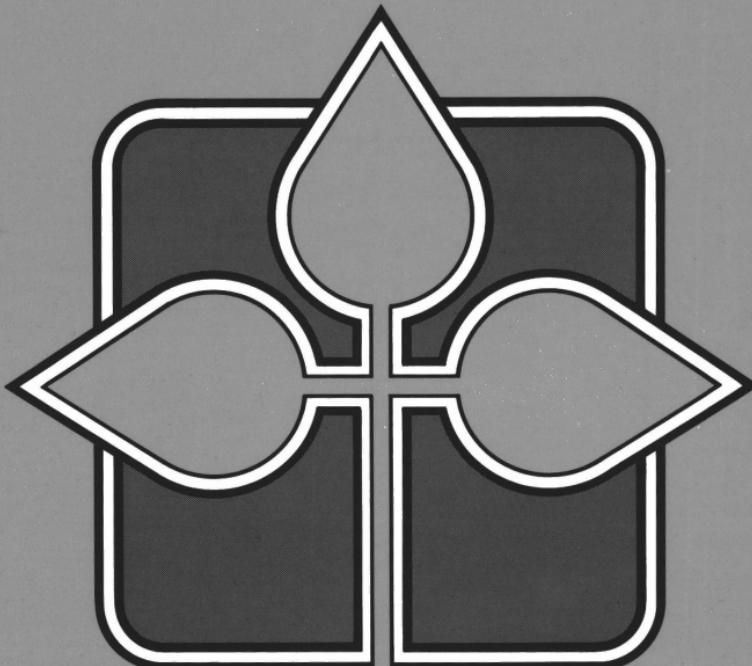


# 1 CORINTHIANS

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Devotional  
Studies On  
LIVING WISELY



J. ALLEN BLAIR



# **1 CORINTHIANS**

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# 1 CORINTHIANS

## Devotional Studies on LIVING WISELY

*by*

J. ALLEN BLAIR

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LOIZEAUX BROTHERS

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J. ALLEN BLAIR



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## INTRODUCTION

NOT ONLY was the city of Corinth the capital of Achaia in Paul's day, but in political and commercial importance it surpassed all other cities in that part of the world. Though famous for its commercial prestige, it was also recognized as a center of culture and learning. Along with this, it was a city of great wealth; but it was also known for its gross wickedness and corruption. There was a familiar phrase spoken in Paul's day: "To live like a Corinthian." Everyone knew this meant to live in ease and licentiousness. To live like a Corinthian was to dwell in comfort while giving way to the lusts of the flesh.

The establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ in such an area is another proof of the power of the gospel. Paul wrote in Romans 5:20, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Never was this more true than in Corinth. Sin abounded on every hand, but the grace of God, as proclaimed in the gospel, took hold of needy hearts. The Apostle Paul further declared in Romans, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, you may be sure that God will use His Word to the saving of souls.

Years ago a missionary went out to the Fiji Islands to proclaim the gospel of God's grace. When he returned, after some years on the field, someone asked if he had any proof of the power of the gospel at work among those people. Here was his answer: "When I arrived among them, my first duty was to bury the hands, arms, feet, and heads of eighty vic-

tims whose bodies had been roasted and eaten at a cannibal feast. I lived to see those very cannibals, who had taken part in that inhuman feast, gathered about the Lord's table." What God has done out in the Fiji Islands, He has done all around the world, and He is willing to do His work through you and me if we proclaim the blessed gospel of the grace of God.

Reaching Corinth, Paul was greatly discouraged as he looked around and saw wickedness on every hand. He stood alone with no human encouragement. Traveling on his second missionary journey, the apostle had just come from Athens where he had met with indifference and unconcern. Seeing the horrible conditions in Corinth, he was probably tempted to pass on to another area. But Paul, being a true servant of Christ and realizing the tremendous need, preached the Word and upheld the name of Christ under the most adverse conditions.

In the providence of God, the apostle soon met two Jews who became his friends, Aquila and Priscilla, who were tent-makers. Paul, being of the same race and occupation, found a ready reception in the home of these Jewish friends. Attentively they listened as he expounded the truth of the gospel. They were receptive to the message of grace.

Later Paul's close friends, Silas and Timothy, arrived to bolster his strength. A church was formed in the home of Titus Justus to nurture the souls that had been saved. The church grew rapidly. It was composed of the wealthy and the poor, the learned and the uneducated, all of them having been snatched from the lowest depths of sin and vice. Paul stayed eighteen months, working night and day, seeking to get the church of Corinth on the solid foundation of the Word of God.

After Paul left, the devil went to work. The church was torn by faction, strife, and immorality. Many problems had arisen which greatly curtailed the progress of the Corinthian church. Following a three-year residency in Ephesus, Paul undertook the task of instructing the floundering Corinthian believers in the truth relative to their numerous problems.

It would seem that Paul's purpose in writing this Epistle was to provide divine wisdom for Christians who through worldly wisdom had become corrupt spiritually, and then morally. It is for this reason that 1 Corinthians is so vital to us. Conditions have not changed much. Many of the problems that confronted the Corinthians plague present-day believers as well. *Living wisely* for God is not easy in the midst of a sinful and materialistic age. But 1 Corinthians is filled with valuable and important lessons which, if studied carefully and applied consistently, will provide "the wisdom that is from above" which is so essential for our walk with the Lord.



## SANCTIFIED SAINTS

### *1 Corinthians 1:1-9*

PAUL'S APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY had been questioned, so he began his Epistle: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God." His apostleship was not a matter of his own choice. In fact, Paul was on his way to persecute the Church of Christ when God intervened on the Damascus highway, and he was stricken with blindness as he fell helplessly to the ground. From this very moment Paul began his march with the people of God rather than against them. He was soundly converted and called to the gospel ministry.

The word "called," as it is used here, really means "summoned." When a policeman stops a speeding car, he usually gives the driver a summons. The driver is under arrest. He must either pay a fine or appear in court, and sometimes both. Paul was summoned by God for the rest of his life on earth to be a servant of the Lord. He was divinely called to make known the name of Jesus Christ.

But not only Paul was summoned; if you are a believer, you, too, are summoned by God to be His servant. As Paul was called to serve Christ, so are you and I. Listen to John 15:16: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." We have a definite summons from God to be His witnesses, but how few of the Lord's people are fulfilling their commission.

A traveling salesman told a friend about the treatment re-

ceived in a certain business house at the hands of a member of the establishment. The rudeness and injustice recited stirred the listener to protest.

"And you did nothing about it afterward? You let it go too easily. A fellow like that deserves to be taught a lesson."

"Yes, but I'm not here to avenge personal wrongs, you know. I am on business for the firm," answered the salesman.

Child of God, you are in this world on business for the King. You have a summons from Him. You are not on your own; you are His, to make His name known. In 1 Samuel 21:8 God says, "The king's business required haste." Let us redeem the time. All about us there are destitute souls that need Christ. Let us recognize our call and speak out for the Lord Jesus.

Paul mentioned Sosthenes. He did not name him as an apostle, but rather as a "brother." It is not altogether certain who Sosthenes was. If our conjecture is correct, he is one who had been an enemy of the faith but had been converted. In fact, there had been a Sosthenes who was a ruler of the synagogue in Corinth. If this is the same one, we can praise God with the Corinthians that he got on the Lord's side. The gospel of Christ knows no limits. It can transform hardened hearts and stubborn wills.

Paul addressed his Epistle to the "church of God which is at Corinth." The Church "of God" is a divine institution; it is not an organization established and developed by the faulty ingenuity of humans. The Holy Spirit of God establishes churches. Not only that, He protects them and prospers them as the gospel is proclaimed. I doubt that we can call all churches "churches of God" these days. Many of them are nothing more than social centers where, instead of exalting Christ and Him crucified, it seems to be merely man and him glorified. A true church will be a church of God, where the Lord is honored, respected, and followed.

God has preserved His Church down through the ages.

Even in the countries where the Church has been persecuted, its testimony has continued. Years ago Voltaire said, "It took twelve ignorant fishermen to establish Christianity. I will show the world how one Frenchman can destroy it." But how ridiculous was his boast. It is said that twenty-five years after the unbelieving Voltaire died, his home was purchased by the Geneva Bible Society for a storage building, and his printing press was used to print an entire edition of the Bible. Will a man fight against God? Yes, he will; but not successfully.

As to the little band of Christ's disciples, had they been the founders of the Church, it would have faded away long ago. But the Church was founded by God, with His Son as the unshakable foundation. Our Lord Jesus declared to Peter in Matthew 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Of course, He was speaking of Himself as "the Rock." In these words we have the heartening assurance that His Church will stand.

Most of us are familiar with the terms "visible" and "invisible" as applied to the church. The invisible Church is the true Body of Christ, composed of all true believers in Christ, regardless of race, color, or creed. The visible church is a group of local believers in a particular area, assembled for the study of the Word and the proclamation of the gospel. There may be unsaved people in the visible church, but they should not be members of it. The visible church should be as much like the invisible as possible. It should be, as Paul said, "the church of God."

Next, notice that the apostle spoke of the constituents of this church—"them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." The tragedy is to welcome unsaved people into the membership of our local churches. God's plan is that every one who joins should be a saint, sanctified in Christ Jesus. "Sanctification" has to do with being separated from sin and yielded unto Christ. Saints, according to the Bible,

are those who have truly believed in Christ and have been transformed by the power of God. We are not saints because we are saintly; but if we are saints, we should be saintly. Sanctification and sainthood always go together. If one is in Christ, constantly he should be forsaking evil to follow Christ. As we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:7, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."

Thus, these are the people that should be members of the Church of God. But how few churches have such standards today. If one is influential, if he is successful in business, if he is a leader in the community, all too often he is an ideal prospect for church membership. A personal experience with Christ is often overlooked. What a mistake it is when we bring the unsaved, the ungodly, into the church!

Now do not misunderstand. The church must be busy seeking to reach the unsaved for Christ, that the unregenerate might become saints and sanctified so that they can come into the church and be useful for God. But without an experience with the Lord, one is a hindrance to the cause of Christ and useless to the program of God.

Further, Paul told of the scope of the Body of Christ as he wrote to the Corinthian saints reminding them of their bond "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." There is a universal brotherhood among all who are "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." Perhaps you have had the enjoyable experience, possibly in a railroad terminal or airport, of being engaged in a conversation with a stranger whom you found was also a true believer in Jesus Christ. You had so many things in common because of the wonderful bond of Christian fellowship. You were not strangers very long because true believers are one in Christ Jesus.

Paul gives his usual apostolic salutation, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." The grace mentioned here is not necessarily the

grace experienced in salvation, nor is this the peace that is experienced when one believes on Christ, the peace of knowing that all sin is forgiven. Rather, it is the sustaining grace God pours out continuously upon His people and the comforting peace He gives in times of trial. It is the grace we receive whenever we go to the throne of grace to draw upon the resources of Heaven. In Hebrews 4:16 God gives us a glorious invitation to receive this sustaining grace: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Whatever the need, God assures us in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that His "grace is sufficient."

Then, too, in the midst of our trials we may receive freely of His peace. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). The Corinthians were going through a time of severe disturbance and turmoil. Paul assured them that God's grace and peace would be given in sufficient portions if only they would draw on His abundant resources.

Following the salutation, as was so often customary with Paul, he gave thanks for those things which were praiseworthy among the Corinthians. Before he dealt with their evils, he recognized their virtues. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." He reminded them of the continuous infilling of God's marvelous grace. This was a most needful reminder to a church that was encumbered by endless divisions. Thus, since God is gracious to us, we must be gracious to each other.

Next Paul pointed out that God's grace was manifested especially in the gifts He gave the believers at Corinth. "That in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge." Doubtless there were many in the con-

gregation who could speak fluently and ably for Christ. They were wise in the Scriptures, they knew the Word. This was not the result of innate ability or talent; these gifts were provided through the grace of God. But as is often the case, the gifts prompted them to vanity and pride. Rather than being used for the glory of God, these valuable gifts were being used for selfish purposes.

Through the Holy Spirit the Lord endows His people with special gifts to reach hearts for Himself. If these gifts are used for the glory of God, power will be the result; hearts will be changed; lives will be transformed. It is very easy for a musician or a preacher to become proud because God is using him. A preacher may feel that what is being accomplished is being done through his oratory or eloquence. How different it was in Paul's life. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 he wrote, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He was using the gift God gave for preaching for the glory of Christ, and the Lord honored Paul's attitude. How we need to ask ourselves, "Am I using the gifts God has given me for His glory?"

It is possible for a church to possess many gifts because of born-again believers in the congregation who have received the gifts. But a church can become wholly useless if the gifts of God are wasted and unused. A church that might easily be a source of power and strength for God in the community can become a monument to weakness simply because the divine gifts which its members possess are not being used to glorify the Lord. This was the sorrowful picture of the Corinthian church.

How do gifts which God has given to us become useless? Is there a process, is there a means by which their effectiveness begins to dwindle? God's gifts become ineffective when you and I fail to obey the commands of God's Word. Our

Lord Jesus said in John 13:17, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." It is one thing to know what God says in His Word; it is still another to obey it, to do what we know God would have us do. Failure to obey the Word of God will result in unhappiness. Disobedience and unhappiness go hand in hand; if we do not yield to all His commands we shall not enjoy all His blessings.

Is God using you as He has used you in days gone by? If not, it is not for the reason that He has withdrawn any gift He has given. The reason is disobedience in your heart. What I am saying about an individual can be true in a church, a body of believers. It was true in Corinth. It may be true in your church through disobedience to the commands of God! Thus, if you are not being used of the Lord to point men to Christ, to serve the Lord effectively, do not blame circumstances or your surroundings. Look into your heart, confess your disobedience, and again your God-given gifts will become productive. The power you once knew through the Holy Spirit will be renewed, and the joy of the Lord will flood your heart.

One of the most sorrowful tragedies among Christian people is possessing spiritual gifts which are not being used to the glory of God. I venture to say that among the children of the Lord all around the world there are enough Heaven-sent gifts to give the utterance and the wisdom to evangelize, within only a matter of days, every lost soul now living. But God's gifts are not being used.

Paul said that when these gifts were given to the infant church in Corinth, "the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." That is, the Christians were on fire for God, witnessing for God. But something happened. Instead of getting out on the front lines to expend all their efforts in reaching lost souls, they were fighting among themselves. Paul assured them that there was no reason for this, saying, "So that ye come behind in no gift." Of all the churches he knew, there

were none that exceeded the Corinthian church in gifts. They were without excuse.

In this same Epistle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This was never more true than it was in the Corinthian church. But we too need to keep on our knees, close to the Saviour. Satan is so subtle and deceptive, most of us are not aware of his illusory ways. Like the Corinthian saints, some of us have had a glorious past; but our present, as it affects our service for God, is pitiful. Our faithful activity in days gone by has degenerated to nothing more than loud talk. Oh, examine your heart! Is there anything at this moment you could be doing for the Lord Jesus Christ that you are not doing? If so, you are squandering the gifts God has given.

Sometimes we are prone to pity ourselves and offer excuses for failing to honor Christ. We say the going is too hard or the temptations are too many. But look at verses 7-9: "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Do you notice in each of these three verses Jesus Christ is called "Lord"? Here is the secret of perseverance—submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ, looking for His return in glory, while daily yielding to His control and power. This is how we keep our gifts useful for God.

Jesus Christ may be your Saviour, but is He the Lord of your life? Is He the Master of everything? If so, there will be no problem of unused gifts. In 1 Thessalonians 5:22-24 the apostle presented a similar thought: "Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." As we permit Christ to live and reign within us, He promises to guide us through to the end.

The word "confirm" in 1 Corinthians 1:8 is really "establish." It is not you and I struggling, trying, doing our best; it is yielding to the control of Christ, permitting Him to establish us in every step we take, assuring us that we shall meet Him face to face.

In verse 9 we read, "God is faithful." Indeed, He is. When we are weak, then are we strong. Why? Because "God is faithful." Indeed, the secret of power in the believer's life is not within himself. It is not a case of intention, aspiration, or inner struggle. It is the constant yielding to the control of the Lord Jesus for it is He who is faithful. I am convinced that one reason there is so much expenditure of labor for Christ with so little result is that in many cases the laborers are more concerned about their *work* for God than their *relationship* to God.

This reminds me of a little girl who had been listening to a sermon which urged efforts to bring people to Jesus. After the message she said to her father, "I think I'll bring somebody to Him."

"Whom will you bring?" asked her father.

"I think I'll bring myself," was the answer.

All of us should do well to ponder these words. Perhaps we should bring ourselves to Christ at this moment in a life of complete and full surrender to Him. Jesus said in John 12:24, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." We need to die to ourselves. This was the acute problem in the Corinthian church, as we shall see. The believers were too much alive, but not to the proper person. They were alive to their own selfish interests rather than to Christ and His control. Is this not the basic problem in many of our churches today? There are few churches without some kind of faction

or division. Rarely is it a matter of doctrine. Self is the disturbing problem because Jesus Christ is not Lord. That is why Paul upheld Christ as Lord before he faced the serious problem of division in the church of Corinth.

Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Is His divine will more important to you than silver or gold, loved ones or friends, or anyone or anything else? Maybe you do not even know Christ. You know Him in your head but you have never had a real heart experience with Him. You have never invited Him to come into your life. Why not turn to Him now? If you never have, do come to Christ and claim Him as your Saviour and Lord.

## ONE IN CHRIST

### *1 Corinthians 1:10-17*

PAUL HAS TOLD US in 1 Corinthians 1:9 of the wonderful fellowship believers have in Jesus Christ. Every true born-again Christian, regardless of his social status, is a member of the Body of Christ. But rather than furthering the bond of unity and harmony possessed in Christ, believers have disrupted the family of God by factions and divisions. Such was true in the church at Corinth.

Then Paul exhorted the saints about their need of Christian unity: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

He was not commanding them, but beseeching them, to respect Christian brotherhood. The word "beseech" is a word of grace. The law commands, but grace beseeches. He was imploring them to stand together as a body of believers in Christ, rather than be divided asunder by satanical divisions. He beseeched them "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." This Name in itself proclaims the love of God which should banish all division among those who belong to Christ.

The apostle specifically stated that they should "all speak the same thing" and that there "be no divisions" among them. Paul was not striving to get the Corinthian believers to agree on everything. No two people look at any one thing in exactly the same manner.

Suppose you and I see an automobile accident and are called upon to be witnesses in court. In all probability there would be sharp disagreement regarding some of the minor details. At least, however, we would agree on the fact that there was an accident. We would have some sense of agreement as to the injuries sustained and the extent of damage done to the cars involved. But I doubt that any two people would agree perfectly on every phase of such an experience.

The same is true concerning Christian doctrine, certain passages of the Bible, and the Christian way of life. God's people may not agree on all of the minors, but they should stand together on the majors. This was what Paul was saying, that on the cardinal truths of the Christian faith the Lord's people should stand together in perfect harmony.

Consider the cross, for example. In the light of all that God has told us in His Word concerning the message of salvation made possible by the cross of Christ, there should be no disagreement, no division. We are to be, as Paul says, "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

The Bible says in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

This does not mean that you believe what you want to believe and I believe what I want to believe and we will all get to Heaven, whether you believe in the true meaning of the cross or not; that it doesn't matter what you believe just so you are sincere in what you believe. Paul did not mean this at all. He was writing "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." He was writing to true believers, those who have experienced the new birth, whose sins have been washed away in the blood of Christ. To them he said, "Speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." Let there be no murmuring, complaining, or faction in your local assembly.

Romans 12:18 says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." God's people ought to get along with each other. Of all people in this world, they should be the most loving, the most kind, and the most gracious. Bitterness and envy should have no place in their hearts. They are called upon by God to manifest His love and grace to those all about them.

Do not look for a church where everybody will see everything as you see it. You will not find such a church.

The late Dr. Harry Ironside used to tell of the old Quaker who left one meeting place after another, and finally someone said to him, "Well, what church are you in now?"

"I am in the true church at last," he said.

"How many belong to it?"

"Just my wife and myself, and I am not sure about her sometimes."

No, we cannot expect everyone to see things as we do. But we are to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." "The same mind" refers to the mind of Christ, the lowly One, the humble One. In Philippians 2:5 we read, "Let this mind be in you, which was also

in Christ Jesus." As we have the mind of Christ, we shall not be quarrelsome and divisive. We shall not be troublemakers but peacemakers.

The word "judgment" as used in verse 10 does not mean that we should go about judging one another. It has to do with discernment, spiritual discernment. Certainly we are to discern between truth and heresy, but discernment never refers to division among those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ. Every true believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. In the final analysis, it is the Spirit that gives us discernment. As we pray and seek the leading of the Lord, He will direct us into spiritual judgment. But under no circumstances should this ever cause us to act in any other way than as children of God. Oh, how this is being abused in our churches today. We hear of so many splits and divisions. This is not pleasing to Jesus Christ. The Bible says we are brethren: "I beseech you, *brethren*, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." How we should examine our hearts at this time. Is there any trace of hatred or divisiveness in your life? Child of God, this may be the sin keeping you from the blessing of the Lord. This may be the sin hindering you from the experience of God's power in your life. You are prone to blame the other fellow, but look into your own heart. Analyze it in the light of the perfections of Christ.

The Apostle Paul declared in Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Think on that verse for a few minutes; read it over two or three times: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." If that verse were to get into our hearts, we would not be unkind to our brother. There would be no splits in our churches. We would live in the kind of unity and harmony Paul was pleading for in 1 Corinthians 1:10.

"It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are conten-

tions among you." Here Paul told of an evil report he had received concerning the Corinthian Christians. Please notice that everything was aboveboard. The apostle did not receive an anonymous letter, nor did some "saintly" sister whisper something in his ear, saying, "Now please, don't tell anyone I told you." Paul stated freely and boldly where he got his information, so that if it were not true, if it were nothing but gossip, the house of Chloe would have to make good for this libel. Doubtless Chloe was a member of prominence in the Corinthian church and probably the report came from either her servants or relatives.

Paul was told that there were "contentions" among the Corinthians. The apostle then proceeded with his appeal by means of an illustration. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." Exactly what the reasons for the divisions were we do not know, but we might conjecture from this illustration that the divisions were the result of following humans rather than God and Him only.

Some no doubt followed Paul because of his ability to teach the Word. They loved Paul because he could feed their souls. He was not like some of the evangelists that came through with a string of stories; he clearly expounded the Word. Thus there were those who were banding together in the name of Paul.

Then there were others who liked the great orator, Apollos. He was mighty in the Scriptures. Not only that, he was well known for his eloquence. He could keep his hearers on the edge of their seats; they were spellbound as they listened to him. And so some were saying, "You can have Paul if you want him, but I'll take Apollos."

There were still others who were going strong for Cephas. He could stir them up. Cephas could bring them under conviction by strong exhortation. Thus they were saying, "I like

a man who can make me feel small when I go to church; Cephas does that for me."

Then, there was a fourth group. They condemned the others because each of them seemed to be men-followers. "I am of Christ," members of this group declared. "We do not need men to teach us; Christ is our Teacher." The followers of this group considered themselves more holy than the others.

Realize that Paul was simply illustrating here. He was not using the actual names. Evidently there were particular members in the congregation who were being idolized. Paul used his own name and that of Apollos and Cephas to illustrate how ridiculous it was to set up humans as objects of admiration. In 1 Corinthians 4:6 the apostle said, "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." What he was saying here was merely figurative to illustrate their error.

The apostle continued by stressing the unreasonableness of their attitudes. "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" To me these questions seem most convincing; there is no room for any argument. Of course Christ is not divided. Since all believers belong to Him, then we must be one in Him. Furthermore, if believers realize who died for them on the cross, they will not give Christ's honor to a man. They will not follow Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or anyone else. They will look beyond any man to Christ. Faith in Christ is the basis for baptism; not faith in a man.

It should be understood that in these next few verses, through verse 17, Paul was not underestimating the importance of baptism. He reported that he had baptized only Crispus and Gaius, along with the household of Stephanas. He desisted from baptizing others, "Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name." He had refrained from

baptizing many of the converts for fear those who observed might feel that Paul was trying to get followers for himself. I am quite sure he saw to it that these converts were baptized, and doubtless he encouraged them strongly to proceed with baptism. But Paul refrained from baptizing, for as he declared in verse 17, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Paul was saying, "Christ sent me not to see how many I could baptize, but my mission, my call, my main business, is to preach the gospel." To this end, Paul was God's missionary to proclaim God's message, while he left baptism to others.

The Church's great mission today is not that of baptism but to bring men to Christ. Of course, after they come to Christ, they are to be baptized. But how many there are who miss the point of the gospel altogether. They are far more concerned about ceremony than they are about salvation.

Our task as believers is the same as Paul's; we are to make Christ known, "Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." We are not to depend upon human oratory or eloquence, but through the power of the Holy Spirit we are to uphold a crucified, risen, ascended, and coming-again Christ, that a sorrowful and disappointed humanity might know the wonderful joy of everlasting life. Is it not regrettable that in our churches today we find congregations concerned with themselves, with their little petty differences? They are disturbed by their mere human whims and feelings rather than standing together with a vision and a concern to reach a lost and dying humanity with the message of the cross. May God forgive us for our selfishness. May we repent of our narrow-mindedness, and yield fully to the control of Him in whose Name we were baptized, who has called us to preach the gospel, that we might be His faithful and obedient servants.

If you are not one of His servants, repent of your sin and turn to Him. He invites you to come and receive life eternal.

## THE GREAT DIVIDE

### *1 Corinthians 1:18-31*

PAUL EMPHASIZED THE FACT that his main business was to preach the gospel. It is the message of the cross which is the *heart* of the gospel. Without the cross there is no gospel. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." We should note that "perish" could be translated "are perishing." It is not a case of waiting until one decides to believe the message of the cross before he perishes; he is perishing even now, during the days of his indecision. In John 3:18 we read, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is *condemned already*." The unbeliever is under the condemnation of God; he is perishing.

To those who are perishing, having never believed, the message of the cross is absurd. Man says, "What about my good deeds? Why must I believe the message of the cross?" Simply because this is God's plan. He has declared that there is no way to be saved other than by means of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. In 1 John 2:2 God says, "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." No human could ever atone for his own sins; it is for this reason Christ went to the cross. But the world tries to figure this all out in the light of mere human wisdom. What is the response of many to this message of God's grace? Foolishness! It is foolishness because they can-

not understand it. It is unreasonable because they cannot figure it out. Thus men ridicule and laugh at the simple message of the gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

The attitude of the unsaved, however, does not change the efficacy of the message of truth. Man has always laughed. When George Westinghouse invented air brakes for railroad trains in 1869, many declared his discovery to be ridiculous. Even Cornelius Vanderbilt, the great railroad magnate, laughed at what seemed to be an absurd idea. Later, in 1876, when Alexander Graham Bell produced the first telephone, some of his closest friends were dubious. Others laughed and felt that such a foolish idea would soon pass into oblivion. But while the critics have long since been silenced, air brakes and telephones continue to serve millions.

The great truth of the cross of Christ has been spurned in every generation and declared by many to be foolishness. Some with their learning and human wisdom still laugh at the message of the cross. But the way of salvation through the blood of the cross still stands amidst the crumbling sands of time. The way of the cross leads home. Yes, "the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing, foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

The cross is not foolishness to the true believer. He knows better. It is the manifestation of God's power at work in his life. You and I who are saved know what the message of the cross has done for us. Once we sought sin and darkness; now we seek righteousness and light. A miracle has taken place in the heart, so that we can say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). We have a greater goal and object in life. We are no longer interested in living for the flesh and its desires. We have died with Christ. We have become alive unto the glory of God. Thus we can say with Paul in Philippians 3:13-14: "Forgetting those things which are behind,

and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The Lord has become everything to us. We have sensed the power of the cross in our lives.

What does the cross of Christ mean to you? Is it but an absurd idea, or is it the greatest experience of your life? One time a group of candidates was being examined for baptism and church membership in Korea. Among the missionaries in charge of the service was a sweet young woman who feared to frighten and embarrass an elderly Korean woman by difficult questions. So, placing her arm across her shoulder, the missionary said quietly, "Tell me the story about Jesus." The Korean woman, with face aglow, began her simple recital. Then she came to the Calvary scene. She told it all bravely until the time came when the nails were driven into His feet and hands. Then she broke down utterly; and with sobs and broken voice she muttered, "I can't tell that part. It breaks my heart."

This saint of God knew the meaning of the cross. The cross was to her the power of God at work in her life. When we think of the meaning of the cross, it should cause every true believer to weep before God. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For [God] hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Here was the perfect Son of God, righteous and holy, dying the shameful death normally meted out to the worst criminals, guilty of the vilest crimes, who were unworthy to live. He did it for you and for me! We deserved to be on that cross; it was our sin that nailed the Son of God to the cross to die as He did. He went to the cross as our substitute and paid the entire price for your sin and for mine.

Have you received the Son of God into your heart? There is no other way of salvation. God has made this very clear in His Word. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works,

lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). God has made the full provision of the gift of life in the person of Christ. To be saved, all you need do is receive Him into your heart. You need not change your life. You need not reform. God does all this after you believe. He makes you into a new creature. Salvation is a miracle of God. It is not a case of your changing for Him; it is His changing you.

The apostle went on to say, "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." How futile knowledge is without God. The philosophies of men will soon crumble, for nowhere are we taught that human learning and understanding are eternal. The message of the cross is eternal, but mere human knowledge which excludes God will ultimately be destroyed. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" Paul asked. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" God has permitted man to develop his philosophies, but no one has been successful in producing a way of salvation that can equal or supersede God's, for "God made foolish the wisdom of this world."

Sometimes, when we speak of the wise, the scribes, and the disputers, we have in mind only those who are flatly opposed to Christianity and the principles involved. Of course, this is a fallacy. There are men in our pulpits, posing as men of God, who willingly and openly oppose the true message of the cross. A friend of mine tells of visiting a certain church. On the wall of one of the transepts he saw a huge, illuminated cross. Seeing this he expected to hear something from the speaker about the gospel. The subject that morning was "the Alchemy of Jesus," by which the minister meant that Jesus turned all of His experiences into gold. Toward the end of the message, which was not expository, my friend was horrified when the minister pointed to the cross and said, "Do not tell me that that was the will of God. Such an idea," he said, "is nonsense."

Here you have an illustration of one's professing to be a

follower of God, yet knowing nothing of the true message of the cross. This minister was giving a display of his wisdom, that which seemed perfectly reasonable to the human mind. But to the mind of God, such is only foolishness.

God is not interested in what we think or believe about the cross; He is only concerned that you and I believe what He has declared the cross to be. The cross was not a mistake, nor an accident; it was the divine plan of God. The Bible tells us in Revelation 13:8 that the Lord Jesus Christ was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” That Christ should die on the cross for your sins and mine has been in the mind of God from eternity. Thus all human attempts to attain salvation are utterly useless and hopeless.

