steadfast" – anchored, not flighty
- "Immovable" – like the man who built his house on the rock. The floods came. The wind blew. The storm beat upon that house. Yet, it stood because it was built on the rock of Jesus Christ.
- Always abounding in the Lord – we are to overflow with our desire to do the Lord's work, because we know our "labor will not be in vain in the Lord."

I Corinthians 16:1-4 is about How to Give; I Corinthians 16:5-24 is about How to Work. Paul was an itinerant preacher. He was a traveling preacher, preaching in one place for a while and then moving to another and preaching there. But Paul was not just traveling to see the sights. He had a plan that motivated him and he was focused on three goals in his life.

1. Evangelizing the Lost

Paul wanted every man, woman, young person and child to experience in their lives what he had experienced. Paul had experienced salvation in Jesus Christ and forgiveness of sin through the grace of God, and he wanted every person to experience that.

2. Encouraging the Saved

Paul knew believers needed someone to help them to grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ and His will for their lives.

3. Edifying the Church

Paul wanted the Church to be strong and to be all God desired it to be.

Often when we come to the end of one of Paul's letters, we just skip over the last half of the last chapter because it seems to be just a list of names and a lot of "thank yous."

- But, really, we can draw a lot of insight into the character and spirit of Paul as he writes words of appreciation to his fellow-servants in the Lord.
- Paul has been very stern, blunt and straight-forward in this letter, but in these last verses of the book we see clearly the kindness and love of Paul's heart.

I. Paul's Anticipation 16:5-9

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Paul is careful to make sure that his service for God is directed by the Holy Spirit.

The key phrase in 16:7 is, "If the Lord permits."

I Corinthians 16:9 – Paul says that God has opened a great door of Opportunity for him in Ephesus, AND (not but), there will be much Opposition.

When God starts working, Satan will start working and there will be opposition.

II. Paul's Appreciation

One of the strengths of Paul's ministry was the way he showed appreciation for those who helped him in the ministry.

A. The Youthfulness of Timothy 16:10-11

Why would anyone have despised Timothy?

- Timothy was a growing saint, but he was a young saint. Paul was concerned that just because he was young, some would show him disrespect. There were some there who were quite outspoken. They might make it difficult for him to minister there. Some-times when a young pastor is called to a church, some of the older members, especially older leaders, resent some young person being over them as their spiritual leader.
- Paul has already told us that Timothy is timid and had some physical infirmities. Paul even had to encourage him to "stir up the gift that was in him." That is, "Get with it, boy! Grow!"
- Think about it: God had called Timothy to preach under the ministry of the great preacher, Paul; now Paul assigns him to go to Corinth to pastor there. Naturally, he would feel a little uncertain about preaching in a church where the members were getting drunk at the Lord's table, and fornicating among themselves and fighting with one another.
- The word "despise" here means to reject, to treat with contempt, to belittle.
- Paul says, "Yes, he's young and he is going to make mistakes, but don't belittle him when he does. Rather, encourage him and pray for him."

B. The Steadfastness of Apollos 16:12

Notice that Paul addressed Apollos as "brother."

In Acts 18:24-25 we are told that Apollos was:

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1. An Eloquent Man

He was a good speaker with the unique ability to communicate in a way that held the attention of others.

2. Mighty in the Scriptures

He was knowledgeable of God's Word.. How did he get that way? How does anyone get that way? He studied the Scriptures.

3. He had been Instructed in the Way of the Lord

He was willing to be a student and to be taught.

4. Fervent in Spirit ... Speaking and Teaching Accurately

C. Yieldedness of Stephanas 16:15-18

Stephanas was "hooked" on faithful service or devoted to Jesus. Paul adds that he was the kind of saint that refreshed his spirit.

D. Usefulness of Aquila and Priscilla 16:19

This fine couple used their home as a worship center for the saints.

III. Paul's Admonition 16:13-14

Paul admonishes them with the authority of a commander.

A. Be Alert

God's people are to always be watchful, alert, awake, as opposed to being spiritually indifferent and listless.

Believers are called to be alert regarding:

1. Satan I Peter 5:8
2. Temptation Matthew 26:41
3. Their conduct I Thessalonians 5:5-6
4. The Second Coming Mark 13:33

B. Be Firm

Know what you believe by being anchored in God's Word.

Don't be carried (blown) about by every wind of doctrine, but be firm in the faith.

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C. Be Mature

- "Quit you like men" means to grow up; be mature.
- Act like men: The basic idea is that of mature courage rather than acting in an immature, childish manner.

D. Be Strong

Denotes an inner, spiritual strength and growth.

E. Be Loving 16:14, 20

Note the broadness of our service of love: Let ALL you do be done in love.

Greeting one another with a holy kiss was a method of greeting people in Paul's day. Men would kiss men on the cheek, and women would kiss women on the cheek. It was practiced in the same way that we would shake hands. People still greet each other this way to this day in the Middle East. We often see people of this part of the world greeting each other in this manner on the news.

To greet each other with a kiss was a part of the life of Jesus. He used this method of greeting.

Jesus was at a dinner given by one of the Pharisees. In the course of the meal, a woman who was a sinner, came in weeping, knelt down and began anointing the feet of Jesus with perfume and wiping His feet with her hair.

Some of the Pharisees got upset with Jesus for allowing such a woman as this to touch Him. The reply of Jesus to these men reveals the kind of greeting He was accustomed to:

“Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet me feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss my feet.” Luke 7:44-45

When Judas betrayed Jesus to His enemies, Judas used this method of greeting.

“Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, he is the One, seize Him and lead Him away under guard.' After coming, Judas immediately went to Him saying, 'Rabbi!' and kissed Him.” Mark 14:44-45

When Paul writes to the Church at Corinth, he encourages them to “greet one another” in the manner of the day.

IV. Paul's Authentication 16:20-24

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In New Testament days, people were forging Paul's name on letters. In order to authenticate His letter to the Corinthians, Paul takes the pen from the hand of his secretary and writes, “The salutation of me, Paul with my own hand.” (16:21)

- When the Corinthians received the letter and saw the handwriting, they recognized that it was an authentic letter from Paul.
- Paul closes his letter with some phrases that are very characteristics of his writings:

A. A Word of Enlargement 16:20

Paul is saying, “Enlarge your hearts to one another.” The “holy kiss” is the equivalent of a handshake today. The church ought to be a friendly place – not withdrawn or stuck-up. Get to know those who may visit.

If there is someone we cannot greet, there is sin in our lives.

B. A Word of Enlightenment 16:22

The work “Anathema” means “devoted to destruction.” Hell is the just result for those who refuse to love Jesus.

C. A Word of Encouragement 16:24

“Maranatha” means “our Lord comes”. The coming again of our Lord is an encouraging, refreshing and challenging part of our faith.

D. A Word of Enablement 16:23

We are not only saved by grace, we are daily sustained, taught and enabled by His grace.

E. A Word of Endearment 16:24

Paul closes by assuring them once again of his love for them.