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” This verse states the only possible way for a lost soul to be saved: he must believe. He must believe that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose again. He must believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. Acts 16:31 says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” This is God’s plan; it cannot be altered in any way.

It should be noted from this verse that Paul was not commending “foolish preaching.” It is not preaching that saves souls; it is the content of preaching that God uses. The word “foolishness” is referring to the cross, as we saw in verse 18. It is the message of the cross that is to the unsaved mere foolishness. Thus God uses the message of the cross in preaching to bring the unsaved to the realization of their need of believing. Without the preaching of the message of the cross, listeners will be left unreached and unmoved. As Paul emphasized throughout the first chapter of this Epistle, it is not by eloquence or oratory that hearts are stirred; it is by the power of God which is manifested through the faithful preaching of the message of the cross. If any person other than Christ is exalted in a sermon, if any message other than

the message of the cross is proclaimed, souls will continue on to their way to perdition.

In verse 22 we are told that both the Jews and the Greeks of Paul's day sought to side-step this great truth of the message of the cross in two ways: the Jews required signs, and the Greeks sought after wisdom. The Jews were saying, "Show us a miracle to prove what you are preaching." And the Greeks declared, "Your preaching doesn't match up to our reasoning." Thus neither of them would have anything to do with the cross.

Paul declared further, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Someone may say, if the message of the cross is a "stumblingblock" and "foolishness," why not alter the message and make it more acceptable, tone it down, polish it, do anything to reach more people? Well, some have done this, to their own shame and regret. God makes it clear that the message must not be altered, that Christ alone is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

He need not be supplanted by miracles nor human wisdom. He is everything in Himself. We read in Colossians 2:9, "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Then further, in verse 10, "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power." Christ is everything. If you are in Christ, you need nothing more for salvation—no signs, no miracles, no teaching from man's wisdom. It is the message of the cross, the fact of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice for sin that is the basis for our belief.

"The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." It is not to be supposed that Paul was in any sense referring "foolishness" to God. He was referring again to the message of the cross which some have declared to be foolishness. The very best man can produce by way of good works is still superseded by the message

of the cross. There are many kinds of human philosophies being taught in our day as ways of being saved, but the greatest of these is not only worthless but nothing in comparison to God's plan—the message of the cross.

Paul continued, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." God does not choose men because they are wise or brilliant, nor because they are strong and mighty. In contrast, we see that God has chosen on occasion those who would appear ignorant in the eyes of the brilliant, and those who are weak in the eyes of the strong. He does this to prove the power of the message of the cross and to emphasize the fact that salvation is of God.

Salvation is all of God, "That no flesh should glory in His presence." If mere human wisdom and ability could save us, we might well boast of our attainments. But no one will ever be able to boast of the works he has done as a means for salvation. God makes this clear in Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Those who are saved by the message of the cross will sing:

In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time;  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

It is regrettable that so little emphasis is being placed on the cross today. It seems that in many of our churches we are glorying in everything but the cross. Many are glorying in

church attainment. They worship the records of their local church or their denomination. They polish and publish statistics of the past years and months and weeks. They enjoy comparing statistics, hoping to boast of their good record or to justify their poor showing. Many church people glory in their methods, and they are very proud that they possess new equipment, are well trained, and use the latest techniques. The old methods have been replaced by "more scientific procedures." These people will not stoop to use out-of-date materials or practices. They look down upon those who have not yet "seen the light."

Many people are glorying in "name personalities," people who talk about their past life more than about their present victories in Christ. Advertisements glorify the unregenerated life of the speaker. The gangster life or the theatrical life attracts attention, brings the large crowd, and also has its effect upon the nightly offering.

Other people build up and almost worship evangelists, singers, preachers, missionaries, youth leaders, or athletes. All these things are an evidence of our inward carnality. They show the world, ourselves, and our God that we have taken our eyes off the Christ of Calvary's wondrous cross and have centered them upon ourselves. The things that we have accomplished, the things we have practiced, and the people that we enjoy have taken first place instead of the Christ of the cross.

Paul summed up what he had already said: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Not our attainments, not our accomplishments; we are to glory only in the Lord. He is everything to us. Thus we ought to say constantly, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Philippians 3:10). "That in all things He might have the preeminence"

(Colossians 1:18). Nothing must be allowed to come between Christ and us. He must be in the first place. Whatever we are today, it is because of His grace at work in us. Where did we get wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? "In Christ," Paul said. We have no holiness of our own. We cannot make ourselves more like Christ. It is His blood that was shed at Calvary that continually cleanses us from sin so that someday when we shall see Him, we shall be like Him, even as He is.

You will recall from the opening verses of this Epistle that Paul had reproved the Corinthians for their division. They had become men-followers. In the closing verses of this chapter he made it clear whom they should follow: not Apollos, or Paul, or Cephas, but Christ only. Sectarianism finds no place in the heart of the man or woman truly redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Some years ago three people came forward one Lord's day to be received into the membership of a Baptist church in Washington, D.C. One was Charles Evans Hughes, who had come to Washington to be the secretary of state of the United States; another was a poor working woman; and the third was a colored man. The pastor of the church said to the congregation: "You will note that the ground is level at the cross." And so it is; all divisions are removed. We become one in Christ. There is no room for pride and selfishness; in abject humility we bow at the feet of Him who gave His all for us.

Have you ever bowed at the feet of the Lord Jesus to acknowledge Him as the Saviour of your life? God makes it very clear that there is no other way of salvation: Christ is the way. This is what He said in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." If you never have, will you turn to Him now? Believe God! Take Him at His word!

## ALL THAT COUNTS

*1 Corinthians 2:1-8*

THE APOSTLE PAUL did not go to Corinth to contribute to the culture of the city, for they had plenty of that. Nor did he go to add to their wealth of philosophy, for Corinth was not far from Athens, one of the great philosophical centers of Paul's day. He went with one ambition and desire, which is expressed in 1 Corinthians 2:1-2: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The people of Corinth did not need another philosophy; they needed Christ. Thus Paul in verse 2 stated his creed: Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. As he proclaimed Christ, he did not obscure Him by stirring flights of oratory or by convincing rhetoric, but in simplicity and humility he upheld the Christ of the cross who meant everything in the world to him. The apostle knew well the worthlessness of vain philosophy to move the hearts of men toward God. Thus, as he went to the needy, sinful, deluded people of Corinth, he said, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Certainly nothing is more important than knowing this; and when I say "knowing," I mean knowing it by experience. You have here the summary of the gospel in experience. We live in an age when Christianity is quite popular. In Paul's day, to be a Christian was a shame and a reproach. All who truly followed Christ bore a stigma. But for many people in our present day, it is often advantageous to be a Christian. It helps socially, economically, and in many other ways. There

are tremendous practical advantages in being a Christian. That is, if you are the kind of Christian many people are.

There is a popular brand of Christianity that has no cross, that bears no reproach for Christ. This is not what Paul was speaking about here. The very essence of the cross of Jesus Christ is that it is in contrast to sin. The cross is against sin. In other words, for anyone to say, "I am determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," is to say, "I believe in the message of the cross, and for that reason I am against sin."

Let us revert for just a minute to the popular type of Christianity of today. Is it against sin? Decidedly not! One can claim to be a Christian and continue on in the old ways of life even though he may declare with his lips, "I believe in Jesus Christ." With this kind of experience there need be no real hatred toward sin and its evils. If one is truly and soundly converted, if he has experienced a heart change which is known only in true conversion, he will hate sin and love righteousness. He will love the Word of God and want to study the Word of God. He will be found in prayer meeting. He will be regular in all the services on the Lord's day. He will refrain from secular endeavor on the Lord's day, respecting it as a holy day. He will have a vision for souls and be busy witnessing for Christ. This I believe to be New Testament Christianity which has nothing to do with worldliness, because worldliness is sin. In James 4:4 we read, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"

To say, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," means just what it says: it means I am determined not to know anything about worldly amusements; I am determined not to know anything about worldly habits and practices; I want my mind, my heart, to be centered in what Christ wants for me. Now Paul said, "I am determined to do this. I have set my face in one direction, and that toward the cross. I do not have time, I do not have

interest, I have no concern for the lesser things. I am sold out to Christ. I am His witness. I am His servant."

In Toledo, Ohio, a man notified the police that his seven-year-old boy had traded a hundred-dollar bill to a passer-by for a quarter. The boy did not understand the nature or the value of a hundred dollars, but a quarter represented something to him that was negotiable at the corner drugstore for a milk shake. I don't know where the boy got the hundred dollars; but nevertheless, to him twenty-five cents had more value than a hundred dollars.

This sort of thing is being done by so-called Christians every day. How many people trade an hour in the house of God for an hour of television—a hundred dollars for a quarter. How often we have given up something eternal for something temporal, when there was nothing really pressing except our own desires.

God says in 1 John 2:15-17, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Here are two distinct highways: one, the road of lust, the broad way leading to destruction. This road is very appealing because everything on it satisfies the flesh. But God says the other road is the way of the Lord, the way that seeks to please not the flesh but God. This will be the way that will abide. On which road are you? The only people who are on the God-pleasing road, the narrow road that leads to life, are those who can confess, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Those who say this are willing to declare, "Christ is my Lord. I do not care what happens to me, what my friends think about me, what my employer thinks about me. My greatest concern in life is that I may please Jesus Christ." This is all that counts. It was the secret of the Apos-

tle Paul's usefulness. This was the heart of his life that pulsated and throbbed with blessing.

Is Christ your Lord today, or are you one of those Christians who go through the motions but inwardly you are hopelessly wretched because of the sham, the unreality of your confession? Surrender your heart and life to the control of Christ. Let Him become the Master of your soul, your possessions, yea, everything that concerns you—and you will find life at its best.

When Paul entered the prosperous city of Corinth, he knew no one. He had gone to that great city to start a work for God. Such a task, from a human standpoint, demanded a man of tremendous ability and wisdom, ready to use every means possible to get things moving for the Lord. But notice how Paul described his own state: "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He did not go to Corinth in self-confidence, for he had none. In fact, if there had ever been a time when he had less confidence in himself, it was probably when he went to Corinth. He had just come from Athens. Some have declared that he failed completely in his ministry there. I am prone to disagree with this; but nevertheless, he had an unhappy experience and came to Corinth discouraged, probably feeling, "What is the use, anyway?" Thus, there he stood, listening for the Lord's voice as he watched men and women going here and there, buying and selling amidst the hustle and bustle of activity.

As far as human ability was concerned, Paul stood not as a strong man, but weak, trembling with fear as he anticipated his new mission. The apostle learned a valuable lesson through his experience at Corinth. He discovered that in his state of weakness he experienced the power of God as never before. In fact, in his second letter to the Corinthians he wrote, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for

when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

This is always true. Servants of God are strong only as they are weak. Only as we come to the end of ourselves and serve God in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit do we have any strength whatsoever. Paul experienced great success in Corinth. Souls were saved. Soon a church was established. Believers were unashamed of the gospel, faithfully witnessing to Christ the Lord. How do we account for this? Simply because there was a man of God who realized that he was weak and helpless, wholly dependent on the Lord. Here is his own testimony: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

One of the most delusive temptations that comes to any preacher is to be a *great* preacher. If there is anyone God uses less, I do not know who it is. It is not *great* preachers God wants; it is men yielded to His control so the Holy Spirit can work through them and reach lives. Paul was a conditioned man, conditioned to the extent that he was empty of Paul. He had come to the end of himself. He was weak and helpless. Picture him standing on that street corner in Corinth with head bowed, crying aloud to God, "God, I cannot do this. This task is beyond me. I don't know where to begin." Thus when Paul preached his first sermon in Corinth, it "was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

There is much shallow preaching from the lips of men who are sincere. I do not for a moment question their motives. They have carefully prepared their sermons. They have labored over them, written them several times, choosing every word carefully and exactly. They have chosen the proper illustrations. After these sermons have been preached, many in the congregation have declared, "Isn't he wonderful? Wasn't that a marvelous message?" What happened? The flesh was stirred, maybe some tears were evoked by the touching stories. But twenty-four hours later you would never know

anything happened. Why? These were "enticing words of man's wisdom." There was not a complete dependence on the moving and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

If a man does not have the fullness of the Holy Spirit, he had better cease from his preaching. In Acts 1:8 we read the words of our Lord: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." No one will ever have power until the Holy Ghost comes upon him. I know whereof I speak. There was a time in the early years of my ministry when it was difficult for me to prepare sermons because I faced the job in my own wisdom. I wanted to be profound. I mustered every trace of ability I possessed and poured it into sermons. As sermons go, they were not really bad; but behind them there was struggling, there was agonizing, without the joy of the Holy Ghost, without the liberty and power that only He can give.

I may be speaking to some who have never received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. You may be a Sunday school teacher, a church leader, a pastor. Like many, you may be profound and wise. But souls are not reached by human effort. They are reached by the Holy Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus said in John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

Will you yield to the control of the Holy Spirit in your life? You may say, I want the fullness of the Spirit, but how does one go about it? There are two requisites. Jesus said in John 7:37-39: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.) To be filled with the Spirit, the Lord Jesus said we must "thirst," and then "drink." To "thirst" is to become empty. We must be willing to forsake all that displeases Christ. To "drink" is to receive by faith of the fullness of the Spirit. Take these two steps sincerely before God, and then rise to serve with the overflowing power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul began his work in Corinth in the power of the Holy Spirit. He was weak in himself; that is, he was trusting not in his human ability to accomplish a work for God but wholly in the power of the Spirit. This must have been a constant battle in Paul's heart, for he was a man of tremendous human ability. When one has unusual ability he is plagued by the temptation of depending upon ability rather than upon the Holy Spirit. But Paul had victory in his life. As he spoke to the Corinthians, it was not with enticing words of man's wisdom but a demonstration of Holy Spirit power. Such preaching will produce good results. Thus we read, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." When one preaches in human wisdom, he will get human results; but when he preaches in the power of the Holy Spirit, he will get lasting results. The outcome will be not men-followers but Spirit-filled followers of the living Christ.

So often in special meetings, as the evangelist or spiritual life leader speaks with great emotion, I have seen a stirring among the listeners: I have seen many tears shed and heard testimonies expressing a renewed vision. I have heard some say, "Oh, I feel so much better. I am a Christian but I have been drifting, and now I am back again. You will never know how I feel." It frightens me when I hear people talking about feelings, because so often this is a mere emotional experience that will not last more than a few days. There is a common danger to be stirred by dynamic preaching rather than moved to repentance by the Holy Spirit. I am not suggesting that the Holy Spirit does not work through one's emotions. In fact, I would say, on the other hand, if one is not moved emotionally to some degree, we wonder if there is any real moving in his heart. You cannot divorce the emotions from any experience in life. But there is a great danger of having an emotional experience only, without a real heart experience with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Those who

are moved by the Spirit will no longer trust in the wisdom of the flesh, but in the power of God.

Paul continued, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought." While giving a treatise on wisdom Paul stated that he was not against wisdom, that is, the wisdom of God, but he was opposed to "the wisdom of the world" as a means of fulfilling spiritual responsibilities. The wisdom the Holy Ghost blesses is divine wisdom. This, said Paul, is the wisdom used "among them that are perfect." The word "perfect" here could be translated "mature" or "well developed," referring to believers who have grown in the faith. They are not sinless but well advanced in the things of God. These believers are hungry for the deep things of God's Word. When Paul spoke to the unsaved he had one message, but when he spoke to mature saints he had a deeper one.

One of the weaknesses of many pulpits today is that many preachers spend so much time talking to the unsaved and immature that they neglect the mature saints. Mature saints need to be fed with the strong meat of God's Word. Thus "the wisdom of God" is the message of God as opposed to "the wisdom of this world." The wisdom of God is the message of Christ, of whom we read in Colossians 2:3, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "The wisdom of God," the message of the living Christ, is not understandable to the Christless, those who have never experienced salvation. Even "the princes of this world," those who have reached the top rung of the ladder of success, in spite of their human ability and profound knowledge to understand all the sciences, cannot within themselves understand the simple message of the cross of Jesus Christ. Had they understood it, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory," Paul says. The message of the cross is a mystery to

the worldly wise. Christianity is a revelation from God, not a product of the human mind. It is not a humanly developed theory, but a divinely given truth, which can be received only by faith. How sad it is to see so many in our world who are wise as far as the wisdom of the world is concerned. They are brilliant and well taught in their fields of endeavor. But they are blind to the simple truth of salvation through Jesus Christ. They are like the princes of this world who nailed Christ to the cross.

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 we read, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." It is difficult to perceive how a man with degrees in education can stumble over the simplicity of the gospel. But when we consider again that God's message is a revelation which can only be received by receiving Christ, then we see why many are stumbling. In Isaiah 5:20 we read, "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!" How many are doing this simply because they have never been born again!

Recently a young friend was rejected by the Navy because he was color-blind. Since he could not tell a green light from a red, he could not be used. Can we not say that there are many who are wise in the knowledge of this world who, morally speaking, are color-blind? They are putting "light for darkness" because they have never trusted in Him who said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." They try to gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles because of their blindness.

You may be one who has never had a real heart encounter with Christ. You know about Christianity, you are even in favor of it. You go to church, you say you believe, but down in your heart you have never experienced conversion. You are

still enthralled by the attraction of sin. Oh, turn to Christ, let Him become your Saviour and Lord. Experience the wisdom of God as opposed to the wisdom of men. Commit yourself to the Son of God, our eternal Christ.

## REVEALED MYSTERIES

### *1 Corinthians 2:9-16*

IN THE OPENING VERSES of chapter 2, the Apostle Paul had declared that the wisdom of God cannot be understood by unconverted men, for unconverted men are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives understanding of the truths of God. In verse 8 Paul pointed out that, had the princes of this world been converted men, those who were possessed by the Spirit of God, they would never have crucified Christ. They would have worshiped rather than murdered Him.

Paul continued, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Here we are taught that those who have never experienced the new birth cannot possibly perceive spiritual truth. In their unsaved state, they have no love for Christ nor can they understand the meaning of the cross. The wonderful and glorious truths of the Bible have no appeal to them.

Very often this verse is quoted at funeral services to suggest that we are in the dark now concerning death and the future state, but by and by all will become light. This certainly is not the meaning of this verse. Paul was referring to those of whom he had previously spoken in the context, the

unsaved, those who had never had a heart experience with Christ. To them Christ is unknown. They cannot see, they cannot hear, nor can they perceive in the heart what God has done for them in providing salvation through His Son. Regardless of how brilliant one may be, without the new birth he cannot understand the simple truth of the gospel. In 2 Timothy 3:7 Paul speaks about those "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." This is descriptive of so many in our day who are intelligent, well trained, and educated. Yet when it comes to the simple A B C's of the gospel, they have no understanding whatsoever.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The true believer has the gift of spiritual perception through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The child of God is not in the dark relative to the past, present, or future. The Lord has revealed His truth as contained in the Bible to the one who lives in fellowship with the Spirit. We read in Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." What a wonderful privilege is ours, that is, those of us who are in Christ, to turn to the Word of God daily and to allow the Holy Spirit to teach us the marvelous truths of God's Word.

Some people complain that the Bible is so deep. "I can't understand it. I get very little out of it," they say. If one's heart is in tune with God, if he knows the Lord and wants God's will for his life, he has the promise in the Word of God that the indwelling Holy Spirit will be his teacher. We read in 1 John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him."

The Spirit of God who comes to live within believers at the

moment of conversion is ever ready to unfold the truths of the Bible to them. Of course, we must spend time in the Word each day. If we do not allow sufficient time for the Holy Spirit to teach us, we shall not be taught. But ours is a high privilege concerning all these wonderful things that are meaningless to the unsaved. "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." These are not only surface truths, for we further read that the "Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." God will tell us the whole story if we will take the time to listen.

Following the evening service at a Bible conference where I spoke recently, I had an interesting time of fellowship with one of the staff members. He told me that the previous night, when he had gone in to say "Good night" to his little seven-year-old boy, who had just gone to bed, he asked if he remembered to read his Bible before he got into bed.

"No, Dad," he replied, "I finished it last night." For many months this little fellow had been trying to read the Bible through and finally, after reading the last chapter of the book of the Revelation, he thought he was all through with the Bible, having finished reading it.

"Well now, Son," said his Dad, "do you think you will want any breakfast tomorrow?"

"Why certainly, Dad."

"And do you think you will want lunch and dinner?"

"Why, of course, I'll be hungry."

His father went on to explain that the Bible is food for the soul just like bread, meat, and potatoes are food for the body. After a little explanation, the child realized that he would never get through reading the Bible. It would seem that some adults need this same kind of explanation. God wants to teach them about the deep things, the things that will stir the soul and at the same time provide encouragement and comfort in the hours of stress and trial.

George Müller used to say, "Though I have read the whole of the blessed Word of God through more than a hundred

times, I never tire of it. The more I read it, the more precious it becomes to my heart, the more delight I take still in reading it. It is always a new Book to me when I begin it again from the beginning. Bible reading is the 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."

Give God's Word the place it should have in your life. If you know the Lord, you have the Spirit of God who will reveal the great truths of God to your heart. Of course, the Bible may be dull and uninteresting to you because you have never really met Christ. Many people think they have been converted because they have joined a church or been baptized. But when one truly and sincerely receives Christ, immediately he becomes different, for a miracle is performed. Whereas the ways of darkness were formerly chosen, the newborn soul is concerned about the ways of light. There is a burning compulsion to follow Christ and to do His will.

Do you really know the Lord? Have you met Him? He is ready to receive you. In 1 Kings 18:21 He says, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him." Come the Lord's way! Turn to Christ! Maybe you are going through a time of great trial. It is possible that the Lord has permitted this to come your way that you might look up and find the only way of escape, not only from trial but from sin and the sorrow it brings.

The apostle continued his thought that without Christ the unsaved cannot possibly understand the things of God: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." "The spirit of man which is in him" refers to man's human spirit, that is, his personality which differentiates him from the lower forms of creation. Man has the ability to think, to decide, to weigh evidence, and to discern. Because of this God-given ability, he is able to know himself and his own mind. No one else knows you

like you know yourself. Some may think they know you but you are known best by your own personality. Thus Paul declared, "Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." As you know your own mind, the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God. He only can know the mind of God fully and completely. In John 14:26 Jesus said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The Holy Spirit who has a thorough understanding of God, because He is God, is willing to reveal the plans and purposes of God to man.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." "The spirit of the world," of course, is that system of things which is against God and thrust upon us by him who is called three times in the Gospel of John, "the prince of this world." Paul was saying that "we have received not the spirit of the world." In other words, we are not under the control of the devil if we are in Christ; we have the Holy Spirit within who will guide us and direct us as we yield to Him.

Of course, it is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 4:30 we are instructed to "grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The Holy Spirit is grieved when we yield to sin. As we yield to sin, we forsake the leadership of the Holy Spirit and commit ourselves to Satan's control. But the Word of God teaches that the true believer may live in the power of the Spirit. 1 John 4:4 says, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." Christ won a lasting victory over Satan when He died on the cross for us. Satan became a defeated foe. He refuses to give up the fight, however. But if we yield fully to the Spirit's control, not only can we have an understanding of the things of God, we may know the victory God has promised in His Word.

There is a guide in the deserts of Arabia who is said never to lose his way. He carries in his breast a homing pigeon with a very fine cord attached to one leg. When in any doubt as to which path to take, the guide throws the bird into the air. The pigeon quickly strains at the cord to fly in the direction of home, and so leads his master unerringly. They call that guide "the dove man."

We may be sure that the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Dove, is willing and able to lead us if we will permit Him to do so. In Galatians 5:16 God says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." We can praise the Lord that He has given us His Holy Spirit to indwell us, that we do not have "the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

In 1 Corinthians 2:13 we read, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Those who would decry the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures should meditate on this verse. The Bible is not composed of words "which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The Holy Spirit gave the writers of the Bible not only the thoughts but the words.

What is meant by the phrase, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual"? Simply this, that spiritual things can be understood only by spiritual men. Carnal Christians who are ruled by the world and the flesh know little of spiritual truths. If one is to understand the Word of God and its teachings, he must be empty of self and yielded to the control of the Holy Spirit.

If there is sin in your life, known sin, it ought to be dealt with. Let the Spirit of God work in your heart. There is nothing more regrettable than going through life as a believer in Christ while holding on to the things of the flesh and the world. The unsurrendered heart is an unhappy heart. God says in 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." A divided life is a miserable life. Why not let Christ have supreme control? Bid farewell to those things that have been hindering your spiritual growth. Then, as you yield to the control of Christ, you will find that the things of the Word of God will become real to you. The Spirit of the Lord will take spiritual truth and make it clear to your dedicated mind. May God help you to turn everything over to Him.

It is an absolute impossibility for a person in the natural state to understand spiritual truths. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." God created man a tripartite, that is, a threefold being. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Paul wrote, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus man is spirit, soul, and body.

It is interesting to note the order God has given. Very often we speak of body, soul, and spirit, placing first importance on the body, while God says the spirit is of supreme importance. The spirit is the highest part of man. It gives him intelligence above the animals, making him more than an animal. It is through his spirit that he is able to listen to the voice of God. The spirit of man is like a lofty observatory, ever searching for God. The soul has reference to man's natural instincts and emotions, his affections and desires. Thus man is as a building: the roof is the spirit, his highest part; the foundation and basement represent the body, the flesh; the living quarters between are the soul. The man who has never been born again is controlled only by the flesh and the soul. The spirit lies dormant. The natural man is selfish; having never experienced the grace of God, he lives to satisfy his own appetites.

How different it is after one is converted. His motives change, his attitudes are different. He realizes the truth of 1

Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Rather than live for self and comfort, he lives for God. Am I saying that unless a man is born again he is not a good man? No, for there are many unsaved people who are benevolent, who do good things. But they do these things usually to receive the commendation and applause of men, for the heart basically is selfish; and until a person experiences the love of God, he has little real concern for anyone but himself. Most definitely he is not interested in the things of God; they are foolishness unto him. But we must realize that he is spiritually discerned, or spiritually judged. Without having a new birth he cannot experience the truth of God. He may even laugh at the things we hold to be sacred and reverent. But all of this will change if he experiences the miracle of the new birth.

It may well be that you have laughed in your heart at some of the things that have been written. I challenge you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and let God prove Himself to you. I could not expect to convince you that the Bible is the Word of God or that what I have written is truth. I would not attempt such a thing; only the Spirit of God can do this. For, if you would desire to see "the things of the Spirit of God" and to know them, you must be born again. Jesus said in John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Then in verse 7 He made it even more emphatic when He said, "Ye *must* be born again." No amount of reforming or seeking to better your life will satisfy the demands of God. The Bible still states, "Ye must be born again."

Charles H. Spurgeon said one time: "I was staying one day at an inn in one of the valleys of Northern Italy where the floor was dreadfully dirty. I had it in my mind to advise the landlady to scrub it; but when I perceived that it was made of mud, I reflected that the more she scrubbed it the worse it would be. The man who knows his own heart soon perceives that his corrupt nature admits of no improvement. There must

be a new nature implanted or the man will be only 'washed' to deeper stains. God declares, 'Ye must be born again.' Ours is not a case for mending but for making new." Oh, if you never have, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, be reborn, and the things which you once termed foolishness will become real to you; greatest of all, Christ will be your Saviour and Lord.

Having dealt with the natural man, the apostle turned to the spiritual man. "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." "He that is spiritual," of course, is the one who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He has been lifted from his natural state and is now spiritual. As a spiritual man, we are told, he "judgeth all things." He may be unlearned according to worldly standards. He may even be unintelligent in the eyes of men. But he can apprehend truths that the most brilliant of the natural men cannot understand. He has the Holy Spirit as his teacher to instruct him and guide him in all ways. The Bible is his textbook. Daily he searches the Scriptures to receive the message of God for his own heart. No longer is the Bible a closed book; it has meaning. It has sense, because God's Spirit is interpreting the truth to his hungry heart.

"He himself is judged of no man," Paul said. This means that he cannot be understood by the natural man or even by the unspiritual man who professes to be a follower of Christ. The spiritual man follows the leading of the Spirit of God. He may do some things that seem unreasonable and unwise to the people of the world. But the unsaved are not his judges; he is spiritual—God is his Judge. The spiritual man has the mind of Christ. He is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Not only does the Holy Spirit reside in his life, He presides in his life. There are some Christians who, though indwelt by the Holy Spirit, do not permit Him to rule in their lives. These are carnal Christians of whom we shall learn more in chapter 3 of

this Epistle. But the happy Christian is the spiritual man, the one who permits the Holy Spirit to control and direct in everything.

Thus we have seen three kinds of men—the natural, the spiritual, and the carnal. The question is, which are you? Are you still in the natural state, having never met our Lord? Are you a Christian still living for the things that please the flesh—a carnal Christian? Oh, become spiritual. Commit yourself fully to the control of Christ. God is ready to receive you. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). Will you surrender completely to the control of Christ? This is God's desire for every believer. If you are not a believer, He wants you to trust in Him for salvation.

## DANGEROUS LIVING

### *1 Corinthians 3:1-9*

PAUL HAD BEEN DESCRIBING the natural man, the man who has never experienced the new birth. The natural man is in the unregenerate state, knowing nothing of spiritual things.

Coming to chapter 3, the apostle spoke of two more men. It is usually thought that the world is divided into two classes of people—saved and unsaved. But Paul declared that the world is divided into three classes of people—the natural man, the carnal man, and the spiritual man. In the opening verses of chapter 3 he spoke about the spiritual man and the

carnal man. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." The word "carnal" literally means "fleshly." It does not refer to human flesh but rather to the nature we have received from Adam. This nature being a sinful nature is always opposed to God and things spiritual. Thus a carnal man is one who is controlled by the old Adam nature rather than by the Holy Spirit.

Paul informed us that many of the Corinthian Christians were carnal. Because they were carnal they were mere "babes in Christ." They had not grown in the Lord. They had remained as infants. Surely it is not a disgrace to be a babe in Christ; but to remain in such a state is pitiable and deplorable, for all Christians have been commanded to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). We expect infants to grow when they are born into the world. Then is it not normal for believers to grow after they are born into the family of God?

The Christian life is somewhat like riding a bicycle—when you stop going forward it falls over. When you stop growing in the Lord, usually you fall in defeat. God has intended that the believer grow constantly. Jude put it this way, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20). "Building up" means to grow up. We are to grow up into the fullness of the glory of Christ.

Perhaps you are wondering, how does one grow? The little word "grow" suggests the answer: G stands for "go to God in prayer every day"; R—"read God's Word every day"; O—"obey God every day"; and W—"witness for God every day." In these four exercises I believe you have a God-given formula for growth—prayer, Bible reading, obedience, and witnessing. Neglect any one of them, or all of them, and soon you will be a defeated Christian.

Paul said further regarding the Corinthian believers, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye

were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." Paul could not give the Corinthian believers the strong meat of God's Word, that is, the deeper truths, the great doctrines of the faith, because they were too worldly-minded. Their interests were not in spiritual things but purely in that which satisfied the flesh or the self-life.

There are a great many Christians like that in our day. They are far more interested in a movie than in a prayer meeting. A popular TV program has a much stronger appeal than a Sunday evening service. We cannot say that these people are unsaved. They are sincere. They have made their profession of faith in Jesus Christ and they are all for Christ. But they are not for all the things Christ is for. Though they believe on Him for salvation, they look to the world for satisfaction. It is impossible to grow in grace by feasting continually upon those things which are a hindrance to grace. God says in 1 Corinthians 10:21, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." The world is against Christ. The world crucified Christ. How, then, can we expect to grow on that which is against the One we profess to love?

A worldly-minded Christian is always spiritually unintelligent. It is impossible to be led in God's mind if we are on friendly terms with the world. We read in James 4:4 that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." If one is in this condition of soul, then communion and walking with God are out of the question. In 1 Corinthians 7:31 we are told to "use this world, as not abusing it." Another translation says, "Let . . . those who deal with the world (act) as though they have no dealings with it." We are pilgrims in this world. We may admire things that are in the world because God has placed them there for our enjoyment, in fact, for our rich enjoyment. But these things should not be our concern and interest in life. We have a greater goal, the Lord

Himself. We have another life, the life of Christ.

What about you? Are you a carnal Christian? Are you a babe in Christ, failing to mature and grow in the Lord? Become a spiritual man! Surrender your life to the control of Christ. The spiritual man is one who is yielded to Christ, seeking the will of God for his life. Yielded to God, we become instruments in His hands, willing and ready to be used in any way He wants to use us.

A surgeon's wife who was very much interested in her husband's surgical work was sitting in his office looking at his delicate surgical instruments, when the thought of what it means to be a humble instrument in the hands of God came to her. If one of those glittering, delicately-fashioned instruments should move by its own volition and deviate a hair's breadth from the place where the surgeon wished to guide it as he was operating, he would put it aside and never use it again because it would not be an instrument in his hands.

It is only when we lie utterly helpless in the hands of God that He can use us as He will to accomplish His highest purposes. Thus I ask, is your life surrendered to the control of Christ? Are you a spiritual man, a spiritual woman? What good is a life half given to God? The Lord wants all. Yield completely to His control. Should it be that you have never received the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and Lord, remember, you are still a natural man. You need to be born again. You need the life of God in your soul.

Paul told of several of the descriptive marks of carnality: "For ye are carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Consider these three marks! First of all, envy or jealousy. The word Paul used could mean rivalry, the dislike of seeing someone else getting ahead. Believers are members of the same body, the Body of Christ. How foolish it is for any of us to be envious of other Christians! Yet most of us are guilty. We who are in Christ ought to be as concerned about our Christian brothers as we are for ourselves. In Romans 12:15 we read,

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Other believers are a part of us; we are of the same family.

Do you have any bitterness toward another believer in Christ because God is using him in a greater measure than He is using you? This is a clear and recognizable trait of carnality. You are not growing. You are controlled still by the old Adam nature.

Another characteristic Paul mentioned is strife. The carnal Christian is a selfish Christian. Rather than seeing the needs of others he sees his own needs and desires. As long as he is satisfied and everything agrees with his thinking, he appears to be a happy Christian. But if his plans or wishes are crossed, immediately he flares up. The Adam nature, the self-life, becomes obvious. What is the result? Strife, anger, unkind words. This is carnality, which is a mark of spiritual infancy, a babe in Christ who has never grown up. He pouts and complains, his feelings get hurt, he is offended easily. In contrast, think of our Lord when He was on this earth, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). What an example for you and me! How we need to learn this lesson.

The third mark of carnality is that of "divisions." This appears to be the ultimate of the carnal life. For envying refers to the feelings, strife to the words, and divisions to the actions. Divisions are usually the result of envying and strife. The Corinthian church had degenerated into this sad state of being divided into cliques and groups. One little group followed one man; another group followed another leader; there was dis-harmony and strife among them. For this reason Paul declared, "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Doubtless they were complaining about the preaching they were receiving, lacking in spiritual depth. Paul declared, "You are not spiritually in a condition to receive more than this. You are not

prepared to receive the solid meat of the Word of God."

Child of God, let the Lord speak to your heart from His Word. Are you a complainer? Are you the cause of division and strife among the people of God? Are you given to occasional flights of anger, saying things you never intended? If so, you are still carnal. You are controlled by the self-life rather than by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Self is the believer's greatest problem. It is the constant enemy that never rests. But there is victory over the self-life. If there was not an available victory, then the death of Christ was a tremendous waste. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." It is possible to claim victory over the self-life by submitting completely to Christ's control. There is no other way. It is by yielding to Christ, admitting defeat, and claiming His moment-by-moment victory.

The diver goes down to the bottom of the sea to search the watery deep. Though walking at the bottom of the sea, he does not live there. He lives up above. He is drawing his life-sustaining air from above. Let us remember that though we are pilgrims on this earth, our citizenship is in Heaven. You and I must draw on our heavenly resources. We must lean on Christ wholly if we are to overcome a sorrowful life of carnality. Keep in mind the words of 2 Corinthians 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." Whenever we depend upon the self-life for anything, we fail. But as we draw upon the power of Christ, made possible through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can walk in continuous victory, without envying, strife, and divisions.

When one is living in a state of carnality, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether he is a carnal Christian or not a Christian at all. Your continuous defeat may be a suggestion that you have never really met Christ. You have only a head knowledge but no heart experience. Why not make sure? Ask the Lord to come into your heart and save you. He will trans-

form you and make it possible for you to live as a victorious, joyful, God-honoring Christian. The mercy of the Lord is available but it must be received through Christ.

Paul has informed us that envying, strife, and divisions are marks of the carnal Christian. Divisions seem to be the ultimate of carnality. The Corinthian church was torn by divisions because of loyalty to men rather than to God. "One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos." Paul declared this attitude to be carnal.

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" Ministers are not the masters of men; they are the servants of God. Paul was pointing out the danger of following men rather than God, the temptation of exalting a man rather than Christ. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" They are channels through which God spoke to His people. They were not to be set up as idols to have their own personal followers. The important thing was the message, not the messengers. Paul had a particular type of ministry to perform, Apollos another. These were not two separate ministries, but two parts of one whole.

In the final analysis, it was what God did through these ministries that really counted. "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase," Paul said. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." In other words, "Get your eyes off men and on the Lord." To be men-followers is carnal. This is not to say that God's servants are not to be respected and loved; rather they are not to be the subjects over which divisions are formed. Were it not for the power of God working through a minister, he would be nothing. God must receive all the glory and all the praise. If a minister preaches a good sermon, this can only be done through the power of the Spirit of God, not through the brilliance of the man. Yet the apostle would have us to understand that because a minister of the

gospel is endued with power from on high, he is not excused from human responsibility.

The apostle continued, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." Here is something that should not be overlooked. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." God has a particular type of ministry He wants each of His servants to perform. Even though one may choose to do something else within the bounds of Christian service or work, he may be out of the will of God. God calls some of us to be pastors and teachers, others are to be missionaries, while others still are to be Christian businessmen, and so on. Among those who are in full-time service, some are to be writers, administrators, nurses, teachers, doctors, contractors, others are to work in the field of electronics, and in many other important vocations and professions. There are scores of fields of labor to which God calls His servants. Some may have a teaching type of ministry. Others may have a special evangelistic gift. God's servants are not to be criticized if they are faithful in fulfilling that call which the Lord has made obvious to them.

Paul informed us that God's servants will be rewarded on the basis of their faithfulness in doing what God has called them to do, not on the grounds of how much they have done for God. Thus you see the seriousness of determining what kind of work the Lord would have us do, and then the need of being faithful in fulfilling these responsibilities. God knows better than any of us where and how He wants His servants to labor. Let us not make the mistake of trying to serve Him the way we like. We must serve Him according to His will. I have known instances where Christians prepared themselves for a specific type of ministry and after they got into that work, God made it very obvious that it was not His will for them at all. After switching into another distinctly different field of endeavor, they were fruitful. No one can be fruitful

out of the will of God. Being in the service of the Lord does not necessarily mean being in the center of God's will. We must be specific; we must be certain that we are laboring in the place of God's choice.

Paul reminded us that "we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." This phrase "labourers together with God" does not necessarily mean fellow workers, but rather "laboring under, belonging to, and drawing all grace from Him as servants." We labor together but He is the Master and we are His blood-bought servants, purchased out of the slave market of sin to obey Him. How important it is that each one of us examines his own heart before God to be absolutely certain that we are fulfilling not only the ministry God has committed unto us but the type of ministry which He has planned for us. We are told in 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." God expects faithfulness. To some He has given more gifts than others. We cannot all serve Him in the same way, nor with the same degree of effectiveness. But remember, "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." We must be faithful to do that which God has appointed us to do. Others may do a greater work but you have your part to do and no one in all God's heritage can do it so well as you.

There was an old pastor who seemed to labor on faithfully day after day. His enthusiasm never waned no matter what the difficulties and discouragements. His trials and heartaches were many, but he always seemed to be the same, laboring faithfully for God. Most people knew the secret of his undaunted labor for the Lord. Those that had been in his study had seen under the glass of his desk a verse of Scripture, Galatians 6:9: "Be not weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Beloved in Christ, keep busy for God. There is so much work to be done but so few hands to do it. Indeed, the words of our Lord as found in Matthew 9:37 and 38 are true: "Then saith

He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." Notice He does not say, "preachers"; nor does He say, "missionaries"; He says, "labourers." How we need to pray for men and women who will give themselves wholeheartedly to God as obedient servants, willing to be laborers for Him in the fields of His choice. You may be a secretary, a dentist, a machinist, or a dress-maker. If this is God's chosen task for you, you can still be a laborer for God, to use your vocation or profession as a means to reach men and women for Christ. Every believer should be a laborer for God. You may not be as well trained as someone else. You may not know as much about the Bible. But use what you know.

At the close of an address given by Dwight L. Moody, a highly educated minister said to him coldly, "Excuse me, but you made eleven mistakes in your grammar tonight." Mr. Moody smiled.

"Probably I did," he said pleasantly. "My early education was very faulty, but I am using all the grammar I know in the service of the Master. How about you?" This was indeed a searching question.

Are you using all that God has committed unto you for His glory? Do not lament the fact that you have not had greater opportunities, that you do not have a higher education; use what God has given in His chosen field of service for you. If you are surrendered to His mastership, He will work through you and hearts will be reached and strengthened for His glory.

Should you not be a child of God, remember the door is open only as long as you are living. This is the age of grace. God longs that you come to Him and be saved. He invites you to turn from sin to the living Christ. He will save you and put His joy into your heart.

## FACING THE TEST

### *1 Corinthians 3:10-15*

PAUL DECLARED that "we are labourers together with God." In other words, every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a collaborer with God. To be sure, the Lord could do His work without us. God is not dependent upon any man. He could certainly send His angels into the fields that are white unto harvest and reap a crop that would be well pleasing in His sight. But in His marvelous grace and love, God has chosen you and me, faltering, weak, sinful beings, to do His work here on this earth. What a blessed privilege He has given to His blood-bought children.

The apostle likened Christians to a field and then to a building: "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." "God's husbandry" is literally "God's tilled field." Doubtless you have seen a field of wheat in the glistening sun; the heads are fairly level. So the Body of Christ—we are members one of another as a great field under the control of the Master; one in Christ, called to do the work of God.

"God's building" is literally, "God's temple." Again the same truth of oneness which we have in Jesus Christ is portrayed. As each stone is carefully laid, building up the walls of the temple, so each believer has a part in the work of God in the fulfillment of the Lord's plan.

Paul developed the idea of laborers further: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Paul was not proud or boastful as he used the phrase, "a wise masterbuilder." Before he gave himself this title, he

said, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me." He wanted us to see clearly that all he was and all he did were purely through the grace of God. He was quick to give God the praise and the glory for every accomplishment.

Paul was responsible for laying the foundation of the church in Corinth. When he entered the city there was no evidence of any trace of a believer. But led by the Holy Spirit and guided step by step, Paul was used to call men and women unto repentance and salvation. Thus by his upholding the Name which is above every name, hearts were humbled before God and souls were saved. Paul had only one message—Christ and Him crucified. Thus he was "a wise," or literally, "a skillful masterbuilder."

Every laborer in the work of God, proclaiming the Christ of the Bible, is also a skillful masterbuilder, laying a sure foundation which will never crumble. Thus the apostle warned the Corinthians that he had laid the foundation, but each servant of Christ must "take heed how he buildeth thereupon." In our day, we have seen churches crumble which years before were established upon a solid foundation. But later pastors failed to teach the truth of the gospel, presenting instead the wisdom and philosophy of men. They failed to build according to Paul's admonition.

Paul declared that God's work must be built on a solid foundation, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Every work for God ought to be built upon this foundation. If Jesus Christ is not the foundation of everything, then our work is useless. We read in Colossians 1:19, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Christ is everything, and every work claiming to be a work of God will have as its end and goal the supreme purpose of exalting Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

What is true of God's work is true also of the individual. Anyone who claims to be a Christian should certainly be building daily upon the enduring foundation of Christ and

His redeeming love. We understand, too, from the Word of God, that unless one's life is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ that life cannot be eternally saved. Christ is the God-appointed way to eternal salvation.

Some years ago it was my pleasure to hear Anthony Zeoli, an evangelist known to thousands. Mr. Zeoli spent much of his life in prisons, many times in solitary confinement or on bread and water, both because of his crimes and to break him of the dope habit. Every time he was released at the expiration of his sentences, he would be found, in a matter of hours, in Chinatown with a gun in his pocket. His sister never ceased to pray for his conversion. After he and a companion had nearly killed a victim they robbed, and he was serving a term in solitary confinement, he became ill with influenza in his dark, damp cell and almost died. The prison chaplain did not have any message for him except that he ought to reform. Mr. Zeoli had tried this, time and time again, with agonizing attempts, but always failed. Finally a guard literally threw at him in his cell a Bible which had been sent by an unsaved sister-in-law. Searching the Scriptures, which he had never read before, he found hope, finally yielded to Christ, and was saved.

The first person to whom Mr. Zeoli witnessed was the chaplain. He asked him why he did not tell the prisoners about Jesus, about sin, and how to be saved. Then he started witnessing to the sixteen hundred prisoners. When released, he sought the salvation of unsaved brothers and sisters, and got a job working ten hours a day in a foundry. When the day's work was over, he would wash up and go down to his old haunts and try to win his former companions to Christ. The judges who had sentenced him and the detectives who had arrested him all had to hear his plea to them to give up all to God. Those from whom he had tried to run away now began to run away from him.

Christ is the solid foundation upon which every life should be built. His death and resurrection were for you, that you

might die to sin and become alive unto God. Do not seek other ways. Turn to Christ! God makes it clear in His Word that there is no other way to be saved. In Acts 4:12 we read, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Christ is the road to eternal life. Perhaps your life has been built upon sinking sand. You have searched in vain for something to satisfy your empty and sorrowful heart. You need Jesus Christ. He invites you to come to Him. Hear His word, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Receive Him into your life. Ask Him to come in: He will hear you, He will save you. Then you will find life worth living, for you will experience the abundant life that only Christ can provide.

After stressing the importance of a good foundation Paul went on to say, "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." The apostle referred primarily to the building of the temple, the Body of Christ. This temple is being built with lives that are as "gold, silver, and precious stones," converted men and women, rather than the unsaved of "wood, hay, and stubble."

These verses also suggest the importance for one who is truly saved, having built his life upon the solid rock of Christ, of building his life day by day in such a manner that it will appear before God as "gold, silver, and precious stones" rather than "wood, hay, and stubble." The Psalmist said many years ago in Psalm 90:17, "Let the beauty of the **LORD** our God be upon us." There are many professing to be followers of Christ who are not displaying "the beauty of the **LORD** our God." How can we best show forth the beauty of Christ? Listen to Romans 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." We

are to draw upon Christ for the unlimited power He possesses to enable us to walk in a life of holiness and obedience, disdaining the appeals of the flesh. Such a life seems too high for frail humans, and indeed it is. But it is not too high for Him who declared in Leviticus 11:45, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." God enables us to overcome sin, all sin, as daily we yield to His control. There are many Christians who know this in theory but have never experienced the victorious life of Christ within.

A young man appealed for spiritual help to Dr. A. B. Simpson who, over a period of months, displayed a fatherly interest in him. One day the young man said, "Dr. Simpson, I am all right when I am with you, but when I get away from you I do not seem to have the strength to resist temptation."

"Suppose it were possible for me to get inside of you and live my life in you and through you," the beloved teacher said. "Do you think that would solve your problem?"

"Most assuredly," replied the young man.

"Well," said Dr. Simpson, "you must believe that the Scriptures teach that you have One greater than I living in you, for every believer has Jesus Christ abiding in his heart. He is your life. It is your privilege and duty to let Him live His life in and through you."

This is the only way one can build upon the foundation of Christ in a manner that will please God. If our lives are to be as "gold, silver, and precious stones," there must be a moment-by-moment dependence on Christ to live through us. Over and over again we must remind ourselves of the great truth expressed in Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." There is no hope of glory apart from unreserved dependence on Him. There are many professing to be followers of Christ in our day whose lives are nothing more than "wood, hay, and stubble," or more literally, "timber, hay, and straw." This is a life of defeat, the life bogged down by besetting sins, that looks to frail self rather than to the power of Christ.

God is looking for men and women whom He can trust, those who will shine like gold and silver and sparkle like precious stones. What is it that is marring the glory of Christ in your life? Why not claim an eternal victory by surrendering completely to the Saviour? There may be just one small obstacle in your heart preventing a life of effectiveness for God. You are saved—yes, established on the true foundation, Christ Jesus; but you are building with “wood, hay, stubble.” You have no convincing testimony that will attract the lost to the Saviour who died for them.

I was at a Bible conference not too long ago where I met a man from California, a very successful builder who had a radiant testimony for Christ. He was on fire for God, with a burning compassion to win souls to Christ. He was telling me how, after he became a Christian, he tried to give up smoking. He felt that he could be a better testimony for the Lord if he could claim victory over cigarettes.

“But, oh,” he said, “it was a terrible battle, until one day I was telling a friend about my problem.”

“Why, I had the same trouble,” said this friend, who was also an earnest soul-winner, “but let me tell you how I conquered it.” Pointing to his shirt pocket, he said, “Do you see this New Testament? Where I now carry that, I used to carry a pack of cigarettes; and repeatedly throughout the day I would reach for the pack. But,” he said, “one day I finished my last pack and I put in there this New Testament that someone had given me. Every time I reached for a cigarette I pulled out the New Testament, and I found in that Book the words that gave me the strength to overcome the smoking habit.”

“When I heard that,” the builder told me, “I said, ‘I am going to do the same thing.’” And pointing to his shirt pocket, he said to me, “Here is my New Testament.”

Praise God, our Christ is all-powerful. He can give victory over any habit or temptation so that our lives might be clean and useful for God. How are you building today? What does

your life look like before God? "Gold, silver, and precious stones" or "wood, hay, and stubble"? Maybe there is a need in your life of full surrender to the Lord. God is ready. Bow before Him, tell Him about that thing that has been hindering your spiritual growth, and ask Him for grace to overcome and give you victory. You may be sure He will hear you.

Not only are we to live a life of victory in the power of Christ, but we are to be busy for the Lord, doing His work, realizing the shortness of time. God says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest." He is speaking of Christians here. The day is coming when we must stand before God and give an account of our works. This is not the Great White Throne judgment when the unsaved will be judged at the end of the millennium, but it is the believer's judgment, which will take place at the judgment seat of Christ at the end of this present age. God says in Galatians 6:7-8, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Have you been sowing day by day for the Spirit of God, or have you been living for yourself? The time is coming when "Every man's work shall be made manifest." "For," God says, "the day shall declare it"; literally, "the day shall make it clear because it shall be revealed by fire." The Lord says further, "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is"—whether it be to the glory of God or otherwise. Now I believe fire as used here is figurative. Paul seemed to be using a figure of speech as he did when he said we as believers should be as "gold, silver, and precious stones" rather than "wood, hay, and stubble." The "gold, silver, and precious stones" will stand the fire, but the "wood, hay, and stubble" will be consumed.

Paul went on to say in verse 14, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." If his work has been to the glory of God, if he has been faithful in sowing the precious seed of life, he will be rewarded. But

in verse 15 we read, "If any man's work shall be burned [because it was not for the glory of God], he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." In other words, he just gets into Heaven. He will have no reward because he has been a carnal Christian, living for the flesh, with no concern for the work of God.

Understand that the reward believers receive is not salvation. Salvation is not a reward; it is a gift. We receive salvation the moment we believe in Christ; but God will in some way reward those who have been faithful in His service. On the other hand, if we have not been faithful, our selfish works will be consumed and we shall enter Heaven empty-handed. Though we shall have a saved soul, we shall be the sorrowful victims of a lost life.

I am sure that you do not want to get to Heaven by the skin of your teeth. We ought to be sacrificing for God to get the gospel out to the ends of the earth. Millions in the world have never heard about the true and only foundation for eternal life which the Lord has provided in the person of His Son. We are laborers together with God, not to live for ourselves and to lay up treasures on this earth. We read in 1 Samuel 21:8 that "the king's business required haste." It still does. There is not too much time left.

A young pastor, bending over an aged minister who was dying, said to him, "Give me some word, my brother, that will be a help to me after you are gone." The aged minister looked up with an earnest expression and seemed to pack a whole half century of experience into a single sentence: "Hurry up, my brother, and preach the gospel! Go!"

I believe this is the message the Lord Jesus would speak to every believing heart today: "Hurry up, my brother, and preach the gospel! Go!" "Go . . . into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). You and I must hear His voice, we must respond to His call. This will mean sacrifice. We cannot do this with a few dollars. We must be willing to lay all at the feet of Christ, that millions

in the world who have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel might hear the name of Christ at least once.

In 1874 Frances Ridley Havergal wrote her famous consecration hymn, "Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee." It was not until 1878 that the lines were put in print. When she read the third stanza in print, "Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold," she was suddenly convicted of her failure to do just that. She had a fine collection of exquisite jewelry, most of which had come by gift or inheritance, including an unusually fine jewel cabinet. Immediately Miss Havergal packed the jewel box full, except for half a dozen pieces which were special memorials of her parents and relatives, and sent it to her church missionary society. Then she also included a check to cover the monetary value of the jewels she had chosen to keep.

"I don't need to tell you that I have never packed a box with such pleasure," she exclaimed.

Would it not be a wonderful thing if all of God's people in our day were willing to invest their earthly treasures in the propagation of the gospel of Christ? Many of those who profess to be followers of the Saviour know absolutely nothing of denying self to follow Him. Yet in Matthew 16:24 we have a clear definition of a Christian: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

The day is coming soon when "every man's work shall be made manifest." "It shall be revealed by fire." "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is," literally, "of what quality it possesses." For whom have you been living? You say you are a follower of Christ; are your works nothing more than wood, hay, and stubble? Oh, that they might be gold, silver, and precious stones for God. Get busy for the Lord before it is too late. Turn everything over to Him before your opportunity is missed. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves

treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6: 19-21). Where is your treasure? Is it in seeing souls come to Christ or is it in getting more comforts, in buying more gadgets, in providing greater ease for yourself?

Maybe you do not know Christ. Maybe your profession is without possession, you have never truly been born again. If you never have, turn to the Lord Jesus. Receive the Son of God into your heart. If you will receive Him, if you will truly believe on Him, you will receive a vision to live for others and you will have a desire to see men won to Christ, that they might enjoy the wonderful life we receive through Him.

## THE WORLDLY WISE

*1 Corinthians 3:16-23*

"KNOW YE NOT that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." To understand fully these verses, it should be kept in mind that the Apostle Paul was not speaking of any individual as being the temple of God but rather all Christians, who form the sanctuary of the Lord, the Church universal, composed of all born-again believers in Jesus Christ. This is God's sanctuary, His temple. To this invisible Church Paul said, "Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."

Though Paul was speaking of the Church collectively, the Word of God teaches also that each individual believer is

indwelt by the Spirit of God. What an important fact this is, to think that God dwells in us; that is, in those of us who have been born again. We are never left alone. He is with us constantly to lead, direct, and guide. Thus, in all matters of chastity and righteousness the question is not, is this right or wrong, but does it please and honor the Holy Spirit who lives within us? In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we read, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Consider those words, "Ye are not your own." Whose are you? You are the possession of the Holy Spirit. Here is the key to a life of holiness and obedience; the full recognition of God's ownership of our lives by His indwelling Spirit. If we fully realize this and live in the light of this great truth day by day, we shall know the happiness of a God-pleasing life as described in Psalm 1:1, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Here is the "happy man" who walks step by step in the light of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

To walk in such a manner, we must respond quickly to the inner voice of the Spirit. Constantly He speaks to the people of God and gives divine directions as to manner of life, important choices, and rightful paths. We may either spurn His promptings or respond to His voice by immediate obedience. What calamity we have brought upon ourselves by rejecting His divine counsel. In Hebrews 12:25 we read, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." The Holy Spirit may be speaking to your heart about a particular evil in your life or a choice you should make. Do not turn your ear from His voice. Do you want God's best? Then obey Him!

I am told that the wireless operator of the *California* sought repeatedly to warn the crew of the *Titanic* of dangerous icebergs. But the wireless operator on the *Titanic*, having

spurned the numerous attempts from the *California*, finally replied indignantly, "Stop interfering. I am busy." It was only a little while later that the side of the *Titanic* was ripped open by one of the icebergs which could have been avoided had the warning been heeded.

If you are in Christ, you are "the temple of God," and His Holy Spirit dwells in you. He wants to guide you into the paths of greatest blessing and usefulness. Hear His voice! Do not grieve Him by disobedience. God says in Ephesians 4:30, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

In 1 Corinthians 3:17 we read, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." We must remind ourselves again that Paul was speaking to the Corinthians collectively. In this verse he had in mind unconverted men who were defiling the Body of Christ by their false teaching. God assured them that they would suffer judgment for this sin. Thus Paul was dealing with apostasy, or a failure to teach the truth, rather than one's individual sin.

Some interpret this to mean that if one sins against his body, God will destroy him. This is not the meaning. It is referring to men who pose as true shepherds, yet for filthy lucre's sake they stand in pulpits preaching godless philosophies, thus defiling any who may have a knowledge of the truth. God makes it known that for them judgment is certain. Anyone who mars the Body of Christ must face the condemnation of God. Indeed, there are many in our pulpits today preaching eloquently, but what has been the result of their sermons? Have there been conversions?

There was a great preacher of the last century whose splendid pulpit orations eclipsed others of his day, but during all the years of his preaching, not one conversion could be traced to his sermons. On the other hand, an unlettered evangelist whose refined pastor, years ago, counseled him to keep still, moved two continents by holding up the cross.

Someone has written a few lines describing some of the sermons of our day:

His sermons had the usual heads, and subdivisions fine;  
The language was as delicate and graceful as a vine;  
It had a proper opening, 'twas polished as a whole,  
It had but one supreme defect—it failed to reach a soul.

There are many sermons like this being preached from our pulpits. What is the result of such preaching? It is marring "the temple of God." I feel sorry for such men who have ignored the entire counsel of the Word of God. How unfortunate that they have not listened to the Holy Spirit. You may be in this position. Heed the truth of the Scriptures. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:1-2, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Here is your call: preach the Word in the power of the Holy Ghost, and God will bless you; God will use you.

In 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 we read: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." Do not be deceived, God says. It is not worldly wisdom that makes a man wise, rather, it is by becoming a fool. A fool? Yes, in the eyes of the unconverted. Indeed, that is what many true believers appear to be to those who have never experienced new life in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul emphasized the cross as being foolishness. Thus those who believe the message of the cross and who faithfully bear the cross for Christ, very often will be termed fools. In 1 Corinthians 4:10, Paul declared that "We are fools for Christ's sake."

We find many in Christian circles who want to be popular with the unconverted. Thus, they dress like them, act like them, and talk like them, for fear that they might be termed different or odd. In fact, they do not want to be fools for Christ. But we are not "to be wise in this world." That is, we are not to be partakers of that which pleases the ungodly. We are to be fools for Christ's sake. We have been saved for a purpose, not to live for ourselves but for Him who died for our sins. This is the great truth of 2 Corinthians 5:15: "And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Christ has liberated us from the bonds of this world, that we might live wholly for Him. Often we are afraid of offending people if we take a sincere stand for Christ. But some people need to be offended, they need to be shaken to their senses. Do not be ashamed of Christ. We are not to build up popularity for ourselves; we are fools for Christ.

I had a friend in New York City in the investment business for whom I had great respect and admiration. Erling Olsen was a Christian businessman God used down through the years. Some time ago a client came to his office, a southern gentleman who had approximately six million dollars in investments handled by Mr. Olsen's company. During the course of the conversation the visitor used the Lord's name in a way which Mr. Olsen did not like. Immediately Mr. Olsen interrupted.

"Please, sir, that Name you just used is the most precious Name I know anything about. I love it more than anything in this world and I don't like to hear it used in the fashion you did. I am a Christian."

What do you think the client said? "So am I. I teach a Sunday school class down South."

"Well," said Mr. Olsen, "I would not have guessed it in a hundred years."

The business was transacted; and after the man left, Mr.

Olsen began to think that possibly he was a little bit too outspoken, that, after all, this was a customer. But then he realized that Christ meant more to him than even his business.

Later the southern gentleman returned to the New York office, this time with his wife. Introducing her to Mr. Olsen, he said, "This is the man who gave me such a thrashing when I was up here before."

"I am glad you did," said the wife, "because he deserved it. He has been a different man ever since."

You never know what the effect will be when you are true to the Lord. Let us not try to be wise in the eyes of the world but wise before God. That is what this verse means. If we become fools in the eyes of the world, we shall be wise in God's sight.

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Man may think he is wise apart from God, and indeed he may be as concerns this world. But the Bible teaches that all men must die. Someday they must face their Creator and Judge. The Bible is clear: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). God takes men in their craftiness and casts them into eternal perdition, for it is not the wisdom of this world that prepares a man for eternity; it is a heart experience with Jesus Christ. The most important thing for any of us is to take Christ into the life and let Him live through us.

Paul continued by saying, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." This is hard for the worldly-wise to realize. Many are puffed up by knowledge. Their brilliance has led them into confusion. By their much searching they think they shall find God, and some have even excluded Him from their thinking after their searching. But what has man gained without coming to Christ? Take the most brilliant man in all the world. When he dies, still he must face eternity. He has a soul. And, if that soul has not been quickened by believing on Christ, he will be shut out from the

presence of God forever. What a horrible end to life. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

If you have never taken Christ into your life, I hope you will do so immediately. Reach into the presence of the holy and eternal God by saying, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart." God speaks loudly enough for the willing soul to hear. Possibly He has been speaking to your heart for many days. Hear His voice! Believe on Christ!

Beginning with 1 Corinthians 3:21 we read, "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Paul continued to strike at the core of the trouble in the Corinthian church as he dealt with the unreasonableness of division. As we have mentioned before, the congregation was divided, one reason being their individual preferences for certain Bible teachers. Paul reminded them that they were sinning against God by glorying in men. We are to glory in the Lord, not in men. We are to respect and love God's servants, but we are not to glory in them. Paul said, "All things are yours." Not only were they to listen to their own favorite teacher but to all teachers. Every born-again believer who has been called of God to teach the Word can make a contribution to others' Christian life. We must be careful that we do not become men-followers by preferring one man above another because he speaks or teaches in a certain way. Let us beware that we do not fall into the error of the Corinthians. God has raised up all true teachers for our edification.

But in addition to the Bible teachers being ours, Paul said, "Death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." And then notice verse 23: "And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." If we are in Jesus Christ, if we have been born again, even death is ours. We have victory over this greatest enemy of mankind. We are masters over death. I do not mean that we can prevent it; but rather, we are masters

over it in the sense that when we die, we go immediately to be with Christ. It is as Paul declared in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Indeed it is gain for the believer. If you are Christ's possession, death is not the end; it is the gateway into Heaven. And, of course, Heaven is where Christ is.

A Christian physician died some time ago and his Christian widow was greatly bereaved, but she was victorious in her sorrow. She posted over his office door the little card he had used when he frequently left the office, "Gone for a little while. Will be back soon." She had a reliant faith in Jesus Christ. She believed the Word of God. She knew the truths of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14: "But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Yes, the Lord is coming back again; and when He returns, the saints of God who have died in Christ will be with Him. "Gone for a little while. Will be back soon."

God assures us that "death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." All are yours in Christ. But they are yours only *in Christ*. Have you taken the Lord into your heart? I do not mean have you professed Christ on your lips; have you taken Him into your heart? If you have, there is an implication here in verse 23, "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "Ye are Christ's" means that you are His eternal possession, that you are no longer to live the way you choose to live. You are not to go here and there and fritter your time and life away. You are Christ's, you belong to Him. This is a wonderful culmination to this chapter which has to do primarily with serving God.

We might think of these three words, "Ye are Christ's," in relationship to any phase of our living. How do you spend your time? Remember, "Ye are Christ's." How do you use your money? "Ye are Christ's." Do you have known sin in

your life? "Ye are Christ's." Are you faithful in your worship in the house of God? "Ye are Christ's." Do you take time for Bible reading and prayer? "Ye are Christ's." Do you witness to the saving grace of our Lord to those around you? "Ye are Christ's." Oh, that we could have these words before our eyes constantly. How many Christians are living for self, and yet, God says, "Ye are Christ's."

Austin Phelps tells a fine story of Dannecker, the German sculptor. For eight years he labored on a statue of Christ. After his first two years of labor, the statue seemed finished. What more could he do to add to its perfection? To test it, he called into the studio a little child, and directed her attention to it.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"A great man," she answered.

He turned away disheartened. He felt that the work of those two years was lost. He took his chisel and began again. For six years he worked, and at the end invited another little child into his workshop. He stood her before the figure.

"Who is that?" he asked.

She looked up at it for a moment, and then folding her hands before her, answered, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

That was enough. Dannecker knew that his work was done. The sculptor declared that during the long and patient toil of the six years Christ had come and revealed Himself to him, and he had tried to transfer to marble the vision he had seen. Later on Napoleon Bonaparte asked him to make a statue of Venus for the Louvre. He refused.

"A man," Dannecker said in his reply to the emperor, "who has seen Christ can never employ his gifts in carving a pagan goddess. My art is henceforth a consecrated thing."

This seems to me to express what this phrase means, "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." We come to the place of full and complete submission whereby everything we do or undertake is considered in the light of what does Christ

want; does it please Him; will it magnify His Name, or is it purely selfish; is it of the flesh; is it my carnal nature at work? We want to be spiritual men and women, filled with the Holy Spirit, obedient to Christ. This is why we are saved. "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Are you Christ's today? Is your life sold out to Him, or are you still living for self? Hear His voice; "Ye are Mine." It may be true that you are not Christ's, you have never been born of the Spirit. You may be close to the kingdom, you may be a good man, a church member, you may be honest and morally upright; but you need to be born again. You need the new life that only Christ can give. Are you willing to turn to Him? He is ready to receive you. He has been ready for a long time. It is you who have turned from God. He has never turned from you. If you have not, will you receive Christ?

## THE IMPORTANT REQUISITE

### *1 Corinthians 4:1-5*

As we begin our study of chapter 4 of Paul's instructive and challenging Epistle, we see that he still had in mind the basic problem of the Corinthian church—factionalism. The Corinthians were divided in their support of various teachers known to the congregation. Once again we see the apostle rebuking this partisan spirit as he said, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Here Paul defended the position of the minister. To whom is the minister responsible? You will note that the apostle used the phrase "ministers of Christ." He did not use the

usual word "servant" or "bondslave," which we find in some of his other Epistles. "Minister" is a different word, suggesting an office. God-called and God-ordained ministers of the gospel are officers in the church *for Christ*, to dispense the Word of God. In everything they are obligated to Him. Though they are to be servants in the church, yet the church is not to be their master, relative to the message they proclaim. According to the Scriptures, they have only one Master. With this in mind, Paul contended that the Corinthians had no right to judge him or any other minister of the Word. The minister is not obligated to his congregation for His messages; he is responsible to Christ.

Paul emphasized this further in the phrase, "stewards of the mysteries of God." The word "steward" here has the meaning of a confidential servant to whom the master has committed the direction of his house. He has the responsibility for assigning the tasks and labor to others who serve the master. Thus, Christian ministers are responsible to Christ to be dispensers and administrators of the truth of God. They are not obligated to render an account to those to whom they minister. But even more serious, they must give an account to Him who has called them to be His ministers.

Paul stated that ministers are "stewards of the mysteries of God." The word "mystery" as used in this verse does not mean something unknown or unrevealed, but rather that which was hitherto unknown but now made clear and understandable through the Holy Spirit. There are many mysteries spoken of in the Bible. Probably the greatest is the mystery of the cross, which is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. The full meaning of the cross did not become clear until Christ gave Himself to this ignominious death for our sins. Of course, to the unsaved the cross is still a mystery. How God could forgive our sins on the basis of the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross is a mystery to the unbelieving mind. But to those who believe, the purpose of the cross is meaningful. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the preaching of

the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

What does the cross mean to you? To some it means the unexpected fate of a victim of circumstances. To others it means the martyrdom of a good leader who refused to be deterred by his high and noble purposes. If this is all the cross of Jesus Christ means to you, then as far as you are concerned it is still a mystery. You are blind to the divine interpretation of its true meaning.

The cross means sacrifice. It is the altar on which the Lamb of God was slain, where His blood was shed for your sin and for mine. It was God's offering for you, that you might be a possessor of eternal life. This need not be a mystery. It can be a blessed reality for anyone who will sincerely receive Christ into his life.

Man's only approach to God is by means of the cross. We read in Colossians 1:20, Christ, "having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." There is no other possible way to God. There is no other plan of salvation. There is nothing you can add to the work of the cross. This message is a great mystery to millions today, but to those who believe it is perfectly clear.

"But I can't see it," said a cabinetmaker to a Christian friend who was trying to show how the death of Christ completed the work of salvation. The Christian lifted a plane as though he would plane the top of a beautifully polished table that stood near.

"Stop!" cried the cabinetmaker, "don't you see that's finished? You will ruin it if you use that plane on it."

"Why," replied his friend, "that's just what I have been trying to show you about the work of Christ. It was finished when He gave His life for you. If you try to add to that finished work, you can only spoil it. Just accept it as it stands, His life for yours, and you go free."

How many there are in our day seeking by their good works, their own system of morality, their personal standard of righteousness, to enter Heaven. Hear the Word of God (Ephesians 1:7): Christ, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

You ministers who are called to be "stewards of the mysteries of God," I urge to be faithful in proclaiming boldly the message of the cross. Week by week, tell your people this great story of what Christ did for them. It is the message of which the saints will never grow tired, and always it is good news to the sinner. You have a high calling. You are responsible to Him who called you to preach the message of redemption, that helpless, burdened, heartbroken souls might find peace through Him who is the Prince of Peace, through Him who alone can give peace, even Christ Jesus our Lord. You may be criticized, you may be ridiculed. Remember, they did the same to your Master. In fact, He said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12). Do not look for the easy way, but be sure you follow God's way. You are responsible to Him. He has called you to preach the gospel. Hungry hearts are waiting to hear. You are men of God, make His message known.

Next Paul stated, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." God requires fidelity in His servants. It is not important that he hold his audience spellbound or draw the largest crowd; but it is important that he preach the Word of God. One may deliver a sermon that electrifies the audience. The sermon may be stimulating, interesting, and thought provoking. Some present may declare that it is wonderful, the best they have ever heard. Yet God may be judging such preaching to be a complete failure. On what

basis? "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." In 1 Peter 5:2 we read, "Feed the flock of God which is among you." In 2 Timothy 4:1-2 Paul writes, "I charge thee . . . before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the word." It is the Word of God that the Holy Spirit uses in the conviction of sin and in the instruction of righteousness. There is no other substitute.

It is the minister's responsibility before Jesus Christ to inform his people not only what the Word of God says but what it means in the light of his own study and meditation. To preach and to teach the Word, the man of God must be a student of the Word. He must give himself to many hours of valuable study of the Book of Life. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this. He must discipline his life, with a desire to know the Word.

For years I have reserved the hours from early morning until noon for study and preparation to preach to those to whom God called me to minister. Rarely did I ever let anything interfere with these important hours. When friends contacted me for counseling, I usually arranged for an afternoon appointment in order not to interfere with the needful study hours. I endeavored to refrain from scheduling any appointments in the morning, except in the case of an emergency, so that I might be faithful to God in fulfilling my trust to those to whom He called me to preach.

I recall, however, one morning our doorbell rang. My wife informed me that one of the ministers of the city would like to see me. I invited him into my study. He told me that he was out calling, and that he just wanted to stop by and have a little visit. He talked on and on, saying very little, and relaxing as though he had nothing to do for the rest of the day. I tried to be as courteous as I could, though disturbed to realize that all of these valuable minutes were being wasted. During the course of the visit I tried to direct the conversation to something more worth while, so I asked what he was

preaching about Sunday. He told me what his topic was for the coming Sunday morning.

"I prepare only one sermon a week," he said.

"You have an evening service, don't you?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "but I always use an old message for that. I just pull out one I gave in the morning a year or so ago and my people don't even recognize it."

Suddenly, I realized how this man could sit around and waste precious time which should have been used in his study digging into the Word of God. I happened to know some of his congregation, and on occasion I heard the complaint that their pastor gave them very little from the pulpit. Well, it was understandable. No man can give out unless he takes time to take in.

What Paul said about ministers could also be applied to God's servants in any phase of His vineyard—Sunday school teachers, church officers, and youth leaders. No one can check up on us to see whether or not we are really prepared; but our obligation is much more serious. We labor under the eye of God. We are His witnesses. To you and me the Word of God says in 2 Chronicles 29:11, "My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him." Has the Lord committed some work to you to do? "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Are you faithful in fulfilling your responsibilities?

Being faithful does not necessarily mean busyness. It means being faithful in fulfilling God's assigned task for you. Many unsaved people are busy. In fact, they are very diligent in being busy. But to be a faithful steward demands obedience to God's revealed will relative to the service He would have you perform.

A small boy was drawing his still smaller sister along the walk in his little wagon. He looked up beaming when his mother's watchful face appeared in the doorway.

"I'm trying to make Janie happy, Mother," he said.

"What a beautiful spirit for the child to have," thought the

mother. But presently she noticed the boy's effort was not very successful. Little Janie was evidently afraid to ride and was trying to climb out and draw the wagon herself.

"She doesn't like to ride, Bobby," exclaimed mother.

"But I want to draw the wagon myself. I want to make her happy doing the things I like to do," said Bobby.

Is it not true that this is the spirit of much of our service in the name of Christ? We are busy doing what we desire to do, but God is not pleased because we are failing to fulfill His chosen paths for us. Are you serving the Lord in the light of His will? Are you being faithful to the obligations He has placed before you? "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

If the servant of Christ is faithful to the Lord, he should not be disturbed by criticism about his work. The Apostle Paul was being severely criticized by some, but, said Paul, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." He was not annoyed by the appraisal of the Corinthians because they were not his judges. The question Paul had to consider was, have I been faithful to the Lord in opening up and unfolding the Scriptures to the people as God has desired me to do?

Very often a minister's messages will offend some in his congregation if he is faithful in preaching the Word. The Word of God does not always satisfy everyone, but whether the Word of God rebukes, exhorts, or whatever it does, the minister must proclaim the Word, in spite of the opinions of men.

Paul said further, "I judge not mine own self." He did not have the right to choose what he should preach, or to pass criticism on his preaching. It is possible after a minister has preached a sermon to think, "That was a pretty good sermon. It seemed to go over very well." On the other hand, there may be times when he thinks, "I was a complete fail-

ure today. I never had such a hard time preaching. It seemed as if the people were more restless than ever." The minister should not judge himself in this light; the question is, did he through the Holy Spirit preach the Word? Was God pleased because the Word was proclaimed in sincerity and truth? These are the questions that need to be answered.

Paul declared further, "For I know nothing by myself," literally, "I know nothing *against* myself; Yet," he said, "am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord." As far as Paul knew, he was not aware of anything in his life or in his preaching and teaching that was contrary to the will of God. Yet this fact in itself did not justify him because he was not the true judge. He was a minister of Christ. Christ was his Judge.

Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to be careful of getting on the judgment seat. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." The day is coming when all believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged on the basis of faithfulness by the rightful Judge. The gold, silver, and precious stone labors will stand forever; but the wood, hay, and stubble service will be burned. Paul made it clear that the responsibility of judging is not the right of any believer. Let us wait, let us refrain until the true Judge comes —Jesus, the Son of God. For we do not know what is in the heart. We cannot see everything; only God can. When He returns, He will "bring to light," Paul said, "the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." He will reveal the entire picture, as only He sees it. The Bible says, "The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). You and I know only a part of the story. We know what we can see. But God sees deeper; He sees the heart of man. What a day that will be when the

cover is lifted and everything is brought out into the open. None of us will want to be judges then, for our own sham and hypocrisy will be too pronounced. We are proud and critical at present, but the scene will change when Christ comes and we are judged according to truth.

Have we been faithful in fulfilling our responsibilities to God? Remember, He is our Judge. Let us pray in the words of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

Basically, our service for Christ is a spiritual relationship. If we are not right with the Lord, our service will be ineffectual. Faithfulness is not so much a state of *doing* as a state of *being*. One must be faithful. If he is faithful to the Lord, he will do the things God wants him to do. But again, faithfulness has to do with our *being*. We must be in a right relationship to God before we shall do what He wants us to do. In John 15:4 He says, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." We must be abiding in Christ. There should not be anything in our lives hindering fellowship with Him. The greatest obstacle to faithful service is not laziness; it is sin—sin in the life of the believer, sin that has not been confessed to the Lord. It is this that Jesus will reveal on the day of judgment when He "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Why not face up to these things now? Why not let the Lord give you victory immediately?

A Christian friend tells of the occasion when her little daughter visited a friend one weekend. While she was away, her mother cleaned the house thoroughly and expected that the daughter would mention it when she returned. But the daughter did not seem to notice it.

"Ruth, don't you think everything looks nice?" the mother asked.

"Let me see the desk," she answered.

In one room was a roll-top desk, and when the cover was down it meant that all was not as it should be on the inside. Yes, that day everything in the house was in place except the things that were hidden in the desk. Anyone else would have thought the house immaculate, but those who lived there knew why the top was down.

God knows all about the hidden things of darkness. Those around us may not know, but He knows. Has our service for Him been ineffectual? This may be the reason. Could it be that you have a roll-top desk in your heart and the lid is down? Open the lid and let God clean out all the hidden things, that He may have perfect control in your life, so you might be filled with the Spirit and overflow with blessing in effectual and fruitful service.

## EASY LIVING

### *1 Corinthians 4:6-16*

THE APOSTLE attacked the subtle evil of believers judging one another. He continued, "These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." In the opening chapter of 1 Corinthians, the apostle pointed out the evil of a partisan spirit among believers; some were following Paul, some were following Apollos, and some were following Cephas. Here he reiterated that the use of these names was for the purpose of illustration. The names of the actual teachers were not given by the apostle, but the saints at Corinth were divided because they were

following men rather than the Lord. Paul informed them that he was illustrating, using his name and that of Apollos and Cephas for the reason that "Ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written."

Oftentimes as one follows a certain teacher, he begins to believe everything the teacher says. Even when the teacher speculates, the hearer will frequently accept what is said as fact. Paul was quick to tell the Corinthians they must not believe anything that is not written in the Word of God. In other words, all teaching should be tested. It should be substantiated from the truth of Scripture. We read of the Berean Christians in Acts 17:11, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The Bereans took nothing for granted. After listening to a Bible teacher, they would immediately go to the Scriptures in their own private study and by comparing Scripture with Scripture test the teaching to be sure it was absolute truth. Indeed, this is praiseworthy. No hearer of the Word of God should accept the teaching of anyone as a substitute for his own personal Bible study.

Regrettably, in many of our churches today there are Christians who are depending wholly on what they hear taught as the extent of their Bible study. You have the Holy Spirit within: He is the great Teacher. Jesus said of Him in John 14:26, "He shall teach you all things." How important that we take the time each day to study God's Word, not only to read it but to study it, pour over it, concentrate on it, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal its meaning to us, that we might be strong in the Lord. Do you take adequate time to study God's Word? If you do, I am sure you can say with Jeremiah, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16). The study of the Word of God will bring abounding joy to your heart.

One time Dr. Max Reich was conducting a series of meetings, and at the close of one of the services a lady came to him and said, "I really enjoyed that message." He thanked her and said, "I hope you will soon get beyond the enjoyment stage." Then he suggested that she consider Revelation 10:9 upon her arrival at home. In this verse the angel gave the Apostle John the little book saying, "Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey."

There is no enjoyment in bitterness. The Bible will not always be enjoyable. As you study, it will disturb you. It will convict you of sin. It will humble you. It will bring you low. But at the same time, you will enjoy its sweetness, its passages of comfort and inspiration. If you study it and let it go through you, you will be the kind of man or the kind of woman God wants you to be.

We are not to be as the Corinthians, for they were following men and spending more time listening to the teachers than they were studying the Word. As the result, they were becoming "puffed up for one against another." They were proud of their favorite Bible teacher. Well, you know what the Bible has to say about pride: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). These believers were headed for a fall because they were more concerned about what men had to say than they were about what God had to say. These men were saying, "I like my teacher better than yours." All of this was the result of hearts filled with pride. They were exalting men rather than God.

Paul was quick to remind them that, if they did have anything unusual that was good, it did not come from them, but from God. In verse 7 he asked, "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?" God should receive all the praise for anything that is worth while. The Bible is clear on this fact. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every per-

fect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." God is the giver of everything worth while, thus we must not praise men but praise Him. We are to respect our preachers and faithfully labor with them, but all praise is to be given to Christ. If we glory in a man, the first thing you know God will remove the man. God will not share His glory.

At the same time, I think of unsaved people glorying in their good works as a means of salvation, or even in their church attendance. What a delusion from the wicked one. Do you think that, after God sent His only Son from Heaven to earth to die on the cross for your sins, He will be pleased with your plan of salvation while you ignore His? Your good works come out of a proud heart. You want to be well spoken of by your friends and neighbors. It is not because you want to please God. If you really want to please God, then you would humble yourself in His sight and acknowledge His Son as your Saviour from sin. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). He has provided a way of salvation which is the only way of salvation. Any other kind or method you offer is blasphemy of the God-ordained plan of salvation. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord! Turn to Christ! The Bible says in James 4:8, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

In 1 Corinthians 4:8 Paul said, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." Because the Corinthians were following their favorite Bible teachers, they possessed a certain self-sufficiency, a kind of "holier than thou" attitude. There seemed to be a cocksureness among them as if they knew everything that should be known. Thus Paul pointed out, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings." One who is a true student

of the Word of God should never reach this place. He should be a humble man, for as he daily meditates on the Scriptures he should be quick to confess his own unworthiness before the Lord.

But there is something else here. I see a condition that prevails among many professing Christians today. They are reigning as kings. They are quick to take all of the good things, all of the blessings of the gospel, but they almost completely overlook cross-bearing. I am convinced that one of the best-used illusions of the wicked one is that of getting Christians comfortable, with plenty of money and a sense of security, so they will say, "God has been so good to me."

Look at Paul's words in verse 9, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." We are not to reign as kings now. This is yet to come. When the Lord returns we shall reign with Him. Many Christians are living like kings before the time comes to live like a king. The reigning time is not yet. Right now it is suffering time. We are "appointed to death." Ours is to be a life of self-denial. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Many of us have been deceived by the devil. Our task at the moment is not to reign like a king but to sacrifice like a saint. We are to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. This is a costly proposition; there is no easy way to do this.

Paul said that he and others like him who were trying to do the work of God "were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." The words "appointed to death" connote the meaning of a criminal condemned to die. In Paul's day criminals were thrust into the amphitheater. They were theatrical spectacles to be torn to pieces by wild beasts while the crowd cheered with excitement. We are not part of the world; Paul declared, "We are made a spectacle." We are a laughingstock. We are

hated and despised by the world. We are here for a purpose, not to be placed on a pedestal nor to rest in comfort and ease, but to proclaim Christ. Do we not need a new understanding of apostolic and New Testament Christianity? We have deviated so far from what it means to be a Christian that one can well understand why we are so powerless in our day. We have not been chosen to live, but condemned to die.

When the British government sought to reward General Gordon for his brilliant services in China, he declined all money or titles, but accepted a gold medal inscribed with the record of his thirty-three engagements. It was his most prized possession. But after his death the medal could not be found. Eventually it was learned that he had sent it to Manchester during a severe famine, directing that it should be melted down and used to buy bread for the poor. Under the date of its sending these words were found written in his diary: "The last and only thing I had in this world that I valued, I have given to the Lord Jesus Christ."

What does that suggest to you? To me it suggests that General Gordon was a man who was sold out to God recognizing that he was not to reign as a king but he was "appointed to death." He was "made a spectacle unto the world." Paul pleads with us today in Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." In speaking of presenting your body, Paul meant that you should present everything you have and are to Christ.

It may be that you are not a Christian. I have been writing especially to those who have already received Christ. Maybe you thought you were a believer. When one truly comes to Christ a transformation takes place. It is not something we do: God does it for us. The moment one believes on the Lord

Jesus Christ, God makes him into a new creature. Not only that: He puts a loving concern in his heart to tell others about this great experience he has enjoyed in Christ. Continuing, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:10, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised." He was contrasting his own position as an apostle of God with the life of ease and comfort being lived by the Corinthian believers. They were, as Paul had said, "reigning as kings," failing to realize their true position in life as witnesses for Christ. Paul said, "We are fools for Christ's sake." The world looks upon us as the scum of the earth; "but ye are wise in Christ." Many of the Corinthians were "in Christ," but they had not become "fools for Christ." They were wise according to the world. They had settled down in a comfortable living, rejoicing in all the blessings of God, but they had no vision for the souls of men.

You will notice that it does not say they were wise "for" Christ, but they were wise "in" Christ. They remind me of those the prophet spoke about in Amos 6:1, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." This describes the Corinthian Christians perfectly; they were "at ease in Zion." Glorying in their Bible knowledge and their wonderful Bible teachers, living in comfort, they had no burden or concern for those who were perishing without Christ.

Paul went on to say, "we are weak, but ye are strong." Ungodly men looked to the Corinthian Christians and praised them for their worth-while and sanctified practices. On the other hand, Paul and his friends were beaten and scourged for their actions. Frequently they were imprisoned because of their faithfulness and boldness in proclaiming Christ. He said further, "ye are honourable, but we are despised." The Corinthians were revered with praise and respect, but Paul was reviled and hated.

"Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwell-

ingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." In verses 11-13 Paul has given us a good outline of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Things have changed, have they not? Many of us have no conception of what it means to be hungry and thirsty for Christ's sake, to have our clothes ripped from our backs, to be beaten, to have our homes taken from us, to be reviled and persecuted, to be made "the filth of the world," hated and despised. There are some in certain parts of the world who know what this means; they are going through it. But much of modern-day Christianity needs a fresh experience with Christ. God has been good to us, showering us with material blessings and the good things of life, that we might in turn be good stewards of God, investing everything we have in the souls of men. God never intended that we settle down and live for ourselves. All the Lord has sent to us is His, committed unto us that we might use it for the winning of souls to Him.

In these verses Paul spoke very sharply. We have seen irony and sarcasm in his words. It was not because he was angry, nor was it because he did not love the Corinthian saints: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you." The word "warn" here is really "admonish." It is used in the sense of a father admonishing his son. The apostle wrote as he did because his heart was overflowing with love for these saints. He was their spiritual father. He had gone into the hard places to lead them out into the glories of the new birth. He had nurtured them as a parent nurtures a child, and his heart was breaking to see them turning away from a life of full commitment to one of carnality and selfishness. Thus he tried to stir them to action, that they might not fall into deeper sin.

Perhaps you need to be stirred up. Perhaps you are among the many people today who are gospel-hardened, whose heads

are filled with Bible knowledge, but whose hearts are cold. Oh, that these words might penetrate, that you might get a vision of what it means to be a follower of Christ, that you might claim victory over the self-life and enter into the Christ-centered life.

Augustine once said, as a principle of his life, "To myself I will show a heart of steel. To my fellowman a heart of love. To my God a heart of flame." How few of us could really say this. Many of us, though we name the name of Jesus Christ, are wholly living for self. If Christ were to be taken away from us, some of us would not lose very much, for He has so little hold on us; but if the things that cater to self were removed, we would feel as though we had lost everything. What a tragedy that we have been deceived.

A Christian doctor tells of receiving an urgent message while he was attending a patient. He resented such interruptions, but hurried away when he heard the message, "Your house is on fire, Doctor." Coming within the region of his home, the flames were quite visible and he was considerably concerned. Just as he neared the house a friend rushed up.

"It's not your house, Doctor," he exclaimed, "it's the one next door."

"Oh, thank God!" the doctor exclaimed on the spur of the moment. Then quickly he began to think: Am I thanking God because my neighbor is burned out instead of me?

Yet, is this not common? Word comes that your little child is injured. You run frantically to help, but then you learn that it is your neighbor's child. What a relief! Is it? Yes, because we are so selfish. We do not have the burden of Christ in our hearts.

This is the thing that disturbed Paul regarding the Corinthians. In verse 15 he wrote, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." The apostle's heart was overwhelmed with the love of God. In 2 Corinthians 5:14 he wrote, "For the love of Christ con-

straineth us." This was the secret of his selflessness. Paul reminded the feeble saints at Corinth that they had many instructors in Christ but not many fathers. He was their spiritual father; and with a heart impassioned with the love of God he wrote, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." To be able to say such a thing, one must be walking with the Lord. Paul was that man.

What was the secret of such a life? How do you explain it? I think the whole story is found in Colossians 1:18, "That in all things He might have the preeminence." Is Jesus Christ pre-eminent in your life? Who is on the throne of your heart —Christ or self? Oh, let Him have first place! Let Him be your Lord!

## WORDS THAT COUNT

### *1 Corinthians 4:17-21*

PAUL REMINDED THE BELIEVERS at Corinth that since he was their spiritual father, they should give heed to the important things he had written. Furthermore he substantiated what he had written by a life which was beyond reproach. Thus he said, "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."

Timothy was a young preacher of the gospel who was dispatched by the apostle to help care for the emergency in the Corinthian church. Paul recommended him to the Corinthians by stating that he "is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord." As Paul was the spiritual father of the Corinthians,

he was also the spiritual father to Timothy. He had tried and tested Timothy and found him to be faithful.

What an encouragement it is to any minister of the gospel to have those who are not only faithful to the Lord, but faithful in helping to bear the load of the ministry. Oftentimes they do not receive due credit and recognition, that is, from men. Of course, God sees everything. But they labor humbly day in and day out, doing the menial things to help support the ministry of God's servants. If I have enjoyed any degree of success during the years of my ministry, it has been largely the result of the faithful helpers God has given me all along the way, who have made it possible for me to do the work I have been able to accomplish. Thus we find Timothy to be a faithful son in the Lord, one who could be depended upon, one who had a single goal in life: to exalt and glorify the Lord Jesus in sacrificial service.

Paul sent Timothy to the Corinthians to bring "into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church." His "ways" include not only his teaching but the practical application of this teaching to his own life. Timothy knew Paul well. He had traveled with him, he had lived with him. Thus Paul sent one to Corinth who did not merely hear him preach but who knew him as a man. The apostle had been unduly criticized by the Corinthian Christians. False reports were being circulated not only about his teaching but about his manner of life. Consequently Paul sent Timothy who could present the facts.

Of what value is a sermon if it is not backed up by a holy life? What good is a Sunday school lesson if the teacher does not live what he teaches? What Paul stated here is very important. We must not only *tell* people the way, we must *show* them the way. As for soul-winning, do you know how you can best tell your neighbor what Christ can do for him? *Show him* what Christ has done for you! The trite phrase, though well-worn, is true: "Actions speak louder than words." In Psalm 89:15 we read, "Blessed is the people that know the

joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Thy countenance." If we have really met the Lord, we shall walk with Him.

In the Gospels we see that the Lord Jesus "trained" His disciples by example. He taught prayer, He preached prayer. But behind His preaching and teaching, and indispensably essential to their effectiveness, was His practice of prayer. There can be no real teaching in the fullest implication of that function if the teacher is not a living demonstration of that which he teaches. It is for this reason that Paul could say, as we saw in the words of verse 16: "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

What kind of world would this be if every Christian lived just like you? In all the business relationships, in the home life, in the social life, if all Christians were to do things in the same manner in which you do them, what kind of world would this be? Would you be satisfied to have your children grow up and be the kind of Christian you are right now? I am speaking to those who profess to love Christ. I am not thinking of the ungodly or those who have not time or regard for Christ and His program, but of those of you who profess to be true followers of the Lord. Would you want your children to grow up and be like you are now? Are you satisfied that you could say to them, as Paul said to his spiritual children, "I beseech you, be ye followers of me"? Are there any traces of deceit or inconsistency that ought to be confessed and made right in the sight of the Lord in order that you might become the kind of Christian that would produce a worth-while example? Jesus said in John 12:26, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." Have you not found it easier on occasion to serve Christ than to follow Him? But if we are not following Him we might just as well not serve Him, for our service will be a waste of time and effort. It will be ineffectual, without fruit. Paul could say to Timothy, "Go to Corinth and remind them of my manner of life and teachings as you know them." What a profound statement.

Maybe you and I ought to do a little heart-searching right now. Maybe we should ask God to show us anything that might be hindering this kind of life. Then as He reveals it to us, let us confess it and ask God to fill us with His power, that we might be mighty witnesses for His glory.

Paul proceeded to point out that there were some in the Corinthian church who were reacting adversely to his absence. He said, "Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you." In the next verse he assured them of his coming, saying, "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power." Some of the saints at Corinth had become "puffed up" with their own importance. Doubtless they were saying, "Paul is afraid to come back." Without question, they were backing this up with all kinds of lies and false reports. These bold dispensers of gossip were becoming "puffed up" in the sense that they were furthering the partisan spirit which, as we have already seen, was one of the foremost problems of the Corinthian church. By their attitude and the things they were saying, they were dividing the congregation rather than drawing it together in the unity of the Spirit. Paul reminded them that very soon he would come to them again, that Timothy's coming was only a temporary measure until Paul could fit Corinth into his schedule.

In his promise to come Paul declared, "If the Lord will." I always like this about the Apostle Paul. Rarely do we see him doing anything without discerning God's will in the matter. You and I can learn a very useful lesson from this. Nothing should be attempted on the part of the believer, not even that which seems to be most insignificant, without first of all determining God's desire in the matter. He is interested in guiding us in everything, not in some things but in everything. We read in James 4:15, "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." "If the Lord will" should be in the Christians's thinking constantly.

Before God saved us we were rebellious, living in the light

of our plans and aspirations. But having been to the cross, we are no longer our own; we have been bought with a price. This is more than theory; it is extremely practical. Because we are not our own, we are to live under the leadership of God in everything. Look at Hebrews 13:20-21. Here we see the results of redemption in the life of the believer. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work"—notice this next phrase—"to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." The word "perfect" as used here is really the word "mature." It suggests growing up. We grow up in the Lord as we let Him work through us according to His will for us. Thus before making any decision, we should patiently wait on God in order to know and understand His will.

How much misery and hardship would be averted among believers were they to wait carefully before they acted. So much sorrow could be averted, so much heartache could be avoided, if only God's people would be more concerned about the Lord's plan. One reason so many believers are frustrated is that they are trying to move in a direction other than God's purpose for their lives. There are many Christians who know nothing about the peace of God that passeth all understanding simply because they are inwardly rebelling against God's plan. There can be no peace in the heart of the believer as long as he refuses to seek God's way in everything.

John Hall wrote in *Moody Monthly*: "I stood one evening watching the pure white flowers on a vine encircling the veranda. I had been told that the buds that hung with closed petals all day unfolded every evening near sunset and sent out a peculiar fragrance. The miracle was more than I had anticipated. A feeling of silent awe possessed me as I saw bud after bud, as if under the touch of an invisible hand, slowly fold back its leaves until the vine was filled with perfect

blossoms, most beautiful and sweet. . . . If the finger of God laid upon these His flowers can do this in a way beyond the power of human study to explain, cannot the same divine touch, in ways we know not of, do as much for human hearts?"

Indeed it can. God can open and shut doors at will, and even more, at His appointed time. Thus there is no need for the believer in Christ to become disturbed and fretful. What should we do? David gave us the answer in Psalm 37:5: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." What does God say to you and to me? Commit! Just simply turn the problem over to Him. Do not worry about it; trust Him to care for it. Be willing to accept His will in the matter. Trust in Him, and He "shall bring it to pass."

Paul said that when he visited Corinth, he would "know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power." He would come with a purpose. He spoke with apostolic authority here. He planned to examine some things when he came. Were they merely being pretentious? Were these leaders of faction and dissension in the church really sincere, or were they using only pious phrases while their lives were empty and shallow? Paul wanted to find this out for himself. Thus, he was anxious to know if they were really filled with the Holy Spirit, and if they were speaking in the Spirit, or if this was a diabolical work of the flesh.

Of course the answers to these questions are quite obvious. The Holy Spirit is never divided. Wherever you see divisions among those who profess to be followers of Christ, you may be sure that the Holy Spirit is not in control. It is the Spirit who draws us together in the unity of the faith. It is proud flesh that separates us from other believers. But in bringing this fact to the attention of the Corinthians, Paul used this method of approach, suggesting that when he came to visit them he would point out the real evil of their divisions—pride in selfish hearts. How subtle the devil is, to rob the people of

God of the joy of the Lord through the evil of pride. Oh, how we need to be sure that our hearts are clean before God.

There were many gifted preachers in the Corinthian assembly. They were giving great speeches. They had oratorical ability. They were eloquent. But "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." "The kingdom of God" is a living fellowship with the Lord, not determined by how well one preaches or speaks, but how committed he is to the control of the Holy Spirit. One of the predominate characteristics of the Grecian culture was a love for the power of discourse. This same spirit had found its way into the church at Corinth. It was a church filled with preachers, but Paul reminded them that there was something of far greater importance—that of Holy Spirit power. This is no less true today than it was in Paul's day. It matters not how gifted a man may be in delivering a sermon; unless he is motivated by the Holy Spirit his words are "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

What believer is there who fully recognizes the potential he has within him in the person of the Holy Spirit? Jesus said in John 14:16, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." We know from the Scriptures that every true believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who abides with us forever. Thus I ask, who of us fully realizes the potential we have in His indwelling presence? God has made a marvelous provision for you and for me in sending His Spirit to live within us.

Alongside the football field at one of our great universities a little boy each evening followed the players up and down the field. His eyes were usually fixed on the star halfback of the team. When he would tell his father about the practice session, he would exclaim, "Dad, when I get big I'm going to be a halfback just like Bill Jones." One evening the little fellow did not appear at the practice, and the football players asked about him only to learn that he had been stricken by a dreaded disease. Then came the call for someone to volunteer to give blood for a transfusion to save the life of the little

boy. The players to the man made their way to the hospital, and among them was found one player with the type of blood needed.

Days later when the little fellow was recovering and had been taken home, his father sought to cheer him by reminding him that it would not be long until he could watch the fellows practice again.

"Then you can learn how to become the greatest halfback in all the country," his father said.

"But, Dad," the little boy replied soberly, "I can't be a halfback now."

"And why can't you be a halfback, son?" the surprised father asked.

"Because," replied the boy, "I've got the blood of a tackle in me now, and I'll have to be the best tackle in the whole country."

If we are in Christ, we have the Holy Spirit in us. We can be our very best for God because we have the enabling power in the person of the Spirit. As we listen to His voice and follow His leading, we can be firebrands for God. To be effectual, however, the Holy Spirit must be in the position of authority. He will not assume this place until He is given permission.

God says in Ephesians 5:18, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." The word "filled" means "controlled." Do not be controlled by evil, but be controlled by God, God's Spirit who indwells you. Think of how we might be used by God were we to allow ourselves to be fully controlled by the Holy Spirit. What power we should possess. What mighty works we should accomplish. How effectual our witness would be. How much fruit our labors would produce.

Is your life controlled by the Spirit? Are you unreservedly committed to His direction? Do not try to live your own life. Let God the Holy Spirit live through you. The Spirit-filled life is not only the God-directed life but the blessed, fruitful

life. No, the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power, Holy Spirit power. Our speaking, our preaching, our teaching, is meaningless without His power.

"What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?" Here was an indirect plea on the part of the apostle for the Corinthians to do something about their situation immediately. He was desirous that they make their wrongs right, that they confess their sin of factionalism and get right with God and with each other. If they do, his visit to them would be pleasurable. He would be able to come with love and in a tender spirit. But if they persist in continuing in their sins, then he must come as God's representative with a rod of chastisement. Then he would continue to rebuke them in the name of the Lord. Of course, his desire was to come and have fellowship with them as he had done in the past, gathering around the Word of God. Together, they could dip down deep into the truths of God and be refreshed in the Lord.

What a beautiful picture it is to see a church recognizing its mission to preach Christ and to proclaim the Word, a church whose members are those who love the Word and want to know the Book. I believe this is just about as close as one can get to Heaven on earth. But when a church is divided and filled with enmity and hatred, God's judgment will rest upon it. There will be little blessing received in worshiping in such an atmosphere. Remember though, churches are composed of individuals. As we think of the Body of Christ we must think of ourselves in our own personal relationship to the Lord. Is there anything of a factional spirit in your heart? Is there any envy or hatred? If so, remember, fellowship with the Lord is broken and you are under the rod of His judgment and chastisement. Confess all sin, every trace of sin, that you might be filled with the fullness of His power.

Should you not be a Christian—I mean by that, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ—I urge you to come to Christ. Receive Him into your heart. He wants to save you. He loves

you. He wants to plant your feet upon the solid Rock that will not sink in the shifting sand of the uncertain days in which we live.

## GOD'S JUDGES

### *1 Corinthians 5:1-13*

COMING to chapter five of 1 Corinthians we notice an abrupt change in Paul's appeal to the Corinthian saints. Up until this time he had been pleading for Christian unity among the brethren. Here he spoke out quite pointedly against another serious problem in the church. He realized that there would have been no real value in dealing with the sin he was about to discuss unless there was a spirit of unity among the brethren. What Paul had to say now would only create further division were the saints not truly one in Christ.

Paul called upon the believers to take action against the gross immorality in the church. He began by stating the problem: "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife." What a serious offense! But regardless of how serious it was, it had to be faced with reality. Paul stated that "it is *reported commonly* that there is fornication among you." This was not a case of gossip coming from a few disgruntled individuals. It was well known. Everyone knew about it, in the church and out of the church. What a horrible sin this was! Here was a man having immoral relationships with his stepmother.

What was the attitude of the Corinthians toward this evil? "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." They were still boasting of their pet teachers while

completely overlooking the sin in their midst that was undermining their spiritual effectiveness and usefulness. Even if they did not know how to handle the matter, they should have been on their knees, praying for wisdom, and seeking God's guidance. But no, they had silenced their consciences while vainly boasting of their great Bible teachers.

Is it not true that much of the religious activity in our day is often a coverup for sin in the life? We should always keep in mind that though we may deceive men, we can never hide from God. In Psalm 69:5 we read, "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Thee." How ridiculous for anyone to think that he can cover his sins and hide them from the eye of the Lord.

An employee in a post office had long been suspected of stealing sheets of stamps. But the alleged crime could not be proven. One day a block of stamps was found on him, but he maintained that he had bought them for his own use. The inspector took the stamps, and passing a moist brush over one of the sheets, held it up before the accused man. On the sheet like a flame were the words, "Stolen from the General Post Office." As a trap to catch the thief, these stamps had been imprinted with invisible ink. The moisture brought the words to light, and at the same time brought the guilty thief to conviction.

We cannot escape the eye of God. Sometimes we may wonder whether a certain practice is right or wrong. A good test is to see if you can formulate the questionable thing into a prayer. You cannot imagine anyone praying, "Lord, show me how I may chisel on my income tax." Or, "Help me, dear God, to get the most out of this worldly amusement." It is impossible to pray this way. If you have any doubt about a particular practice, see if you can put it into a prayer request. I am sure that the man in our text did not try this. He was controlled purely by the flesh. There seems to be no evidence whatsoever of spirituality in his life.

Even though the Corinthians had taken no action, Paul had:

"For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed." Doubtless Paul had sought the Lord in this matter and received clear-cut guidance as to the action that should be taken. Thus he wrote in verses 4 and 5, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Quite obviously, the one who had committed this evil was unrepentant. He chose to continue in his sin rather than obey God. Paul declared that he should be delivered over to Satan. Since the guilty sinner was a member of the church, definite action should be taken to discipline this man. He was living a worldly life, following satanical ways, thus he should have been put out of the church and considered as a man of the world rather than a child of God.

But somebody may ask, "Would it not have been better to be kind to him and to treat him with Christian love?" It should be kept in mind that this man persisted in his sin. Doubtless some had been kind to him, but he continued in sin. Thus only one thing could be done. The evil must be faced realistically. If the erring one wanted to live like the devil and follow the course of this world, then he should be put out of the church. Such action, said Paul, would perhaps awaken him to the need of his heart, so that "the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

The present-day church has failed miserably in exercising its judicial prerogative. So often we have turned our faces from sin rather than face the issues. A Christian brother is not helped by having his sin ignored or his wickedness overlooked. Those who are in authority in the church must act as God's representatives to deal with the erring brother, lest he fall into worse sin.

Considering all this, would it not be a good time to permit the Holy Spirit to search out your own heart? Maybe you

have been persisting in some evil that you think no one knows anything about. Remember, God knows! Your life may be fruitless because you have been clinging to some pet sin which God abominates. Let the Lord take it from you! You cannot overcome it, but He can. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Talk it over with Him. Let Him work in your heart. Do not be an unhappy Christian. Be a happy, jubilant, fruitful believer in Christ.

In verse 6 Paul said, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" In other words, it is a dangerous thing to permit one to continue in known sin without doing anything about it. Those who are in the position of authority in the church have a moral obligation to God and to the offender to deal with the matter. If they do not, others in the congregation may be infected by the same sin. For as God says in Galatians 5:9, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Any homemaker would understand this; if a small amount of yeast is kneaded into some dough in a pan and left overnight, the lump of dough will probably double or triple in size. The whole lump is affected by the small amount of yeast. Sin works in the same manner. Not only does it work in us as individuals but also in a body of believers, unless something is done about it.

Dr. M. R. DeHaan, in one of his devotional booklets, told of a sad day that came into his life when he was compelled to part with some very dear friends. The friends were two colonies of honeybees. A bee inspector informed him that a disease (called foul brood) had infected the hives and the bees were doomed. It was necessary to destroy them immediately, lest they spread the disease to other bees in their neighborhood. Dr. DeHaan stood by sadly as the inspector killed the bees with cyanide, carried the hives into the field, and burned the frames and boxes, together with seventy-five pounds of honey, with which he had hoped to surprise his family and friends. Dr. DeHaan said, "My material loss, however, became a

spiritual gain for me. I realized the need of frequent 'inspection' of my own heart for the 'foul brood' of the works of the flesh. Sin in our lives must be purged out or it will grow worse and even affect others."

This is the fact Paul placed before the Corinthians: if they did not deal with the one persisting in sin, the entire congregation would be affected by the evil. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." Then he illustrated from a well-known Old Testament ceremony, the Passover. On the eve of the Passover feast the Israelites had to remove all leaven from their homes. They were not permitted to have any leavened bread on their tables from the time of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb in the Temple at the beginning of the feast until the conclusion of the feast. "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Ours is a perpetual feast. There are not certain times in the church year when we observe the Passover. The entire Christian experience is like unto the Passover. When we came to Christ and believed on Him, we were supposed to have put out of our lives all of the leaven, that is, "the leaven of malice and wickedness," and at the same time by receiving Him, the Lord Jesus, we partook of "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Our Passover feast continues until we meet Christ face to face. Then, of course, the leaven of sin will no longer be any problem. But until that time the believer is to live in the power of Christ, a life of victory and blessing, daily claiming the miraculous power that Christ gives to live the "unleavened life."

Someone may ask, can the Christian live without leaven? What does the Word of God say? Listen to 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." John is writing to those who have been born again, and he tells us he is writing these things so we will not sin any more.

Is that possible? Do you think for a moment that God would tell us to do something we cannot do? When Christ died on the cross He provided a complete victory. But keep in mind, the victory is in Him. It is in Christ only; it is not in us. Only as you and I permit Him to live through us and to control us moment by moment through every day, can we fulfill what we have just read from 1 John 2:1. Christ is mighty to save, but He is also mighty to keep. If we are willing to be kept, you may be sure He will keep us. In Romans 6:14 God says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." This verse means that it is possible for us to live without being overcome by sin. In fact, in Christ we can overcome any sin. In Romans 8:37 God says, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." "More than conquerors!" There is no trace or sign of defeat here. This is a permanent victory through Christ.

Child of God, are you enjoying this victory? Are you permitting the Lord Jesus to live through you? If there is any trace of sin in your life, turn to the Lord and get right with Him. Do not be robbed of joy and peace. Do not permit your labors for Christ to be ineffective. Receive of God's best. Confess your sin and let Christ blot out all sin with His precious blood.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 Paul said, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." In a previous letter Paul had enjoined the Corinthians not to have fellowship with the man in the congregation who was living in sin. It seems that they misunderstood his admonition and thought he meant that they should not have any association with anyone living in sin, including the people of the world who

had never been converted. Thus Paul reminded them that they had a judicial responsibility over the one in their church, but of course they had no control over those who were living in the world, having never been converted. God is the One who must judge those outside of Christ. Christians are responsible for the members of their body of believers but they are not in particular responsible to judge those who have not been converted. Of course they are obligated to go and witness to them, but as far as judicial powers are concerned, God is their Judge.

From 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 we see that the apostle named some other sins as being as vile as fornication, or sexual immorality. He spoke of the "covetous, or extortioners." The insatiable desire or lust for money in believers is as wicked in God's sight as sexual immorality. Some who are most strict in their relationships to the opposite sex have little regard for their selfishness concerning money in its relationship to God.

Paul also mentioned "idolaters." If we love anyone or anything more than God, these are being put above God, making us idol worshipers. This is a very serious evil.

Next, Paul spoke of "a railer." Who is a railer? Dr. Harry Ironside used to say, "It is a person who has a tongue loose at both ends and on a pivot in the middle, a vicious talker, an evil speaker, one who can destroy the reputation of another just as the murderer drives the dagger into the heart and destroys the life. A railer is a wicked person in the sight of God." The apostle also spoke of the "drunkard," the man who persists in his sin without claiming victory through Christ. Yet there is a victory for all drunkards. Let no man say that he has tried and there is no hope for him. God's grace is sufficient.

Paul had been very explicit here. Maybe you can say, "Well, I have not committed the evil of sexual immorality mentioned in the opening verses of chapter 5." Maybe not, but I doubt if any of us can say that we have not been guilty of some of the other sins presented in this chapter. You may

know of someone in your church who is guilty at this moment. If so, your church has a responsibility to do something about it. But of course, church officers must first of all face up to the sin in their own hearts, before they attempt to deal with the evil of those in the congregation. If professing believers love their sin more than they love God and continue in their sin, then they ought to be put out of the church until they are ready to do business with God. Of what value is a church cluttered up with hypocrites? Such a condition is a stench in the nostrils of God and a hindrance to the cause of Christ before the eyes of the unconverted.

Paul wrote that there must be a complete break with those professing Christ while continuing in sin, "With such an one no not to eat." Such hypocrites should not be permitted to come to the communion table. They are to have no fellowship with God's people until they repent.

In conclusion the apostle wrote, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." The church has no right to judge those who have never come to Christ, but we are obligated to judge those in our church assemblies continuing in sin while professing to be followers of Him. Of course, I realize that the exercise of judicial authority is a very touchy matter. Those who would fulfill this judicial responsibility must be absolutely certain that their own hearts are right with God. How important that those who have been called of God and elected by their fellow men to be officers in the church be men and women of surrendered hearts and controlled lives, controlled by the Spirit of God. We must daily permit God to search out our hearts, and then confess all known sin to Him. Small sins enter into our lives so very easily; they begin to grow and take hold of us, then stay unknown and unnoticed. There is a great danger that we will become insensitive to our own pet sins. Perhaps we have already.

Several years ago a little girl was born in Akron, Ohio, who rarely ever cried. She would fall down and bump her head and get up smiling. She did not cry even when she burned her hand on a hot stove. The only time she cried was when she was hungry or angry. The doctors who examined her soon discovered that she had a rare condition, probably due to a defect in the central nervous system, and for which no cure is known. She could not feel pain. The little girl must be watched constantly. She might break a bone and continue using it until it could not be set properly. She might develop appendicitis and have no pain whatsoever. Spanking her for wrongdoing would be of no value; she would not feel it.

Some people might think a life free of pain would be wonderful, but it would be a very dangerous life. As this little girl was insensitive to pain, there are many Christians who seem to be insensitive to sin. If you have come to the place in your life where your conscience does not cry out with a loud alarm at the presence of even the smallest sin, then you are in a place of great spiritual danger. It is for this reason that we need to meet with God every morning and ask Him to reveal to us anything that might be hindering our usefulness for Him. It is difficult for one to see his own sin. This is why we need the help of God, to show us ourselves as we are. Most of us have a fairly good estimation of our own selves. Few of us would think of ourselves as God sees us. That is why it is so essential that we deal with little sins before they become big ones.

If you have never come to Christ, remember, you cannot deal with your sin until you come to the Saviour. He has already dealt with the sin question on the cross. There He shed His blood to pay the price for your sin. Now the choice is yours—life or death. I hope you will choose life by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and claiming Him as your Sin-bearer.

## THE CHRISTIAN AND COURTS

*1 Corinthians 6:1-11*

PAUL FACED ANOTHER of the many problems of the church at Corinth—Christians taking other believers to the civil courts to settle their disputes with each other. Because this disturbed Paul so greatly, he wrote to the Corinthians, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" The word "dare" suggests that Paul was incensed by their action; first, because it was a blight on the Christian faith for believers to try to settle their disputes before pagan judges; secondly, because it suggested that he felt such a practice was treason to one of the key doctrines of the Christian faith—love and unity among the saints.

It should not be construed that there is never an occasion when Christians should go to court. What Paul taught was that there should never be a time when a Christian takes a brother in the Lord to court. Sometimes in dealing with those of the world it is necessary to go to court. Even Paul, when falsely accused by a Roman governor, stood on his rights as a citizen and said, "I appeal to Caesar." But the instance Paul cited in 1 Corinthians 6 was different. He expected Christians to settle their problems among themselves. If they could not, then they should invite several neutral brethren to help them resolve their dispute.

When a Christian takes another into the law court, what does he do? He tells the world that followers of Christ are no different from the ungodly. The unsaved will conclude that believers get angry; they hate; they are covetous; they are selfish, just like anyone else. Thus such acts of litigation as Paul

mentioned here are a poor testimony to those who have never met the Saviour.

In verse 2 the apostle reminded them of something else. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" We are told in the Bible that at the time of the end, when Christ returns, believers will rule and reign with Him. From Revelation 20 we see that the saints will rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years. Thus Paul reasoned, "If the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" In speaking of the "smallest matters," he was not suggesting that their problems were insignificant, but in comparison to the judgments of the millennial reign of Christ they were minor. When Christ returns, you and I who reign with Him will sit as judges over kings and rulers. The great potentates of the world will be judged. World problems that for centuries baffled the minds of the great leaders will be the issues at stake. In comparison, these squabbles, these difficulties among believers, are petty matters. Personal problems, misunderstandings, money, property—these are all trivial in the light of coming judgment.

If we are to be a part of the tribunal that will consider the weightiest problems that have ever confronted human minds, should not believers be able to sit down and in Christian love find suitable solutions to their problems and perplexities? In Psalm 133:1 God says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" We are not to separate from each other in disunity; we are "to dwell together in unity"—the unity of the Spirit. Christians who do not dwell together in unity are out of the will of God and as a result they are in a position to face the judgment of God. In Galatians 5:15 we read, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." By our selfishness and inconsideration we bring suffering and misery upon each other. Thus consider God's Word to His people in Leviticus 19:18: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear

any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the **LORD**." This should be the Christian's attitude toward his brother in Christ. He should love him, even as he loves himself.

On a very cold night a man saw a newsboy attempting to sell his remaining papers so that he could go home out of the cold.

"I'll buy all the papers you have, son," the gentleman said to him, adding, "This is a cold night, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," answered the lad, "but it's much warmer since you came along, mister." Surely we who are Christians ought to be spreading the warmth of God's love.

"Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" Humans will never become angels but they will become superior to angels. Angels, though presently stronger and greater than men, will be judged by God's saints. There are two references in the New Testament, 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, that tell us of the angels that are "reserved unto judgment." These are fallen angels who followed the devil in his rebellion against God. In the final judgment, we shall stand with our Lord as judgment is meted out on these angels. How much more the saints should judge among the brethren in our day.

In Galatians 5:22 we read, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love." Indeed it is. Have you received Christ into your life? Then you have received divine love, for the Bible says in 1 John 4:16, "God is love." This verse further says, "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The evidence of a real heart experience with Christ will be a loving life.

If you have enmity in your heart toward anyone, first of all make it right with God. Confess your sin and claim His forgiveness. Then go to the offended one and get the matter straightened out. If he will not hear you, call the elders of the church. Let them arbitrate. But do not permit the feeling to continue. Neither let a condition arise when brother will

go to court with brother. Abraham's words to Lot are so appropriate: in Genesis 13:8 Abraham says, "We be brethren." Indeed we are.

Paul continued, "If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church." The revised version ends this sentence with a question mark, which seems to give more meaning. Doubtless, those Paul spoke of as being "least esteemed in the church" were unconverted magistrates who knew nothing of the grace of God. In other words, they had neither interest nor place in the church. Thus Paul reminded them that the Corinthians were taking their Christian brothers before one who had no understanding whatsoever of spiritual things and seeking the decision of an unsaved man as an answer to their spiritual problems. Paul was quick to add, "I speak to your shame." He thought their action was horrible.

The apostle then asked, "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you?" That is, a man who has a hold on God, a man of spiritual discernment. "No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" Was there not someone among the Corinthian Christians who was living a Spirit-filled life, who was able to pray this matter through with the parties involved and offer spiritual help and insight? But what did they do rather than seek the guidance of a brother in the Lord? Notice verse 6, "But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers." This was a shameful thing.

In the event that there was not anyone to arbitrate the case, Paul gave further advice: "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" In other words, rather than to go to the civil courts before unsaved people, if there is no one spiritually qualified to listen to your case, it would be far better to do nothing. Just commit it unto the Lord and trust Him to work it out in His own way.

The safest measure of all is to follow the teaching of our

Lord as found in Matthew 5:38-42: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Would it not be far better for the saints to be defrauded than to cause trouble and commotion that in the end would do very little good materially and far less spiritually?

God says in Romans 12:19, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." If we try to settle our own accounts, the flesh will enter into the picture; we shall grieve the Holy Spirit and lose our own effectiveness for God. It is far better to let the Lord care for the difficulties. We may suffer loss, but God can make it up. He says in Psalm 50:10, "For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." God can undertake for us. He can supply all our need. He has promised to do this.

But rather than be defrauded, what did the Corinthians do? "Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." In other words, they were more willing to see their brother suffer than they were to suffer themselves. This spirit is anti-Christian. It is against the Bible and all that God has taught in the Bible. In Philippians 2:4 we read, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Those who have experienced the new life through Christ will not consider themselves, but rather their Christian brethren. How we need to apply these teachings of the Apostle Paul to our own hearts and lives. Are we more willing to defraud a Christian brother than we are to suffer ourselves? Have we forgotten the importance of Christian kindness and thoughtfulness?

There was a tenant farmer who from time to time renewed

his lease. He had worked long hours year after year and had made the farm a model of its kind. One day the agent mentioned to him that the owner would require the farm for his son, who was about to be married. The farmer was greatly upset and made a number of offers in hopes that his terms would affect the owner's decision. It was in vain, however. The day drew near when the farmer had to vacate the home, and then he did something he had decided upon in his weeks of angry brooding. He gathered seeds of all the pests of the land, and when it was dark he moved up and down over that fertile, clean soil sowing the bad seed. The next morning bright and early the agent rode up to the door and informed him that the owner's plans had fallen through, and he would be glad to renew the lease. The agent did not understand the farmer's cry, "What a fool I've been!"

Revenge, hatred, retaliation—what evils these are in the sight of Him who taught love and kindness among those for whom Christ died. Is there any trace of revenge in your heart? Do not ruin your prayer life. Do not hinder your testimony for Christ. Go to your knees and get everything straightened out before the Lord. Let your life be a mighty witness for the Saviour who gave His all for you. Do not be a stumbling block to other Christians. Consider the Word of God as found in Ephesians 4:30-32: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." This is God's Word for believers.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 the apostle reminded the saints at Corinth of the grace of God that wrought a mighty miracle in their hearts and transformed them so that they were no longer to stoop to the ways of the flesh. Paul had urged them not to go before unsaved civil authorities for answers to their problems. Then he said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous

shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." We who are in Christ have inherited the kingdom of God, but those outside the Lord must suffer eternal separation from God because they have never been born again.

In this catalog of sins Paul named about every type of wickedness there is. Then he made the amazing statement that "such were some of you." He was reminding them of their past life. They who were so proud and arrogant in spirit that they were going to drag their Christian brothers into a public court to stand for their rights, were reminded that there was a time when they should have been taken before God's court and immediately consigned to hell. Instead, what did God do? "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The Lord forgave them of all their sin. Through the blood that was shed at Calvary, God completely cleansed these hell-deserving believers. He sanctified them; that is, He set them apart for the work of God, as His chosen ones. Their names were written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 3:5). Further He justified them, declared them no longer guilty because of sin. Oh, the marvelous grace that was bestowed upon these saints, who had been adulterers, idolaters, drunkards, in addition to all kinds of vile sins. God forgave them! Thus what right did they have to hold anything against a Christian brother? If God had been so merciful, they should be merciful to others of the Lord's people.

If you are ever prone to think evil of your Christian brother, may I suggest that you go to Psalm 136 and read it through carefully, slowly, and prayerfully? Twenty-six times you will read that phrase, "For His mercy endureth for ever." Let God burn that statement into your heart: "His mercy endureth for ever." If there is ever any tendency to be unmerci-

ful toward another believer, simply realize what God has done for you: "His mercy endureth for ever." "Such were some of you": fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of yourselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, but ye are washed. On what grounds? "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." We who have experienced the mercy of God must be merciful. Do you remember the occasion when Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" What did Jesus reply? Notice Matthew 18:22: "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." We must show endless mercy toward those who offend us, even as God showed mercy toward us. Day by day we resist His love, we disobey His commandments, we fail to follow His leading; but "the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever."

I cannot pass over this portion of Scripture without saying that I may be speaking to some who are described by one or more of these horrible sins in this unpleasant catalog Paul has given. You may be a thief. You may be bound by sexual immorality. You may be a drunkard. You may be an extortioner, cheating on your income tax, cheating in school or in business. It says here that such shall not inherit the kingdom of God. What it means is that they will not inherit the kingdom of God if they continue in their sins. No sinner will ever get to Heaven unless he is converted. But if he truly believes on Christ, God will forgive all his sin.

Among the body of believers in the Corinthian church there were some who had been guilty of all the things Paul had listed. But the apostle said, "Ye are washed." Praise God, 1 John 1:7 assures us that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." The blood that was shed from the body of our Lord on the cross is the blood that blots out all sin. God says in Exodus 12:13, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." As the Lord looks at the redeemed sinner He sees not us but the blood of Christ that was shed at Calvary

for our sins. In Ephesians 1:7 we read, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." God will freely forgive you of every sin today if you will trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. Then you will be washed, sanctified, justified, "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

In Scotland there was a physician who was noted for his unusual skill. After his death, when his books were examined, several accounts had written across them in red ink, "Forgiven—too poor to pay."

"These accounts must be paid," said his wife, who was of a different disposition. She therefore sued for the money.

"Is this your husband's handwriting in red?" asked the judge. She replied that it was.

"Then," said the judge, "there is not a tribunal in the land that can obtain the money where he has written 'Forgiven.'"

If you are in Jesus Christ today, think of all of your horrible and wretched past. Consider all the gross wickedness you have committed. Realize then that across all that Christ has written with His own blood, "Forgiven." You are free, and you may be sure that "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). If you have not come to Christ yet, I hope you will. Let Him forgive you of all the past. Receive Him by faith as your Sin-bearer and Lord.

## A PLEA FOR PURITY

*1 Corinthians 6:12-20*

THE APOSTLE PAUL discussed next the subject of impurity and its relationship to the Christian. He had just told of the wonderful miracle that takes place in conversion whereby "Ye are washed . . . ye are sanctified . . . ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This being true, there ought to be an evidence of this marvelous transformation. There is if one has truly been born of the Spirit; the new birth not only changes the heart, it changes the life.

With all this in mind, Paul said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." The Christian has real liberty in Christ. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Further, in verse 36 He said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Yes, we possess wonderful freedom such as one can never know in the unconverted state. The unsaved man knows nothing of the liberty of Christ, for he is a slave to sin and the devil.

Praise God, the shackles have been broken for those of us who are in Christ and we possess a marvelous liberty unknown to those blinded by sin. This liberty, however, does not mean that the believer is privileged to do anything he wants. Rather, it is liberty to do what Christ wants. It does not lead to license but rather to obedience. Thus, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." The word "expedient" as used here means "advantageous." Not all

things, even though they may appear to be good, will cause us to advance in the Christian life. Consequently, though we possess liberty, we must seek for spiritual discernment in everything we undertake.

It is possible, too, that we may be able to do some things without hindering our spiritual growth, but at the same time we may be stumbling blocks to someone else. For this reason God says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This verse includes things that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible. Anything the Christian does should exalt the Lord. Though some things may be right in themselves, they may not exalt Christ.

Further, Paul pointed out that there are some practices that may lead to slavery: "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." We have been delivered from the slavery of sin to enjoy the liberty of Christ. One may be a slave to a habit, and though the practice in itself may not be wrong, the slavery is. Though the practice may be lawful, slavery to the practice may curtail Christian growth. If you have been brought under the power of any habit so that you cannot break it, then as a slave you are sinning against God and you ought to claim victory through Christ. I have heard some Christians say they could drink in moderation; they could quit at any time they wanted. Also some who smoke have said they could give up their tobacco; but they never do. The reason they do not give it up is that they are bound by it as a slave is bound to his master. Paul said, "I will not be brought under the power of any." He was free; free not to please himself but free to please Christ.

Next the apostle declared, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them." This is the sin of gluttony. How many Christians there are who sin habitually with their teeth: "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats." Food is suited for the digestive tract

and the digestive tract is suited for food, but we must not live to eat, for here again one may become a slave to a habit. Truly the Christian should guard against overeating as well as the eating of foods that will be detrimental to robust and abounding health. The pagans in Paul's day were given to lavish and sumptuous feasts, which frequently degenerated into nothing more than gluttony. "God shall destroy both it and them," we are told. We are not to live for the body which is perishing, but for the soul which will live for eternity.

"Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." Some were saying, we are Christians but after all it was God who gave us our sex instincts. Because we have liberty, there is no harm in the gratification of these God-given instincts, either in or out of the marriage relationship. But Paul made it clear that "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." Satan is appealing to us constantly through the flesh. But remember, these bodies belong to God if we are in Christ. We are not to submit to mere fleshly enjoyment and indulgence. We are to permit the Lord to live through us manifesting His power and enabling us to live for His glory. We read in Philippians 2:13, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

The battle is on in every believer's heart. Who will win—Christ or self? Only as we commit ourselves to the Lord Jesus moment by moment and allow Him to control us can we have victory and know the joys of true liberty in the Lord.

Dr. Willis Hotchkiss tells of his first convert in Africa. He was a porter who helped carry the missionary's goods into the interior. One day the porter came to Dr. Hotchkiss.

"Master, won't you please sew up my ears?" he said, pointing to the ugly holes made by his former heathen practices.

"Why do you want me to sew them up?" Dr. Hotchkiss asked.

"These were made before I knew Jesus," said the earnest

Christian. "Won't you please sew them up?" Dr. Hotchkiss did not have the nerve, so he put him off.

"God is not looking at your ears," he said, "He is looking at your heart." The young Christian went away apparently satisfied, but he was not. He came back sometime later with large thorns pushed through the holes to hide them. He could not get them sewed up so he chose this method to seek to cover them up.

"It did this missionary a world of good," said Dr. Hotchkiss. "Would I be willing to do as much to get rid of my old earmarks?"

Jesus said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16: 24). To deny self is to bury the past and live for God. Paul declared that the body is "for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." Is that true of you? Are you permitting Christ to live through you moment by moment? If not, yield yourself to His control. Claim His victory, the victory of the cross and the empty tomb, that you might live in the liberty of Christ. How marvelous is the freedom He gives.

"And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power." Sometimes Christians are prone to put all the emphasis on the soul. Carelessly they disregard the laws God has established for the care of the body. But, be assured, even after we die we are not through with these bodies of ours. God "will also raise up us by His own power." If we are going to live again in these bodies from the day of resurrection throughout all of eternity, then we ought to be careful of them now. Oh, I know the body will be raised an incorruptible body, a glorified body; but at the same time our present body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which God has given us to live in on this earth. For this reason we must take the very best possible care of the body.

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them

the members of an harlot? God forbid." The believer's soul is a part of Christ, but what about his body? The body is also. This is what Paul was stating. With this thought in mind, we cannot afford to involve ourselves with sin. Since the body is a member of Christ, we cannot stoop so low as to make ourselves "members of an harlot."

Paul cried out at the close of these rhetorical questions, "Let not such a thing be named among those who call themselves saints." How can we take our bodies, which have been washed in the blood of Christ, and yield them to some unholy purpose? "What! know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith He, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." When a man and woman come together in impurity, they are no longer two but one, Paul declared. If one is truly saved, he has no right to become one with a sinner, for he is one with Christ Jesus the Lord. Thus Paul exhorted, "Flee fornication." Run from it! Do anything you can to keep away from it, for this sin will bring judgment into your life.

How important that we think of these verses in these days of loose morals and careless living. We need some old-fashioned chastity, which can be realized only as we know the Lord and walk with Him, living in His power and strength. God says in Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold." Many give no thought to the "good name" that has been hallowed by a godly mother and father. With impure living they carouse in debauchery, ignoring the claims of God not only on their souls, but on their bodies.

"Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Most sins affect the soul, but the Bible makes it clear that the sin of impurity will ruin both soul and body. Perhaps some of us ought to pray the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a

right spirit within me." When the heart is right with God, cleansed of all impurity, you may be sure that the rest of the man will so live as to be well-pleasing in the Lord's sight.

While riding on some of the very narrow streets of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, I realized that those streets were never made for Philadelphia as it is today. Many years ago, when most of those streets were constructed, the citizens and the builders did not foresee the rapid and phenomenal growth that city has experienced. The city has outgrown its streets.

Can it not be said that many Christians have hearts that are too small for the power of God? Though they have named the name of Christ, they are still mastered by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. They need to give Christ the right of way to their hearts. There must be complete submission to Him. Is your life one of constant defeat and confusion? As the narrow streets of Philadelphia are often blocked by traffic jams, so your heart may be clogged by sin, hindering the free course of the Spirit through you. Oh, that you might open your heart to the power of God and yield fully to His control. Recognize whose you are and whom you serve. Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" You declare that you are a Christian, but no one would know it. Your life is so cluttered with the things of this world that you bear no testimony for Christ.

A missionary relates how a communist soldier shouted through her door while she was still living in Northern China, "In an hour you are to be taken to a concentration camp. Take only one bag with you." The missionary dashed about gathering the most beautiful treasures she had accumulated during the years. The bag was soon full of priceless things—but utterly useless in a concentration camp. Suddenly she thought, "Foolish me. I am going to Heaven before long and I won't be able to take even one bag." She emptied the bag and refilled it with medicine, bandages, food, and Bibles.

With what is your life filled? Is it cluttered with a lot of insignificant things that are meaningless as far as the cause of Christ is concerned? Why not empty yourself before the Lord and ask Him to fill you with those things that will make you a blessing to lost and dying humanity? Invite Him to take full possession of your life, that you might be useful and fruitful for God. It matters not what is hindering your Christian growth; it may be the worst, abominable, besetting sin—but God is able to forgive. Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 15:57, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Is there something in your life that has the mastery over your heart? Kneel before God. Tell Him to remove it from you and give you victory over it. You may be sure that He will. Our God is able to do all things. He is able to help you.

In the two remaining verses of chapter 6 lie the crux of the whole matter of overcoming impurity. “What?” exclaimed Paul, “know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” Consider this, child of God: “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.” If you and I had to overcome temptation through mere human strength, it would be impossible. But when we stop to realize that we are indwelt by God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit, there is no reason in the world for any of us to be subdued by any sin. Your body is “the temple,” the dwelling place, the habitation, of God’s blessed Spirit.

To be sure, the flesh does not like the company of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the flesh is rebelling constantly against His presence. Why? Because the flesh is sinful and the Spirit is holy. In Galatians 5:17 Paul said, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” But the previous verse provides incentive: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit,

and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). As we yield to the Spirit's control, He directs us. But as we follow the impulses of the flesh we are defeated. Thus victory is available, but it is experienced only as we receive it by faith, permitting God's Spirit to take full possession of us.

It is possible to grieve the Spirit by ignoring His voice and guidance. If you had a guest, whom you respected and admired, in your home, would you put him in the attic or would you give him the best room available? I doubt that any of us would put him in the attic. But actually this is what we do with the Holy Spirit on occasion. He has come to live within us, but we ignore Him completely. We abuse Him. We put Him in the attic. We grieve Him. How important that we consider God's Word as found in Ephesians 4:30, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Do you want blessing? Do you want happiness? Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Obey Him, follow Him! Really, we are obligated to do this, for "ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price." Christ did not die on the cross that you and I should take all the mercies of God and ignore the obligations. The Bible is a book filled with truths concerning God's mercy and blessing, but it is also filled with obligations for the believer. Whenever we ignore the Christian's obligations, we deny the fact that we belong to God. The purchase price Christ paid to buy us out of the slave market of sin has never been, nor will it ever be, duplicated, for this was the blood of God offered for your sin and mine. Such a price demands complete and wholehearted surrender to the ministry of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Lord declares in Ephesians 5:18, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." The word "filled" means to be "controlled." We are to be controlled by the Spirit. If we are not controlled by the Spirit, we are controlled by the flesh. If we are controlled by the

flesh, we are defeated, weak, stumbling, disobedient children of God—powerless and ineffectual in serving Him. "Therefore," Paul challenged, "glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." In the revised version the text ends with "glorify God in your body"; the words, "and in your spirit, which are God's," do not appear. This translation seems to be correct, because God is dealing with the body in these verses. What a wonderful keynote with which to conclude the chapter, "therefore glorify God in your body."

Are you glorifying God in your body? This does not mean, are you reading your Bible faithfully? Are you spending the necessary time in prayer? Are you witnessing with regularity? These are spiritual exercises. Paul was speaking about the body. Are you holy? Are you pure? If you are a child of God, remember, "Ye are washed . . . ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of . . . God." For what purpose? That you might live in sin? Decidedly not! That you might stay pure for God! But can a man be perfect? Will he not sin again after he is saved? Yes, he will sin. He need not sin, but he will. He should not sin deliberately against God, but he does. Oh, what a tragedy! Then is it all hopeless? No, not at all. That is why God sent His Holy Spirit to live within us. Through Him we are able "to walk in the light, as He is in the light" (1 John 1:7).

Our Lord said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). It is through the indwelling Holy Spirit that we can do this. Through His power and strength we can walk well-pleasing in His sight. Do not say you have tried but it is impossible. If this has been your lot, it is very possible that you did not depend on the power of God. Consider the promise of 1 John 5:4-5: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is

he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Then be assured, there is no sin that cannot be conquered. Do not forget it: you are not your own. You have been bought with a price.

When Wendell Phillips was just a boy, he heard the great Lyman Beecher preach on the theme, "You belong to God." Here are Phillips' own words about the experience: "I went home after the service, threw myself on the floor in my room, and with locked doors prayed, 'O God, I belong to Thee. Take what is Thine own. I ask this, that whenever a thing may be wrong, may it have no power or temptation over me. Whenever a thing may be right, may it take no courage to do it.' From that day," Wendell Phillips said, "it has been so. Whenever I have known a thing to be right it has taken no courage to do it."

How do you account for this? The Holy Spirit did it through Wendell Phillips. Will you let the Holy Spirit do through you what needs to be done? Will you open your heart to His control? If so, bow your head and tell Him so.

Should it be that you are not a true believer in Christ, I urge you to turn to Him. God is ready to work in your life if you are willing. All you need do is invite Him to come into your heart. Ask the Lord Jesus to enter your life and save you, and you may be sure He will.

## MARRIAGE IN THE LORD

### *1 Corinthians 7:1-17*

HAVING DEALT with the problem of purity in the life of the believer and the church, Paul turned to another subject that has a direct bearing on purity, the marriage relationship. The apostle did not present an exhaustive treatment of the subject in this chapter, since he was merely answering specific questions that came to him from the Corinthian believers.

There were a great many irregularities that had to be corrected in the early church because of the traditionalism of the religionists and the extreme practices of the pagans. Marriage, which had degenerated to a low level under the law, had to be corrected under grace. Paganism, on the other hand, had few standards concerning marriage. Many who had been bound by paganism had come to know the truth, but they found it difficult to put away their old heathenish ideas and customs. Thus Paul sought to deal with some of the problems that had arisen in the Corinthian church about marriage.

“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” Some have misjudged Paul as being an avowed advocate of celibacy. They have felt that he preferred celibacy to marriage, suggesting that it provided certain merits unknown to the married. Such a view is incorrect. Paul’s point was that if the Lord should lead one to refrain from marriage so that he might better serve the Lord, if circumstances warranted such a practice, there would be nothing wrong with celibacy. But considering

the entire counsel of the Word of God, it is clear that marriage is the rule and celibacy is the exception.

In Genesis 1:27-28 we read, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." Here is a distinct command from God for man to marry and have a family. But the problem Paul faced with the Corinthians was that of the precarious conditions existent in his day. Christians were suffering severe persecution. When one took his stand for Christ, he was in danger not only of losing his property and his possessions, but his life. Under such conditions, Paul advised against marriage and the establishment of a home, at least for the present. As a result he said, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."

At the same time, the apostle realized that such teaching could be dangerous. God put in humans the sex drive which cannot be overlooked. For this reason, he wrote, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." In other words, if one found it difficult to restrain himself, it was far better to get married than to suffer judgment at the hand of God.

Those who chose to marry were not to overlook their obligations to each other. "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife." Here is the loving subjection of the husband and wife to each other advocated by Paul in his Ephesian letter and by Peter in his first Epistle. In Ephesians 5:21 we read, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." In 1 Peter 3:1 the apostle said, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands," adding in verse 7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according

to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." Here is God's plan for marriage—loving submission under the guidance of the Lord, realizing that because the husband has the power of his wife's body and the wife has the power of her husband's body, they are to give due consideration to each other in every relationship.

It seems that some in the Corinthian church, though married, felt that they could better serve the Lord by withdrawing from their marriage and family ties. Paul rebuked their actions sharply by saying, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." The word "defraud" as used here means "do not refuse each other." As the apostle had already made clear, the husband has the power of the wife's body and the wife of the husband's body. Thus Christians were not to neglect each other under any circumstances unless it was by mutual consent for the specific purpose of taking time apart from each other for fasting and prayer. Separation for any other purpose might prove to be dangerous, the apostle wrote, since living apart from one's mate opens the way for temptations from the evil one. Thus, separation should be for a brief time and only on the grounds of mutual consent, that God might be glorified.

All kinds of weird interpretations have been placed upon this text, resulting in serious consequences. Some have gone so far as to leave their mates to go into the Lord's service, feeling that they were doing God honor by entering a life of celibacy. Such action only makes one a ready instrument for Satan's beguiling ways.

"But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment," Paul said. Some have accused the apostle of not being inspired by the Holy Spirit on occasion. This verse is often cited as an example, for Paul said he was speaking by "permission" rather than "commandment." A little later in the

chapter we shall find him speaking by "commandment." In speaking by "permission," Paul was not suggesting that he was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Rather, he meant that the question of marriage or celibacy should be decided in the light of one's personal guidance from the Lord; that even though God has commanded marriage, He does not demand that every one get married. Some may have a direct leading of the Lord to follow a life of celibacy. Thus in this respect Paul spoke by way of "permission" so that the individual might seek God's will for his own life.

I hope you have sought God's plan for your life in this respect. There is nothing more important for anyone, whether married or unmarried, than being in the absolute center of the will of God. There is a plan for every life. True happiness can be found only by living in the light of God's plan. In Psalm 25:14 we read, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." If your life is committed to the Lord fully, if you want His will, He will reveal it to you. But above all, your heart must be in tune with Him.

In 1 Corinthians 7:7-9 Paul said, "For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say, therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." Of course, no one knows for certain whether Paul was a widower or whether he had chosen to live a life of celibacy. Whichever the case, it is obvious that at the time he wrote First Corinthians he did not have a wife. He seemed to be very happy in this state, for he said, "I would that all men were even as I myself." Yet at the same time he realized that being unmarried could be a call from God as well as marriage, and that one had to follow the leading of the Lord regarding either of these. Paul further suggested that, in the light of the

persecution Christians were enduring, if one were unmarried he would do well to remain in the unmarried state, but if it seemed impractical or impossible, he was quick to add, "Let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

Next Paul offered a direct commandment regarding marriage: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband." There is no choice in the matter here. This is not by "permission" but by commandment. The commandment was not given by Paul, "but the Lord." There is no question that, if one is married, there is no use praying about celibacy; he is commanded to stay with his wife and remain married. The Lord Jesus also taught that the marriage relationship should not be broken. "It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32). Further in Matthew 19:5-6 Jesus said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." God spoke to Adam in the Garden of Eden saying, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

God never intended divorce for man. "Well," somebody asks, "does not the Bible say that Moses commanded to give a writing of divorcement?" Moses did this because the people were so cruel and unreasonable: In order to preserve life and order Moses was practically forced into such action. The Lord Jesus said, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives" (Matthew 19:8). God never intended that it be that way, as Christ went on to say, "But from the beginning it was not so."

The Lord Jesus spoke of one ground only for divorce: not cruelty, nor drunkenness, nor nonsupport, but fornication. The Bible declares, "Except it be for fornication" (Matthew 19: 9). This is the sin that breaks the marriage relationship. Otherwise marriage is insoluble until death. "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39). Consequently what Paul said in verse 10 was not merely his commandment. He received it from the Lord, and it was as if the Lord Himself had given it: "Let not the wife depart from her husband."

It may be necessary for one to get a divorce from his mate on scriptural grounds, which, we have already seen, is unfaithfulness. If this is the case, Paul was explicit: "But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." Following divorce there is to be no remarriage except to the former mate. The guilty one may repent and it may seem feasible to remarry. But otherwise, God's Word is "let her remain unmarried."

Of course a divorce should be secured only as a last resort. If the erring mate is repentant for his evil and reveals an earnest desire to be loving and faithful, the innocent party should be willing to forgive. Sometimes we are too quick to bring judgment rather than trust the Lord to work out the situation in His own time and way. The phrase, "And let not the husband put away his wife," would suggest that every possible attempt should be made to keep the home together rather than to obtain a divorce.

"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." The phrase "not the Lord" means that this particular truth, which the apostle was

presenting by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was not spoken prior to this occasion by the Lord when He was on this earth. He did speak regarding marriage and divorce, but on the subject that Paul was about to present, our Lord had said nothing. Christ did not teach this, because He came to the lost sheep of Israel. Under the Old Testament law, if an Israelite were married to a pagan, it was his obligation to put her away, for she was unclean in the sight of God. But under grace Paul, directed by the Spirit, taught that if one had an unsaved mate, he should do everything in his power to lead that one to Christ and to keep the home together.

The particular problem involved here is that of one who gets saved but has a mate who is unsaved and refuses to believe on Christ. The Christian should not leave the other if the mate "be pleased to dwell with him." In the case of one who is not pleased to dwell with his mate, it might be well to separate for a period. Sometimes an unsaved mate is vile, brutal, profane, and a definite hindrance to one's physical health and spiritual growth. If it appears impossible to live with such a one, it may be vital to the believer's physical and spiritual well-being to get a separation. If this is the case, much time should be spent in prayer asking God to open the heart of the unbelieving mate so that he might come to Christ. Again, one must seek the will of God in this matter and be guided by Him. If the unbeliever were to get saved or even show any interest in conversion, then the couple should be reunited and establish the home on Christian principles.

A believer in the home has a definite influence on the unsaved mate. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." What does it mean that the unbelieving mate is "sanctified" by the other? Simply that there is someone in the home to pray, to study the Word of God, and to seek the Lord for the salvation of the unsaved mate. There is someone

to lead the children and to train them in the way of the Lord. In all probability such an influence will affect the entire family. Doubtless the believer will be used of God to draw the others to Christ. What an obligation this places upon the Christian in the home. Even though he or she may be abused, laughed at, or ridiculed, he must stay close to God, claiming the promises of the Lord, believing God in prayer to work in the hearts of the unsaved. There is no influence like a holy character. It is for this reason that, when Paul was contacted regarding the problem of Christians who wanted to leave their homes to escape the influence of an unsaved mate, his advice was, "Stay where you are; your influence is needed."

If you have an unsaved mate, be encouraged by this word. God is concerned that the entire family be Christian. In 2 Peter 3:9 we read, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." You may be sure that this refers to your home. God desires that every one of your loved ones come to Christ. So, believer, do not give up! Do not be discouraged. Take God at His Word. Claim His promises. He says in Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*." God says your house is going to be saved. Trust Him to work! Believe that He will move on the hearts of your loved ones. Spend much time in prayer. He will not fail you.

Someone may ask, "Is this not a contradiction of what you have just said about separation?" Let me be clearly understood—the Bible teaches marriage. The believer should leave his mate only when it is impossible to stay. Separation should be a last resort. Divorce should be considered only when there is no repentance and the mate continues in unfaithfulness. The believer is to forgive and to forbear. Thus by all means take God by faith; trust Him; believe Him; expect Him to perform

a miracle in the heart of your loved one. Under some extreme circumstances, it is necessary for the Christian mate to leave the unbeliever. But, again I say, this should only be when everything else fails and it is impossible to continue.

There was another phase of the problem. Suppose the unbeliever desires to leave the home? What if he wants to separate because his mate has become a Christian? Paul said, "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace." There is nothing the believer can do about this. If the unsaved mate wants to separate or even get a divorce, you will have to give him up. You must act like a Christian through it all. But do not look for another mate. Under the circumstances, verse 11 would also apply, "Let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." You are not to marry again. But, if your husband repents and gets right with God, remarriage to him is in order. If your husband leaves you, then give yourself wholly to God for prayer for his salvation. Devote yourself fully to the work of Christ. Let your life be a testimony for God. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Continue to pray that your mate may be reached for the Lord.

"But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches." The apostle taught these same truths in every church. They were divinely inspired. This was not merely the thinking of a wise man. What we have here is the "Thus saith the Lord." If you recognize a need in your life or in your home relative to any of these things, it would be well if you were to give heed to the Word of God.

I personally feel that many of the problems in our homes could have been averted had those who entered into marriage known the Lord. The truly happy homes are those where husband and wife really know Christ. Thus it is so very impor-

tant that one be saved before entering marriage—"born again," as Jesus said, and possess the life of God. One who is saved should not marry an unbeliever. The Bible is clear, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) Though you may agree on everything else—the size of the home you want, the number of children you desire, how the money will be spent—unless you have agreement on eternal things it is practically impossible to know supreme happiness in marriage. If one is not a Christian, he cannot pray. If a man cannot pray, how can he rear a family? No man is sufficient in himself to provide for and care for the home without the help of God.

You may be a husband or a wife, a son or a daughter, who needs to be saved. Until you meet Jesus Christ, you are not in a position to make a really worth-while contribution to your home. Maybe you are in the sad consequence of having a home about to be broken up. Surrender your heart and life to Jesus Christ! This may be the last straw, but I tell you, it will be the best thing you have ever done. Turn to the Lord. He can salvage your home. He can make it what it should be. And may I add, He is the only One who can do it. I do not know your circumstances, but whatever they are, divorce is not the solution. I have talked to many divorcees down through the years, and they have freely confessed that divorce did not solve all their problems regarding their marriage.

Again let me say, it is Christ you need. He wants to come into your heart and life today. Whoever you are at this moment, will you bow your head and let Him in? Maybe you say you are not worthy of coming to God; no man is. But remember, we are saved by grace, God's grace, the unmerited favor of God toward us. Whatever your past has been, He will receive you if you will turn to Him and believe on His beloved Son.

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

### *1 Corinthians 7:18-40*

WHEN WE READ 1 Corinthians 7:18-24, the words of Paul found in 1 Timothy 6:6 came to mind immediately: "Godliness with contentment is great gain." How many miserable Christians there are who are revolting against circumstances, little realizing that their present situations are the result of God's providence.

Look at 1 Corinthians 7:20: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." Do not try to get out of your present situation. Commit your problem to God! If He wants you to get out, He will provide a way of escape. Paul illustrated by saying, "Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandment of God." In other words, if one is a Jew and he becomes a follower of Christ, he should not try to become a Gentile; and, if one is a Gentile and he gets saved, even though he lives in the midst of a community of Jews, as many did in Paul's day, he should not try to become a Jew. For in the final analysis, the apostle assured us, the important thing is not to be a Jew or a Gentile; the matter of greatest importance is "the keeping of the commandments of God."

The essence of the teaching here is that we should not major on secondary things but ever keep before us that which is of foremost importance. In Galatians 3:28 we are told that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor

free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Let us not become excited about what we are by nature or social distinction. The important thing to know is that we are saved and called to serve Christ. In Galatians 5:6 we read, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Do not get your eyes on the lesser things. Ever keep in mind that we have been saved to live for Christ and to serve Him, "Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23).

"Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." Paul wrote these words in a day when slavery was common all over the world. Many of the converts to Christianity were slaves. Some of them felt that because they believed on Christ they should be released from their bondage as slaves. Paul informed them that they were not to become disturbed about seeking their freedom; in the sight of God they were already free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Further, Paul taught that we must not look to our present surroundings and become distressed and disturbed. We must look to God, realizing that if we are saved we belong to Christ, and ultimately He will correct all the adverse circumstances.

There are many believers who are slaves, in a certain sense. Some of you wives who have been saved are in bondage to profane, abusive alcoholics. You would love to get out of those circumstances and I do not blame you. Yet God has a greater purpose for your life. Explain it, I cannot, but this I know: He says in Isaiah 55:8-9: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Some of you dear ladies would like to give of your

money for the cause of Christ, but you cannot. Some of you are not even allowed to read your Bibles or to pray in the presence of your husband. "Art thou called being a servant? care not for it." Do not be disturbed. Trust God! Believe Him!

On the other hand, are you free? Do you have the liberty to serve Christ? Do you have the time? Use it then, for time is so short. Soon the Lord will return. While we wait we must work. "Ye are bought with a price," Paul said, "be not ye the servants of men." Christ has redeemed us. He has liberated us from spiritual slavery. We have been freed from the bondage of sin and death, that we might serve Him and tell others about Him.

"Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." Do not chafe over the fact that God has permitted certain limitations to be placed upon you so that you cannot do the things that you would. Say with Paul in the words of Philippians 4:11, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." God will use your sweet, quiet nature to glorify Him even though you may not be able to use your lips.

If you are in a position to serve Christ and give to the work of Christ, do not be a slave to the things of this world. Go all the way with the Lord, realizing that He paid a tremendous price for your redemption. Do not complain about your lack of education or your lack of ability. One may become a slave to such thoughts, thus hindering his service for Christ. Remember, it is not you who is serving Christ: it is the Lord in you.

Recall Moses' experience before the bush that burned but was not consumed. Do you think that was some special bush? Was it a particular one God created for the occasion? No, it was just an ordinary bush. There was nothing unusual about it other than the fact that God came upon it and used it to fulfill His purpose. Look at this verse again, "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." God can use

any old bush. He can use you and me if we realize that we are His and if we are yielded to His control. The secret of fruitfulness, I believe, is found in Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." We have nothing of ourselves. If we depend upon ourselves for a single moment, we shall fail. Jesus declared in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." He is the Vine. In the vine there is life, sustenance, power. Without Him we can do nothing.

Maybe you need to yield to His control. Your fruitlessness suggests flesh service rather than Spirit-filled service. Let God work in your heart.

Paul had been approached for his advice concerning parents either giving or not giving their virgin daughters to marriage. He replied, "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: Yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." This is not to suggest that Paul's advice was not inspired. "No commandment of the Lord" meant that Christ did not give any specific commandment stating that virgins must or must not marry. Paul in giving his judgment did not exclude inspiration. He had the direct leading of the Lord in what he said and it should be respected as such.

As has been stated before, Paul was living in an extremely crucial time. In many parts of the world Christians were the objects of severe hatred and abuse. Thus Paul wrote, "I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." Doubtless you will agree that there are times when it is better not to marry. Living in the midst of turmoil and distress, such as many believers were, not knowing how soon they would face martyrdom, Paul suggested that perhaps it was better to remain in their present state.

The apostle added further, "But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you." If a couple felt that they should get married in spite of the distress of the current circumstances, according to the Apostle Paul it was perfectly all right, if the Lord led in the matter and made it clear that it was His will. Paul had nothing to say against such action. As a faithful apostle of God he simply tried to present the entire picture. He had been through the many hardships and privations some were enduring, such as beatings, stonings, and imprisonment. He could foresee young people getting married and then being separated for months, years, or perhaps forever because of persecution. Probably they would be better off by not getting married. It was for this reason that he said, "Such shall have trouble in the flesh." Getting married under those circumstances might result in much anxiety and sorrow. "But," he added, "I spare you." That is, in offering his divinely guided advice he was trying to spare them from this misery.

Next, Paul reminded them that they should not become too engrossed in this life. This earth is not the believers' home. They must not allow themselves to become too occupied with this world for, as the apostle said, "Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

There is no question about it, "the fashion of this world" is passing away rapidly. It appears that the day is near for every true believer when "they that have wives [will] be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they

that use this world" will no longer use it, for we shall be in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords at His coming. When I read my Bible and consider the present world situation, I see many Bible prophecies being fulfilled. Our newspapers provide a running commentary on much of the Bible. Everything points to one grand, climactic event—the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37).

While the late Dr. John Kelman was ministering in New York City, he asked one of his church members the question, "What is your solution to the present world unrest?" Dr. Kelman was amazed by the answer, for the church member replied, "A dictator."

"But" argued the great preacher, "your dictator would have to be a superman, one with perfect understanding of civic and economical problems, and with a genius to meet the opposition and resolve the fears of those who doubted and opposed him."

"I know," was the quiet answer, "but we are looking for such a Man and we have Him in view. His Name is Jesus Christ."

"The thrill of that answer will never leave me," commented Dr. Kelman.

Yes, we are looking for such a Man. When He comes every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. But should He not be Lord right now to those of us who know Him and love Him? Have you been concerned primarily with "the fashion of this world"? Are you more interested in making a living than wholly following Christ? It is far better to build a life than make a living. You build a life as you permit Christ to control you and use you. Do not let your business run you; if you do, it will ruin you. Dedicate your business to Jesus Christ. Commit your home and everything you possess to Him. Let Him be the Lord of your life. For again I say, time is short. Soon the silvery clouds will part

and He who is promised throughout the Scriptures as the coming King will return to rule and reign. For this reason it behooves every one of us to let Him rule and reign in our hearts at this moment. Is there anything separating you from your God? Oh, that you might break down every idol and snap every fetter that you might fully serve and honor Christ.

Paul dealt with marital relationships in the light of the "present distress" of his day, severe persecution and even martyrdom in some cases. "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." This is understandable, is it not? One who is single can very often accomplish more for God than one who has the responsibilities of a home and family. Paul did not imply that it is wrong for one who is married to care for his family. He simply emphasized the fact that, in comparison, usually the unmarried person has more time and a greater opportunity to make known the name of Christ. Furthermore, if he had to travel about the world like Paul, as a single man he would be at greater peace without having the fears in his heart and mind of what might be happening to his family at home. The married man, on the other hand, might arrive home to find his entire family slain by some Christ-hater.

"This I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction." Paul was not seeking to set up a general rule. He was careful not to cast "a snare" upon them. Again he simply presented all the facts of the matter in answer to their questions.

In verses 36 through 38 he summarized the problem for the fathers who were concerned as to whether or not they should give their daughters in marriage. "But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better." The conclusion seems to be, if marriage, even in the light of the present circumstances, seems to be pertinent, there is nothing wrong in going ahead and getting married. This is not sin, in spite of the warnings Paul had laid down. On the other hand, if there is a strong feeling in one's heart that he or she should remain unmarried until God should lead otherwise, there is nothing wrong with this either.

Those who are married must not look down upon those who have passed the flower of their age and are still unmarried. I think of all the faithful missionaries of the cross, whom I have known down through the years, who are unmarried. Many of them are women living out in the hard places, oftentimes doing the work of two or three men. It cannot be said that they have been out of the will of God all these years because they were not married. If the Lord so arranged their circumstances, they are not to be criticized.

Paul agreed in the face of the present exigency, "So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better." Under the circumstances it would seem well to postpone marriage until a later time. But again, Paul assured them that if God is leading to marriage, this was not sin and was well in His sight.

In verse 39 the apostle revealed a divine principle that must not be overlooked: "The wife is bound by the law as

long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." I wish every minister would sit down with young couples contemplating marriage and explain the meaning of this verse, that marriage is for life. Or, as someone has said, "Marriage is for keeps." Those who enter into marriage should expect to live together until death separates them. In God's plan there is no room for trial marriage. Though divorce is permitted on the grounds of unfaithfulness, I do not believe such permission provides for remarriage. Some faithful students of the Word teach that, if it is a case of adultery, the innocent party may marry again. Who determines whether or not one is innocent? A husband may be driven to his sin by a nagging, inconsiderate wife. "Oh," but you say, "this still does not give him any liberty." You are correct. But I am convinced that there are usually two people involved in divorce. On the grounds of what Paul has to say in 1 Corinthians 7:39, I see no remarriage except in the case of the death of the mate.

Regarding remarriage, Paul stipulated, "Only in the Lord." Of course, all marriage should be "in the Lord," but Paul stressed this for widows and widowers, especially because sometimes this principle is forgotten in later years. Some feel they must have security; and because one is good and kind, even though divorced, nothing could go wrong. But do not ignore God's Word: the mate must know the Lord and follow Him if the marriage is to experience the blessing of God.

The concluding verse of the chapter reads, "But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God." Paul advised that in spite of the fact that the widow had liberty to marry again, it might be better that she remain unmarried. I can understand this, for I have known of instances where a Christian woman was happy and joyful while living with her Christian husband until he was taken by death, then in later years she remarried,

but brought misery and sorrow into her last few years because of ignoring the Lord's leading. God must lead. Do not be hasty! Above all, seek His will!

The statement of Paul's, "And I think also that I have the Spirit of God," has disturbed many. "Think" as used here does not imply doubt, but well-grounded assurance. It is as though Paul was saying, "Though you Corinthians think much of your opinions, I think in the light of inspiration. And what I say I say through the Holy Spirit." Thus we may accept at face value all that the apostle has to say, recognizing him as one of the holy men of God giving us the inspired Word of God. For this reason we must heed the truth, not substituting our own ideas but obeying the Word implicitly.

Of course one cannot obey the Word until he knows the Living Word, Christ Jesus. It is Christ who gives us the strength to obey. So if you have never trusted in Him, I hope you will.

## THINGS OFFERED TO IDOLS

### *1 Corinthians 8:1-13*

IN THIS CHAPTER the apostle dealt with another question that had been raised by the Corinthian Christians about Christian life and practice. They had been disputing over the problem of eating meat that had been offered to idols. This subject, like others mentioned in the Epistle, was creating dissension among the people of God in the Corinthian church. The apostle reminded them that this problem, like any others that might arise among Christians, can be settled only by love. "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know

that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

The problem at hand concerned meat that had been offered to the heathen deities and then taken to the market place at the public square for sale. Well-grounded believers who possessed spiritual knowledge knew there was nothing to these heathen idols, that they were merely the frail attempts of men trying to quiet the fears of the troubled conscience. Thus, as far as they were concerned personally, there was no problem whatsoever. They could go to the market place and buy the meat without giving any deference to the heathen deities. From the knowledge they possessed, there was no trace of wrongdoing in such procedure. But there were younger Christians that might be affected, who had been saved recently out of the bondage of heathenism. All their lives they had been subjects of the idolatrous practices common to the day. Conversion to them meant a clean break from everything that gave any suggestion of heathenism. Some of the older and more mature Christians could not accept such an idea. The result was confusion in the Corinthian church.

Paul assured the believers at Corinth that knowledge is important but it is also dangerous, for it "puffeth up." On the other hand, our knowledge must be superseded by love, for "love edifieth." Knowledge puffs up but love builds up. Thus the apostle directed his attack primarily toward the more mature believers, reminding them of the importance of Christian humility. For after all, regardless of how much one may know about spiritual truths, it comprises only an infinitesimal part of what he will know when he sees Christ face to face. "And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

Even the greatest Bible scholars have nothing about which they may boast. Before God, all of us are learners. None of us are masters, for One is our Master. If He is truly recognized as our Master, there will be no room for pride of knowledge

in our hearts. We shall be humble before Him. For only as we are humble before God can we really love Him. As we love Him, He loves us and showers His blessings upon us. "But if any man love God, the same is known of Him." These are indeed words of wisdom the apostle has stated for us. I like his approach: it is so sane and practical.

How God's people need to face all of their problems with love. First of all, we must love Christ with the entire heart. Love for the brethren can only be experienced as we have love for Him. Love for Christ demands complete submission to Him and His will. How essential this is. So often we are guilty of pride and arrogancy. Nothing evidences more surely our lack of love for the Lord. A proud heart is never a loving heart, for that heart is filled with self, not Christ. In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul wrote, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). We need to beware of the sin of pride. So often, as we get more knowledge of God and more knowledge of the Scriptures, we are faced with the danger of spiritual pride. Knowledge of the Lord and His Word should drive us to our knees in humility. As we learn more about Him we should yield more and more to Him. But some are puffed up; they are proud of what they know.

To be sure, we need knowledge. It is regrettable that many Christians do not study God's Word more than they do. But for those of us who love the Word and who are seeking to know the Word, we need to be sure that we are advancing, not only in knowledge, but in love for God and for those around us. In John 13:35 God says, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." We are recognized as disciples not by our knowledge, but by our love.

How greatly the love of God is needed in the hearts of

His people today. Our condition is no different from the Corinthian church. As this young congregation was torn by strife and division, the same condition is being duplicated thousands of times in congregations of believers all around the world. Knowledge is not our basic need—it is love for God and love for others. There is no dispute among Christians that cannot be settled with love. If there is not a full commitment to Christ's love, division will be the result. But, if we love, as the Bible says in Romans 13:8, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another," then we can settle any problem easily and quickly, regardless of its severity. Are not the things Christians squabble about usually small and insignificant? It is because of our pride that they appear to be major, but most of these difficulties are extremely minor.

There were two farmers who were fighting over a line fence. It involved about one foot of land which both claimed. Both of them went to see the same lawyer who said to them, "I am willing to represent one of you but I cannot legally represent both. I will refer you to another lawyer whom one of you can engage, while I take the other. I will give you a letter of introduction to the other lawyer." The letter was prepared and they started out together. On the way curiosity overcame them and they agreed to take a peek into the envelope. After opening it they were both surprised when they read, "Dear John: I am sending two fat geese—you pick one and I'll pick the other." For a moment they looked at one another in amazement. Then they began to laugh. They went home—each one insisting that the other take the tiny strip in dispute. Neither one wanted it after that.

Most of our arguments are just about as petty. How we need to heed the words of Galatians 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Let us love one another as afresh we surrender ourselves to the love of God.

Paul continued his reply to the question regarding meat

sacrificed to idols: "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one." Basically, there was nothing wrong with a Christian's buying this meat if he had the right motive. He would know that there is only one God, that is, the Lord who made the meat in the first place. After all, these heathen gods were not really gods. The Lord says in Isaiah 44:6, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God." Every born-again Christian who has entered into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ knows that beyond a shadow of a doubt this is true; there is only one God.

"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." When we speak of one God we have in mind the Scripture teaching of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though three distinct personalities, yet they are one in deity. The entire Bible teaches this.

In spite of this truth, there was a problem involved as far as the Corinthian saints were concerned. "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled." Here were believers who had a very definite stirring of the conscience in this matter. Having been reared in the throes of idolatry, they found deliverance through Christ from all past sin including idolatrous worship. Some of them had been saved for only a matter of weeks. To them, salvation meant a clean break from anything that denied the name of Christ. I am sure that if you love the Lord Jesus with your whole heart, you can sympathize with these believers. Those of us who

have been saved out of similar circumstances would agree wholeheartedly with their thinking.

Considering the feelings of these groups we might conclude in a general way that they were both right. Those who partook of the meat did it with a clear conscience, not in any way associating it with idolatry. On the other hand, those who abstained from the meat did it because they loved Christ and wanted nothing to do with anything that offered any suggestion of idolatry. If we were to stop at this point, we would be deadlocked. The only result could be to have a split and start two churches—one for the “meatites” and the other for the “antimeatites.”

Paul offered a better solution. His was God’s solution—love. First of all the apostle reminded them that the real issue at hand was not the eating of meat. “But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.” This must have startled the Corinthian saints, for they were quibbling over the eating of meat. Paul assured them that this was not the problem, because those who ate the meat did not affect their relationship with God, nor did those who did not eat meat affect theirs. The issue at hand was unity among the brethren.

If we could keep this in mind at all times there would be fewer factions in our churches today. God did not save us to argue and fight with one another. He saved us to be a part of His Body, to dwell together in unity and harmony. In Psalm 133:1 He says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Consider any problem which exists in your assembly of believers and ask the question, “Is this problem of major importance?” If it disrupts the harmony of believers, it is not. So often we get our eyes on the problem and forget that God has called us to be brethren, to dwell together in love. In Romans 12:10 He says, “Be kindly affectioned one to another

with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Suppose all Christians were to fulfill the teachings of this verse? I assure you that there would be no factions or splits among believers. We get all wrapped up in our problems and overlook completely the importance of dwelling together in the harmony of God.

Recall the incident of Abraham and Lot which transpired after they left Egypt. A dissension arose over the land among their herdsmen which finally involved Lot and Abraham. But consider the words of wisdom spoken by Abraham to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). To Abraham, the problem of the land was insignificant. The major problem was the continuation of his fellowship with Lot.

Let us not forget this. Let us not quarrel over anything. Our greatest need is to realize that we are brethren in Christ Jesus. Believers are one in Him. To this end we must be inseparable, standing together as saints of God. In Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul pled with the saints at Ephesus in this same manner: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Are you endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Are you a peacemaker or are you a trouble maker? Have no part in division or strife. Flee from it! Stand for the truth, but stand in the love of God. Do not be guilty of injuring your Christian brother. If he is wrong, God will judge him; your duty is to love him. If you can help him, do it, as Paul says in Galatians 6:1-2, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so

fulfil the law of Christ." Thus let us keep in mind that we are called not to be dividers of men but unifiers in the name of Christ.

The apostle had a word for those who felt there was no harm in eating the meat which had been offered to the idols. "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak." This bears out what Paul had said in chapter 6, verse 12, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." While the believer possesses liberty in Christ, he must always consider the weaker brother as well as the unsaved. If liberty becomes a stumbling block to others, then it is no more liberty but evil.

"For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols." Though the mature saint might sit at the table and partake of this meat without any injurious results, yet a new Christian recently saved out of idol worship might be misled into thinking that idolatry can be a part of Christianity. The tragedy of this is that "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died." "Perish" as used here embodies the meaning of "ruin" or "defeat." The young Christian though growing in grace, is suddenly turned aside from the faith and loses his victory in Christ because of what he has seen in the mature Christian.

Such action on the part of a mature saint results in a double sin. "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." Not only does this one harm his brother but he breaks fellowship with the Lord Jesus Himself. "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." "No flesh" as used here is literally "no such flesh," that is, meat offered to idols. If there

was any question in anyone's mind regarding the eating of meat offered to idols, Paul assured the Corinthian saints that he would have nothing to do with it. Though he might partake of this meat without any feeling of wrongdoing in his own heart, if it offended his brother he would abstain from it forever.

Paul, through the Holy Spirit, has given us some very important teachings here. Many Christians are careless about their habits and practices. I have heard Christians say, "It doesn't matter what people think; I see no harm in it. As long as it is right in the eyes of God, what is the difference?" Beware of such an attitude. Remember, as Paul said, if you continue in such practices you are sinning against your brother and you are sinning against Jesus Christ, because you are turning weaker or immature Christians away from the faith.

We might well consider many things in the light of Paul's instruction: the radio and TV programs that come into our home; our choice of amusement; our manner of dress; smoking and drinking; and scores of other practices that are worthy of our attention in the light of Christian liberty and responsibility. Yes, it is true that we are free. We are living under grace. But let us be sure it is not disgrace. God says in Romans 14:21, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Some things that are worthy and good can be stumbling blocks to our fellow Christians.

Many years ago, John Sung was returning to China. He had gained three doctoral degrees in the United States. While making the trip back to his homeland, one day he went to the rail of the ship and threw his diplomas overboard. These things, valuable in themselves, became a snare to his spiritual growth, and with a violent gesture he threw them away forever. With those diplomas also went self-confidence and pride that were hindering his effectiveness for God and preventing him from doing a lasting work among others.

In the same manner, you and I must be violent in our treatment of anything hindering our effectiveness among believers and unbelievers for God. It was Henry Drummond who coined the expression, "The expulsive power of a new affection." When one falls in love with Christ, that love drives out a host of evil charms. Those vain things that formerly enchanted the soul must go when we become attached to the One who is altogether lovely. The Apostle Paul declared in Philippians 3:7-9: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Pray about this matter! There may be things in your life about which you have given little or no thought. You have never considered them as wrong, and yet, "through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died." As the apostle had already stated in 1 Corinthians 6: 19-20, we must remind ourselves afresh of this truth, "Ye are not your own, For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." We are not our own to live any way we please. In all things we must please Him and honor Him, that those around us may see the Lord Jesus in us in all that we say or do.

Let the Holy Spirit search out your heart. Ask Him to reveal every trace of anything in your life that might be hindering the growth of other believers or turning the unsaved away from Him. As God shows you these things, lay them on the altar, declaring with Paul, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

## FAULTY JUDGES

### *1 Corinthians 9:1-18*

LEAVING THE THEME OF LOVE for the moment, Paul considered several severe criticisms that had been directed toward him. Criticism is the distressing evil that Satan uses so frequently to provoke divisions among the people of God. The Corinthian believers seemed to be masters of the vice of criticism.

As the chapter opened, the Apostle Paul sought to vindicate his apostleship which the Corinthians had questioned. To be an apostle, it was requisite that one see the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely in a vision but corporeally. Paul asked, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" If you are familiar with the ninth chapter of Acts, you will know that the Apostle Paul had seen Christ. Not only that, he received his commission from Christ at that time. Later, in giving his defense before Agrippa, Paul recounted this in his own words. The Lord Jesus had said to Paul, "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts 26: 16-18).

Like the apostles who preceded him, Paul had the power to perform miracles. He said nothing about them here, but

mentioned that the Corinthians themselves were a sign of Paul's apostleship. "Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." The church at Corinth had been founded by God through the Apostle Paul. Could such a work have been established had not Paul been God's chosen servant? The Lord used Paul in this hotbed of heathenism to turn pagans to the assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ. What greater evidence could one require of his God-ordained apostleship? For the sake of those who had forgotten that he was the founder of the Corinthian church Paul declared, "Mine answer to them that do examine me is this."

There were other criticisms thrust at the apostle. Some felt that, because he did not have a wife to travel about with him as the other apostles, he could not be a true apostle of God. Doubtless Paul was a widower. Having been a member of the Sanhedrin he must have had a wife at some time. It would seem that he chose to remain a widower because of the many dangers involved in his pioneer missionary service. Most assuredly, he was not against marriage for God's servants. Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find celibacy taught as a requisite for the Lord's service. Many years later this false teaching entered the church, but it was never known during the days of the apostolic church. In fact, Paul said, "Have we not power [the right] to eat and to drink?" referring to his teaching in the eighth chapter regarding meat offered to idols. Next he asked, "Have we not power [the right] to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"

As Paul refrained from eating meat offered to idols so that the weaker brother might not stumble through his example, in like manner he did not have a wife, for fear that some might not fully understand. Yet he would have us see that, if an apostle should marry, it would not be wrong. We

know for sure that James and Jude, as well as Peter, were married. Thus the apostle taught that one in the service of Christ may or may not marry. Whichever he does has no bearing on his apostleship. The circumstances of the case must be considered, and in Paul's circumstances, traveling from place to place, suffering hardship and privation, it would not have been advisable to have a wife traveling with him.

One must decide the matter of marriage in the light of his own leading from the Lord. How often Christians get into difficulties trying to decide God's will for other Christians. As a result we become critical, causing disturbances and factions. How successful the devil has been in using criticism as a means of producing disharmony among the believers. It might be well for us to look into our own hearts for traces of this destructive evil. Rarely is criticism aimed at believers who are doing little for God. It is usually directed toward those, like the Apostle Paul, who were being mightily used.

In a small country town a humble Christian man who had a burden for children started a children's work in his home. A few of the church leaders of the community became envious of him because of the way God was blessing his work. They tried to interfere, but the Lord prospered His servant and the children's work grew. One day at the railway station, a clergyman was belittling the work to one of his Sunday school teachers.

"Excuse me, sir, I must speak," said a porter standing nearby. "That man you are trying to belittle is doing a real work for God. If it's God's work, why aren't you with him? My thirteen-year-old girl goes to his meetings, and it's a great help to her. If he is not God's man, he could not do such a work."

This is the very thing the Apostle Paul put before the Corinthian saints. They had criticized him as to his right to be an apostle; he replied by informing them that the estab-

lishment of the Christian church at Corinth is the greatest proof of his apostleship.

Let us beware of this evil of criticism. The Lord Jesus said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:1-2).

Others had criticized Paul because of his refusal to accept support for his ministry from the Corinthians, choosing rather to earn his way by tent-making. Having learned that other ministers of the gospel had accepted support, they wondered why Paul should degrade his calling by tent-making. The apostle replied, "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" He would have them understand that there was nothing wrong in a minister of the gospel accepting support from born-again believers, but that his circumstances in Corinth were distinctly different. When he went there to begin a work, there were no Christians. It was mandatory that he turn to some kind of secular work to earn his expenses. He refused to take money from unsaved people. Thus to live with his conscience, he made tents to get support in order to preach the gospel.

There is nothing wrong with born-again believers supporting their pastors. Paul used several arguments to make this clear. First he illustrated from the case of the soldier at war representing his country. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" While a soldier is representing his country at war, he would not be expected to go out and earn his expenses in secular work. As his nation's representative, it is the responsibility of the people to care for him. "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" Does not the farmer have a perfect right to live off that in which he has invested his labors? "Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" Surely the farmer has every right to use as much of the milk coming from his flock as he desires. Then pointing his critics to the Old Testament, Paul

continued, "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?" Here the apostle quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4 where God makes it clear that even the oxen who tread out the corn or wheat have a perfect right to eat some of the products of their labor. They were not to be muzzled so that they could not eat. This was their God-granted privilege. Paul stated further that what has been declared in the law regarding the oxen and the treading out of the corn is "altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope." In other words, the principle is true that "the labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7).

Paul informed the Corinthians that this applies to every minister of the gospel. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" "Carnal things" here refers to the essentials that have to do with the welfare of the body. A minister of the gospel who cares for the spiritual needs of his people has a perfect right to accept gifts from his congregation to care for his temporal needs.

On the other hand, Paul asserted that one need not accept gifts from a congregation or other Christians if he chooses not to do so. There may be instances in which the gospel may be hindered by so doing. Such was the case at Corinth. "If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." The church at Corinth was an unusual church in many respects and Paul felt that it would be a detriment rather than an advancement to the gospel to accept support from the Corinthian believers. From what God's servant said here it is obvious that someone had deceived the Corinthians in money matters. Thus Paul chose not to create any possibility of this evil.

One more instance was cited before the subject was left: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live . . . of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?" Here we are reminded that the Old Testament priests were supported by the tithes and offerings of the people, and also partook of the portions of the animals that had been sacrificed. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." From this we are assured that the principle of accepting support from one's congregation has full authority from the Lord. As the Old Testament priests were supported by the people, so Paul said the same procedure continues in the New Testament dispensation with God's full approval.

What the apostle presented for us here through the Holy Spirit has a direct bearing on present-day circumstances. Many churches are failing in their obligation to care adequately for the needs of the faithful undershepherds. There are many churches where God has wonderfully provided for His people, yet they have failed in their stewardship responsibility to provide for their pastors. On the other hand, there have been numerous instances where men have been called of God to preach the gospel, but they have gotten their eyes focused on temporal things. Many of them have put a price tag on their ministry. They request a certain amount for a salary and set up other stipulations before they will accept a call. There are manifold dangers involved, both for congregations and for their ministers, as concerns money. There can be sin on either side. How important it is that we keep our eyes fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ and our obligation to carry the gospel to every creature, and under no circumstances jeopardize this high calling by our failure in monetary matters. Indeed the Bible is true, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). This has been seen in the selfishness of laymen and clergymen alike. Let us be sure that we are pleasing the Lord in our relationship to that which He has committed unto us through His grace.

Though it was in order for an apostle to be supported by those among whom he labored, Paul chose to serve the people at Corinth gratuitously. "But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void." In other words, what Paul said regarding the scriptural teaching of the servant's being worthy of his hire, was not said of himself. He had chosen not to receive anything from the saints at Corinth.

There were occasions when Paul accepted support from those with whom he worked. One example is found in Philippians 4:15-16: "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." God's servant received help from the Philippian saints graciously with much appreciation. But it seemed wise under the circumstances that he not accept financial help from the Corinthians.

No undue praise or glory was expected on Paul's part for preaching without remuneration: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Some might think Paul deserved unusual praise because he served the Lord so faithfully at Corinth without accepting financial help. But his claim was that the Corinthian Christians were not his authority; God was. And it was God who laid His hand on Paul to preach the gospel. Thus if he did not faithfully proclaim the gospel of Christ, the Lord would judge him for it, for he was debtor to God, not to the Corinthians.

Of course, Paul was not without his reward, even though he proclaimed the gospel without remuneration. "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." To see souls transformed by the power of Christ was reward enough

for the Apostle Paul. He knew that God would undertake in that He would supply all his needs. He had no doubts whatever about this. In writing to the Philippians he declared, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). What he believed for the Philippian saints, he believed for himself. He knew the Lord would never fail. He experienced this great truth in Corinth. God provided! Of course, He did not provide without work. Paul had to go to tent-making, but the Lord provided the job as well as the strength to do the work. At the same time, He blessed the apostle's labors in founding the church at Corinth. But Paul could not go against his conscience. He knew what the Lord wanted him to do and he had to do it.

He summarized what he had said thus far: "What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." Paul felt that it was a joy and a privilege to proclaim Christ, with no thought about or no connection with support or remuneration. He divorced money from the gospel altogether. How worthy of note is such a procedure in our day. Oftentimes evangelistic meetings are planned where it is known that adequate, and on occasion even more than adequate, support will be realized. How many are willing to carry Christ to areas where it is known that God's servant may suffer hunger and privation? We need to say with the Apostle Paul, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." Ours is a high calling from Jesus Christ our Saviour who gave Himself for us. Let us not be influenced by selfish comforts. We must be concerned about needy and lost souls. The Lord has called us to proclaim His truth, but He has also given us the truth to proclaim. Without the gospel men are lost forever. This is God's chosen message to transform lives. Paul declared in Romans 1:16, the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

A woman member of a worldly church had a real longing in her heart to know the Lord. It seems that her minister could not help her, so she called on an evangelical minister who pointed her to the Saviour. In her new-found joy she sought to tell her own minister of her experience, but he was quite offended.

"I preach Christ," he said. "If you had tried hard enough you could have found Him in your own church."

"Sir," said the lady, "you are supposed to make the way of salvation so plain that everybody will understand. Where my soul's welfare is concerned I dare not trifl. You did not seem to care, so I had to seek help elsewhere. The trouble in our church is that we are so busy trying to entertain people that we have forgotten the church's real business."

What was true of that church is true of many others today. The church's business, including the congregation and the pastor, is to spread the gospel. Nothing must be allowed to interfere that might deter us from this all-important task of making Jesus Christ known to lost and dying men. Let not money nor anything else become a stumbling block. May God deliver us from our selfishness and covetousness, that we may have an eye single for the glory of Christ.

Let the Spirit of the Lord search out your heart at this moment. Is there anything keeping you from proclaiming the glorious gospel of the Saviour? Is there any sin hindering your faithful and zealous service for Him? Let the Spirit of the Lord have full possession. Yield yourself wholly to the Saviour. Let Him be the Lord of your life.

## GOD'S FAITHFUL SERVANT

*1 Corinthians 9:19-27*

THOUGH THE APOSTLE PAUL refused to accept remuneration for his services from the Corinthian Christians, the apparent success of his work in Corinth was a greater reward than money could have been. It is quite obvious that Paul's work would not have been nearly as effective had he accepted gifts from the Corinthians. The fact that he was their servant in Christ had a lasting effect upon them. "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." Though he was independent of the Corinthians in refusing to accept their financial help, Paul did not abuse his liberty. In fact, he went to the opposite extreme of making himself their servant in his loving concern to win them to Christ. Naturally, his servitude had a distinct effect upon the Corinthians as they realized that the apostle was not compelled to do this; he did it out of a heart of love.

How completely selfless Paul was. His every effort seemed to be for the exaltation of Christ in the lives of others. Indeed, we might agree that the apostle evidenced one of the most essential traits for effective service—victory over the self-life. Why are millions unreached with the gospel today? There can be no argument—God's people are selfish. The moment we were saved, Christ should have been given the pre-eminence. But for many of us the self-life was carried over into the new life. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." When one receives Christ, a totally new kind of life should

begin, one in which self is eliminated and Christ is exalted.

Toward the end of his tragic, devoted life, General Robert E. Lee attended the christening of a friend's child. The mother asked him for a word that would guide the child along the road to manhood. Lee's answer summed up the creed that had borne him through struggling and suffering to a great place in the hearts of many Americans.

"Teach him," he said simply, "to deny himself."

We do not emphasize self-denial very much these days, either for our children or for ourselves. Instead we concentrate on our wants. We seem to have the notion that the world owes us all manner of good things, and we feel abused when we do not get them. Self-discipline is a bore, and as a result we are winning an unwelcome fame as a land of spoiled children and discontented adults. To realize what the world is going to demand of us may be a good deal more important than what we are entitled to demand of it. This is a difficult lesson. We have not been working very hard at it in recent years. Instead we have developed a moral and intellectual flabbiness that could be fatal to us as individuals and as a nation, for the world itself is really no easier now than it was in General Lee's time. It offers rich opportunity, but above everything else it offers a struggle, a struggle that will never be won by self-indulgence. More than anything else, we need to relearn General Lee's lesson. Of course, this is actually Christ's lesson, for He said in Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Because Paul was selfless, he could witness for Christ under any circumstances. "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law." Paul was not a

"double minded man" such as the one described by James in his Epistle. He was not two-faced, forsaking principles to make contacts. It was not that at all. When he witnessed to the Jews, he quoted freely from the Old Testament Scriptures with which they were familiar. He interpreted their Jewish ceremonies in the light of Christ and used every possible means of Jewish origin to present his Saviour. On the other hand, when working with the Gentiles, he used another approach. He proclaimed the same message of grace and presented the same Saviour, but he used a different method of portraying the truth.

"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." The apostle knew how to adapt his approach to any situation in which he found himself. Never did he compromise in his message, but he endeavored to reach his hearers on the basis of their background or circumstances. In Romans 12:15-16 he wrote, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but descend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." It is not always easy to adapt to the situations of others. But if one loves Christ and possesses a sincere burden to win souls to Christ, he will, like the Apostle Paul, become "all things to all men" that he "might by all means save some."

God's servant, Paul, had a burden for souls because through Christ he had gained victory over the self-life. He could truthfully say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Do you find yourself in the pitiful state of having no compelling concern to reach the lost? If so, it is quite obvious that you are not yet crucified with Christ. In fact, you are very much alive. Self is your master. Though Christ may be your

Saviour, He is certainly not your Lord. Give Him the place He desires in your heart—first place. Tell Him you are ready and willing to forsake the world to follow Him. Let the Lord Jesus have full possession of you and all that you have. Let Him make you a “servant unto all” that through you many lives will come to know the Lord Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 9:23 Paul wrote, “And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.” The word “partaker” means literally “fellow partaker.” Paul had a holy concern for the souls of the lost, that they might come to know the blessings enjoyed by all who believe on Christ. Many Christians take the blessings of God for granted. They enjoy them, but overlook the fact that they have loved ones, neighbors, and friends who are not enjoying them. Are they not concerned? Do they not realize that without Jesus Christ souls are lost for all eternity, and that they will never have another chance? Not only will they be eternally lost and separated from God but they will reside in hell forever and ever.

Oh, that we might be aroused from our apathy. I pray that the Spirit of God might convict us of the destructive evil of indifference. God says in Revelation 3:15 and 16: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.” God hates lukewarmness. But how many Christians there are who are drifting along aimlessly, living for self, without any regard for lost and dying men.

Our Lord’s words to the hungry multitudes were, “Give ye them to eat” (Mark 6:37). I believe He is saying the same to His people today regarding those who are destitute without Christ. Christ is the Bread of Life, and only as the spiritually hungry partake of Him will their spiritual needs be met. We thank God for those faithful heralds of the cross who are defying all laws of reason known to natural man to feed the hun-

gry multitudes. But how few there are fulfilling the responsibility of the great commission. The Lord Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Where are our young people today? Where are those who will answer the call to forsake father, mother, and brethren to go to the land of God's choice to give the Bread of Life to them that hunger? How many of the rest of us will release the claims to the treasures God has given us, that we may invest in the young lives that have answered His call to go?

Few of us have experienced the thrill and the joy which the disciples had when they went out with the bread and the fishes to feed the multitude. The more they broke off and gave away, the more they had in their hands. The farther back they traveled into the crowd, the more abundant the supply became. God's law in this respect is as immutable as the law of gravity. When we give to the glory of God, there will be an endless supply. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:24-25).

Do not keep that which does not rightfully belong to you. Invest it in the service of Christ, that the lost might have at least one opportunity to hear of the Saviour who died and rose again for them. To be saved, the lost must hear about Christ and believe on Him. There is no other way. Do not be deceived into thinking there is some magical or automatic way in which the heathen will get their names recorded in the Lamb's book of life. You and I must either take or send the gospel to them. Let us ask God to burden our hearts for the lost.

All who faithfully respond to the God-given task of witnessing will have their reward. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." Here the apostle illustrated the principle

he just stated. Every second year the Isthmian games brought scores of athletes and thousands of followers to Corinth for the great national and religious festival. In his approach, the apostle assumed the position of an athlete to convey spiritual truths in terms the Corinthians could well understand. Paul reminded them that not all who run in a race are prize winners. In the same manner, not all who are Christians will be rewarded for their labors when they get to Heaven. Many will get there by the skin of their teeth. Though they were sincere when they received Christ, they failed to live and work for Him following their conversion. Their greatest concern in life was not that of winning the lost to the Saviour; rather they lived for their own interests and desires.

Earlier in this Epistle Paul had spoken of both the fruitful and fruitless believers saying, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). How tragic to enter Heaven empty-handed, "Saved; yet so as by fire." Do not let that be true of you. "So run, that ye may obtain." Do not get your eyes off the goal! Remember the purpose for which you were saved. In Philippians 3:14 Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Keep pressing toward the mark! Occupy yourself with Christ and the things that concern Him.

Continuing his simile of the runner, Paul declared that "every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." As the athlete's life is one of constant self-denial, so must be the believer's. Those who would excel for God must not give way to the lusts of the flesh, resulting in damage to their Christian testimony and witness.

The athlete observes strict training rules. He is careful of the food he eats and the hours he keeps. He is insistent upon daily workouts to keep his body in the best possible condition. Christians cannot be any less diligent in regard to the

training rules so essential for spiritual stamina and health. Believers must feed on the Word of God. Time must be taken to wait on the Lord for the spiritual rest essential to soothe jaded nerves. A day should not pass without in some way actively witnessing for the Lord Jesus, for witnessing is the exercise that keeps us trim, conditioning us for the race yet to be won.

What the athlete does is "to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." The athlete practices self-denial, carefully preparing himself for the contest for many weeks and months, with the hope of receiving a wreath of laurel which will soon fade away. The believer's crown will remain forever. Some have interpreted "the crown" as eternal life, believing that one cannot know for sure whether he is saved until after he dies. The Scriptures do not support such teaching. Paul was speaking in this passage to those already saved. The crown believers shall receive will be a reward for labors in the service of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5:10 the apostle wrote: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Some will be rewarded but some will be disappointed. For this reason the apostle said, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." Paul did not simply live; he lived with a purpose in mind. His heart's desire was to glorify Christ in helping others to come to know Him. He kept his eyes fixed on the Saviour. For this reason he could face the adversities and sufferings of life, saying, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

Like the Corinthians, we must realize that running the race for Christ is not always easy. We must expect obstacles along the way. But as we discipline ourselves and run in God's strength, our efforts will not be in vain. The goal will be reached eventually. Paul was subject to all the temptations of

the flesh you and I must face. His was not a sham battle. Thus he said, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

The believer's worst enemy is Satan. Satan works through the flesh. The flesh is an ever-present hindrance to the working of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). The apostle kept his body under control that the work of God might not be hindered by his own fleshly desires. He wanted to do more than preach. He was determined that his preaching should be undergirded by a holy life. If it were not, Paul knew that he would be a castaway. The word "castaway" means one who is disapproved or disqualified. As the runner was disqualified from the race for some infraction of the rules, so Paul feared that in a careless moment he might yield to the appeal of the flesh and be disqualified from the race as an ineffective witness for God, losing the crown held in reserve for him. Some teach erroneously that what Paul said here had to do with the possibility of losing his salvation. The context is clear. Paul was not speaking of salvation, but of service for Christ. If one is truly saved he need never fear losing his salvation; he may lose his reward, but not his salvation.

How many there are who have been mightily used of the Lord but, turning to some work of the flesh, they became castaways. There was a minister of the gospel whom the crowds flocked to hear. As this mighty servant of Christ proclaimed the unsearchable riches of the Scriptures, his listeners seemed to be lifted into the very presence of Christ. One day, however, when temptation came his way, he yielded. Today he is a castaway. He has no message for the Lord. Is this man saved? I believe so. But his great work for God is done. God has forgiven him, but the scars will remain until he meets Christ face to face.

How important it is that every believer keep close to the Lord Jesus. We cannot trust ourselves. God says in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Daily we must look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2.)

In an account of the life of Dr. John Duncan there is a touching passage that relates how much he suffered from religious melancholy. His mental struggles were often very distressing, casting a shadow over his whole life and work. On one occasion he went to his college class in a state of extreme dejection. During the opening prayer, however, the cloud passed away. His eyes brightened, his features relaxed. Before beginning his lecture he said with pathetic sympathy, "Dear young gentlemen, I have just gotten a glimpse of the Lord Jesus."

Maybe this is what you need today—a glimpse of Jesus. For too long you have been looking to yourself. You know Christ as your Saviour, but you do not know Him as your Lord. Turn your eyes upon Him! Heed the words of Paul in Romans 6:13, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Will you yield yourself fully to His control? Tell Him so! Assure the Lord that you want His best, that you do not want to become a castaway. Let Him know that you want your life to count fully for Him. Be sure, this is what He wants for you. He is calling you to a life of full submission.

Should you not be a Christian, remember the door of salvation is open. We are living in the age of grace. The door may soon be shut. You can come now if you will come.

## IMPORTANT EXAMPLES

### *1 Corinthians 10:1-14*

THE APOSTLE PAUL stressed strongly the danger of becoming a castaway. Unless the believer is on his guard constantly, it is easy to fall into sin and ruin his testimony. For this reason Paul kept an eye on his weaknesses, and with Holy Spirit discipline sought to keep the flesh in subjection.

The apostle pointed out that whatever happens to us was experienced by the Jews of old. They, too, failed frequently by depending upon the flesh rather than the Spirit of God. "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea." In a sense, the children of Israel had the same benefits you and I possess in Christ. The cloud represented our Lord's guidance and care; while the sea typified His glorious redemption, that of passing from death unto life. Consequently Paul wrote that they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." That is, trusting in God's guidance through these experiences, they followed their Spirit-directed leader, Moses, confirming their approval and approbation of God's worthy servant.

Though under the law, the children of Israel had an understanding of grace. For they "did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." God in His mercy provided the wandering Israelites with manna from Heaven, never failing them. Not only that, time and again He supplied water to drink. In Philippians 4:19 Paul declared, "My God shall supply all your need

according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The children of Israel could say the same thing, for not once did the Lord fail them. Paul told of the "spiritual Rock that followed them"; and even more, he identified that Rock with Christ. How marvelous was the grace of God. God's chosen ones were not left alone in the wilderness; Christ was there with them.

"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." With all of the spiritual advantages, including the protecting and sustaining care of Jesus Christ, many of the Israelites became castaways. Rather than look to the Lord and trust Him for all things, they turned to the sins and pleasures of the flesh, ignoring God's claims.

Some of us would be willing to say how foolish these people were. How regrettable that they did not keep their eyes fixed upon God, that they might have averted the sorrows and calamities that many of them experienced. But before we become too critical notice Paul's comment: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." The word "examples" as used here really means "types." All that we read in the Old Testament regarding the weaknesses and failures of Israel and the judgments that ensued are for our edification, that we might not stumble and fall in like manner. In Romans 15:4 we read, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." How important that we learn the lessons God intended as the result of the weaknesses and failures of the children of Israel. Little did they realize the awfulness of sin. Most of us are like the Israelites in this respect. In 1 Peter 2:11 the apostle pleaded with his readers to do something about the destructive power of sin, saying, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Many of God's people fail to keep on their guard, overlooking the

fact that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9). By catering to so-called insignificancies, they soon find themselves mastered by sin.

Several years ago I read in *Time* magazine of sixty-four-year-old Grace Wylie and her roomful of snakes. Best of all she loved the cobras, declaring that they were the most intelligent and the most easily tamed. On one occasion she agreed to pose with her newest pet, a five-foot cobra she had recently received from India. To get into position for the picture, she patted its head, stroked its back, and quietly coaxed it to extend its hood. As the cobra's head began to bob rhythmically back and forth, Mrs. Wyley felt suddenly that it was not responding well.

"It's getting nervous," she said, "I had better put it away." But as she reached for it, the cobra struck. 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. When she had torn the snake loose, she carefully returned it to its cage. Then she calmly instructed the photographer to apply tourniquets to her wrist and elbow and told him where to find stimulants and needles. But the needles were rusty and vials broke in the photographer's hands.

"Take me to the hospital at once," she ordered, "this is serious." But all the medical help and serums at the Long Beach Municipal Hospital were of no avail to save the life of Grace Wylie. Exactly one hour and forty minutes after she had been bitten, her body suddenly stiffened and she lay dead on her hospital bed.

What an analogy! What a lesson! How like sin this is. Someone has said, "We play around with sin, and then sin plays around with us." The testimony of countless worldlings, carnal Christians, and backsliders bears out the truth of this statement. Sin excused, played with, and petted inevitably sinks its deadly fangs into the soul. God says in Romans 6:16, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to

obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Have you yielded to some particular sin that is ruining your testimony? Then God says you are the servant of that sin; you are not the servant of Christ. If you are not already a castaway, you will be one, if you continue under the control of that deadly evil. Oh, learn the lesson God has given in the Old Testament through Israel. Drink of the spiritual Rock, Christ. Claim forgiveness from all sin as you yield afresh to His control.

Paul was very specific about some of the evils committed by the children of Israel. First he spoke of idolatry. "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." This refers to Israel's failure after Moses had gone up to Mount Sinai to receive the law from God. The Israelites, having encamped in the wilderness, became impatient and wanted their own god. They demanded that Aaron provide a god they could see and touch. As the result of their compulsion, he had them bring their objects of gold which he melted down and fashioned into a golden calf which he named Jehovah. When Moses came down from the mount and saw this, he was wroth. Judgment came upon the children of Israel and scores of them died because of their idolatry.

Were it not for the grace and love of almighty God, many present-day Christians would die in like manner for their idolatry. Thousands who are in our churches are worshiping the golden calf. Money means more to them than integrity. Wealth has a greater appeal to these idol worshipers than service for Christ. In spite of the fact that Jesus said in John 6:27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," literally thousands of believers are pouring out their lives in an attempt to increase their bank accounts.

D. L. Moody was a young man in business with seven thousand dollars saved toward his goal of accumulating one

hundred thousand. But a series of soul-winning visits from a dying Sunday school teacher changed the entire direction of his life. After a great struggle, he gave up business; living frugally on his savings, he began to devote himself to Christian service. Small wonder that his favorite passage of Scripture was 1 John 2:16-17: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Did D. L. Moody make a foolish choice? The business firms with which he was first associated have long since disappeared. The fortunes accumulated in his day have been scattered or passed on to other hands. But the memory of D. L. Moody's life and ministry and the ongoing work he founded remain to the glory of God and the blessing of an unnumbered host.

When a man turns his life over to Christ, his attitude toward money will change. He will recognize that it is no longer his money but God's; and he will use it according to the will and plan of God. Unfortunately, too few Christians are doing this. Like the children of Israel, they are idolaters worshiping the golden calf.

Paul emphasized our need of watchfulness in the face of sin: "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." The believer should have no part in impurity. In our day, when everything seems to be geared to the appetites of sinful flesh, we who are in Christ must beware of uncleanness. We read in 1 Thessalonians 4:7 that "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." We are to be a different kind of people, not marked by the ways of the world.

God hates sin and He judges it. Twenty-three thousand fell in one day as the result of their gross immorality. One wonders what will happen to the United States unless we experience a Heaven-sent revival. Any right-thinking person who is familiar with the trend of the times realizes that man is

getting farther and farther from God because of sex and lust.

There appears to be a contradiction of figures as you compare the twenty-three thousand in verse 8 with the twenty-four thousand mentioned in Numbers 25:9. These can be reconciled very easily. Paul was speaking of the immediate judgment on the first day, which took twenty-three thousand in its toll. The other thousand died later, making a total of twenty-four thousand.

Paul warned us also of the evil of tempting God. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." "Tempt" as used here means "to provoke," or "to try God's patience." The children of Israel did this when they doubted God and accused Him of sending them into the wilderness to die, claiming that He had not cared for their provision of food and water. What a sorrowful evil! God promises in Psalm 34:15, "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." Yet how few of us really trust Him as we should. Have we not like the foolish Israelites doubted Him and failed to lean upon the everlasting arms?

It is a strange thing, most of us revel in the marvelous gospel of the grace of God, praising the Lord that we are saved for eternity; yet it seems that we cannot trust Him for the next twenty-four hours. One of the greatest needs among God's people is not only to rely upon Christ's past work on the cross but to depend upon His present ministry for us. How assuring it is to know that there is a Man in Heaven who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and who guarantees that "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Closely allied with the evil of provoking God with immorality and unbelief is the sin of constantly murmuring against Him. "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." This refers to the severe judgment meted out on Korah, Dathan, and Abiram because of their criticism of God's servants, Moses and

Aaron. A critical spirit is a very serious thing, as revealed from this Old Testament incident. There is only One who has the right to be critical, and He is the One who knows all things, even God our Creator. He says in Romans 14:10, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." God is the Judge, and we are not to judge one another.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." The Old Testament types are for our help, that we might not fall victims to the same errors. Is the Holy Spirit revealing your need of victory? Then claim it at this moment through Christ, for He is the Victor. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:57, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Having recounted several of the stumbling blocks that caused the children of Israel to become castaways, Paul was quick to remind believers that they must not in any sense of the word feel superior because of their spiritual victory in Christ. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Man in himself is never anything more than feeble flesh. The flesh is unsafe and can never be trusted. We must never look at a weaker brother who has fallen into sin and think that what happened to him, could not happen to us. The defeat of other saints of God should be an impetus to drive us closer to the Lord in humble dependence upon His mercy and grace. Let us not lean on past achievements, acquired knowledge, or anything or anyone other than the Lord Himself. David said in Psalm 18:2, "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." He did not say, "My *ability* is my rock," nor, "My *determination* is my rock." No, the Lord is our Rock. Let us not forget this for a moment, for if we do, we may become castaways.

It seems that from the way most of us live, we forget that our God is almighty. He has us at heart and is concerned about every move. Oh, that we might realize how great He is and how weak we are! David declared, "Our help is in the name of the **Lord**, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 124:8). What more do we need? Our God is all-sufficient.

One time Phillips Brooks saw a little newsboy's papers blowing all over the street. The boy had piled them neatly by his side, but a strong gust of wind blew them all about. Mr. Brooks ran quickly and helped the boy gather them up. After they were all in place, securely weighted down, Phillips Brooks said, "There you are, son, now what is your trouble?" The boy looked up gratefully and said, "No trouble at all sir, since you came along." Every one of us can look into the face of the Lord Jesus and say the same thing. "But," you say "we still have troubles." Why? Because we do not lean on Christ. We think we can get by without Him. Paul reminded us, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The apostle emphasized God's greatness: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Being in Christ is no assurance that we shall not be tempted. But two things are certain: one, God will not permit you to be tempted above your ability to bear it; and the other, He will always provide a way of escape from the temptation if there is a willingness to escape. Nowhere in the Bible are we promised immunity from temptation. As long as there is a personal devil, temptation will continue. We are promised, however, all the necessary power to withstand any conflict with the evil one. Let none of us, even the strongest, think he can face the devil in human strength. Our only hope is in complete dependence on Christ. Praise God, if tried, His grace will be found to be sufficient.

One time a man asked an old Christian woman, "Does the devil ever trouble you about your past sins?"

"Oh, yes," she replied.

"What do you do then?"

"Well, I just send him to the east."

"Does he come back after that?"

"Oh, yes."

"What do you do then?"

"I just send him to the west."

"And when he comes back from the west what do you do?"

"I just keep him going between the east and the west."

That is not a bad idea, for, as God says in Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Never forget it; though temptation is the common lot of all of us, "God is faithful." The devil is unfaithful, and we are faithless, but "God is faithful." As we lean upon Him, the promise is that He will "make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

One of the great truths that so many earnest Christians have failed to see is that salvation is a twofold gift: freedom from the penalty of sin and freedom from the power of sin. Most of us realize that in Christ we have received freedom from the penalty of sin, but few seem to understand that in the same measure of faith in the Lord we receive moment-by-moment power over sin. Even though we are convinced that in our own efforts we had nothing to do with our salvation from the penalty of sin, yet we have been deceived by the adversary into believing that somehow our own efforts enable us to effect victory over the power of sin. Human efforts are powerless to play any part in victory over the power of sin; furthermore, they prevent such victory. In ourselves we are defeated constantly, but in Christ we are "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37).

We are told in 1 John 5:4-5 that "whatever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh

the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" The apostle speaks of "our faith" as a means of overcoming the world. He would not suggest for a moment that this faith is anything we have produced. Faith is the gift of God. But even more, it is the object of faith that enables us to overcome the world. It is, as John says, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." As our faith is directed toward Him and as we depend upon Him fully, we are able to overcome all temptation.

With this assurance in mind Paul cried out, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." Turn away from anything that might hinder victory in Christ. Even more, "Flee" from it. Have nothing to do with the encumbrances that hinder the walk of faith.

Child of God, are you living in Christ's victory? If not, fully submit to His control. If you are not a child of God, remember that He loves you and wants to save you. You can be saved at this moment if you will invite Christ to come into your heart.

## DIVIDED LIVES

### *1 Corinthians 10:15-22*

PAUL APPEALED to the Corinthians to "flee from idolatry." Believers in Christ are to have nothing to do with any form of idolatry. Worshiping other than the true God is a contradiction of what the Bible teaches.

The apostle illustrated this truth in his vivid portrayal of the meaning and purpose of the Lord's table. He appealed to the Corinthians to give thoughtful consideration to his teaching: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." The saints

at Corinth had boasted of their wisdom. Thus God's servant urged them to use this wisdom to good advantage by giving due consideration to what he was about to say.

When we gather at the Lord's table for the communion service, we partake of the bread first; then the cup. But in speaking of the Lord's table, Paul mentioned the cup first; then the bread. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" Why did Paul speak of the cup first? Simply because there is nothing more important than the blood of Christ, for it is through His blood that men are saved. We are told in 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." In Hebrews 9:22 God says, "without shedding of blood is no remission." Were it not for the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross, there would be no salvation for any of us.

Many preachers have nothing to say about the blood of Christ, but God's Word has much to say about it. In Exodus 12:13 we read, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." God did not say, "When I see your good works," or "When I see your repentance, your church-going," or anything else; but "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." In this Old Testament passage it was the blood of the lamb, prefiguring the blood of Christ, that God saw. There was no judgment where the blood was sprinkled.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that it was necessary not only for the blood to be shed; it had to be "sprinkled," or appropriated. When there is "faith in His blood," according to Romans 3:25, then the believer realizes that the judgment that should have fallen upon him has fallen upon Christ. Thus Christ's blood was shed for our redemption. Salvation is through Christ and Him only. It is not by our good deeds, our good intentions, or any other way. It is through Christ.

Not what these hands have done  
Can save this guilty soul;  
Not what this toiling flesh has borne  
Can make my spirit whole.

Nor what I feel or do  
Can give me peace with God;  
Not all my prayers, my sighs, my tears,  
Can bear my awful load.

Thy work alone, O Christ,  
Can ease this weight of sin;  
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God,  
Can give me peace within.

Yes, the way to God is the blood-sprinkled way, the way of the cross where the blood of Christ was shed for your sin and mine.

There is something else that comes to mind as I think of Paul's words regarding "the cup . . . of the blood of Christ." As has already been stated, in verse 14 the apostle begged the Corinthians to "flee from idolatry." After speaking about idolatry, his next thought was the Lord's table and the cup representing the blood of Christ. Do you see the connection? Are there not many who come to the Lord's table guilty of committing the sin of idolatry, feeling that in the partaking of the elements there is special merit even though their hearts are black with sin? It is possible to make the Lord's table a kind of fetish whereby our worship culminates in the partaking of the elements.

The bread and wine are mere symbols to remind us of Christ's body that was broken and His blood that was shed, that we might believe on Him. Unless one has experienced a personal encounter with Christ and has come to know Him as Saviour and Lord, it is a great mistake for that one to partake of the elements of the communion table. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 11:29, in speaking of the Lord's Supper, Paul said, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." For one to partake of the elements when his heart is not right with God results in judgment. We need to realize the serious responsibility of coming to the communion table.

Doubtless there are many in our churches guilty of the sin of idolatry simply because they are partaking of the elements of the body and blood of Christ without ever having been born again. Consider Hebrews 10:28-29 in the light of this: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Can it not be said that one who partakes of the blood of Christ without experiencing conversion is actually treading "under foot the Son of God" and counting the blood of Christ as "an unholy thing"? Throughout the Bible, God places great value on the blood of His Son. In 1 Peter 1:19 the blood of Christ is declared to be "precious blood." Indeed, it is. Robert Lowry, the hymn writer, expressed it well when he wrote the chorus of his great hymn:

Oh, precious is the flow  
That makes me white as snow;  
No other fount I know,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

The question I should like to ask you is, have you been made white through the blood of Christ? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus as your Sin-bearer, realizing that the blood He shed on the cross was shed for you, that you might have eternal life? If not, I trust that you will bow your head now and invite Him to come into your heart, realizing that He has paid the entire price for your sin.

The apostle continued: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Notice this word "communion" which is used twice in this verse. One translator renders it "a joint participation," another, "a sharing together." The word means *partnership*.

The Lord's table portrays the marvelous truth that we are one with Christ.

"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." The oneness we possess in Christ should be experienced not only at the communion table but at all times. It is the communion table that reminds us of our oneness in Christ. There is no room for idol worship in our fellowship with the Saviour. Christians are expected to separate themselves from anything that defiles their testimony for Christ. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). In 1 Peter 2:11: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." If the believer is to be effective and useful for God, there must not be any compromise with anything that dishonors the Lord. For, as Paul said, we are "one bread, and one body." We belong to the Lord. We are His, not to continue in sin, but to permit Him to live through us.

In Romans 12:21 God says, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." No man can be saved by his own goodness. But after he is saved, the goodness of God should be manifested in and through him. In Romans 13:14 we read, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." The believer should be a new man, and this fact should be proved by a new life. If the new life is not evident, something is wrong. Obviously, he was exposed to the gospel but he was not really born again.

A certain university was having a special celebration for fathers' day. Many fathers came from far and near. One of the fathers was introduced to the professor of algebra.

"I am delighted to meet you," he said. "My son took algebra from you last year, you know."

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied the professor, "to be really correct, I must say he was exposed to it, but he did not take it."

Can we not say the same about some who say they are Christians? Their manner of life evidences the fact that they were exposed to the gospel of Christ but they did not take it. We are "partakers of that one bread." "Partakers" means more than sharing; it embodies the thought of possession. As partakers, we belong to Christ, no longer to live as we may choose, but only as He chooses.

There is still another thought to be considered. Paul wrote, "For we being many are one bread, and one body." In the same manner in which believers are one with Christ, they are also one with each other. You would never know it as you look at some of our churches today. It is difficult to understand how believers who claim to be one with Christ are so divided among themselves. Are these people really Christians? They say they are, but what does God say? "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now" (1 John 2:9). The body of Jesus Christ was broken and the blood was shed that you and I who believe in Him might be made one in Him. Do not hinder your prayer life. Do not endanger your testimony by having any part of a division among believers.

Perhaps some of you are saying, "You don't know what I have been through. You don't realize what others have done to me." That may be true. But this I do know: the Lord Jesus said in Luke 6:27-28, "I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." There is nothing here about retaliation. There is nothing written in this text about division. Just the opposite; the love of God is to be manifested through those who have received Christ

I heard one time of a mother who had been sick for two years before she died. Jean was the eldest of six children, and several mornings each week she would be up at five o'clock to help her mother before leaving for her work. She set aside many evenings for the housework her mother was not able to do. Jean was getting so thin that several of her friends were anxious about her.

"You can't keep on working as you have been, Jean," one of them said. "Your health will break down."

"I don't think it will," she answered, "but thank you for being concerned about me. I love helping my mother all I can. And you know, things are not hard when you do them for love's sake."

How true that is, "Things are not hard when you do them for love's sake." We read in 1 John 4:19, "We love Him, because He first loved us." Love began in the heart of God for each of us. We knew nothing of love until we experienced Calvary's love. Have you experienced Calvary's love? Do you know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and Sin-bearer? If so, then you should have some understanding of the love of God. God's love provides no room for hatred, jealousy, and unkindness. Believers are one body in Christ. Thus we should stand together for the cause of Christ. We are partakers of Him, sharers together of His glory. Anything other than this is not of Christ, but of the wicked one. Maybe you have been a part of strife or division. Turn to the Lord immediately and tell him you are sorry. Claim His forgiveness. Go to those you have offended. Bury your pride. Realize that "we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

Turning to the subject of idol worship again, Paul said, "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" The priests partook of the sacrifices, but this was not idol worship, for these animals had been sacrificed for God. "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any

thing?" The question that disturbed the Corinthians was, could they eat meat which had been offered to idols? It was not so much the act as the intention of the act that might be misunderstood. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." There was a moral issue involved in eating the meat that had been offered to demons.

Paul presented a clear-cut call for separated living: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." How we need to take these words to heart in our day when so few seem to be taking a clear-cut stand for Christ. When it comes to worldliness and worldly pleasures, there is no question about what the Bible teaches. In James 4:4 the apostle asks, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" Then he adds, "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Many there are professing the name of Christ who give no attention whatsoever to this important text. Their lives prove it. They name Christ but they follow the ways of the devil. Paul declared, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." You cannot approach the Lord's table, giving evidence of your having experienced the new birth, and then go out and partake of the devil's pleasures. That is, you cannot do this and still be a Christian. You may do it and be a hypocrite, but you cannot please God.

There are many questionable things that confront the believer in our day. How can one really know whether these are wrong? By asking six positive questions regarding any of them the matter can be settled very quickly.

1—Will it bring glory to God? In 1 Corinthians 10:31 we read, "whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." If the chief end of man is to glorify God, then anything that might affect this end adversely should be laid aside.

2—Is it profitable? I must not ask, Will it hurt me? but

rather, Will it help me in my Christian life as a witness for Christ? Paul says, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 10:23).

3—Will it edify? Will it strengthen me in Christian character, and will it enable me to help build up the Body of Christ? According to 2 Corinthians 10:8, the believer's interests should be "for edification, and not for your destruction."

4—Will it tend to enslave me? "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). Even good things may become idols, mastering our lives. They can so demand our attention that we ignore the things of greater importance.

5—Will it strengthen me against temptation? It is of little avail for us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," if we voluntarily go where we will be exposed to temptation. Any place or practice which tends to make sin appear less sinful is to be ignored.

6—Is it characteristic of the world or of the Father? God says in 1 John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." If the proposed course of action is more characteristic of the world, then it is clear as to what we should do, for "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

All of us would do well to examine some of our present practices in the light of these six questions, that we might not be guilty of trying to serve God and mammon. "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" (Matthew 6:24).

Though the Bible declares that "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," many are trying to do it. What happens when one tries to serve God and mammon, or drink of the Lord's cup and the cup of devils? He provokes God to jealousy. Paul

asked, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?" We are the Lord's possession. God has reason to be jealous of us when we run with the devil. What would you think of a married woman going here and there with a man other than her husband? Would her husband be concerned? If he had any love in his heart, he certainly would be. God is the same. He is desirous that those of us who belong to Him live wholly for Him.

Possibly you have been trying to hold on to God with one hand and to the world with the other. Why not make a clean break for Christ? The most miserable people in the world are worldly-minded Christians. They are too worldly to enjoy the blessings of God, and because they are Christians they miss much of the pleasure the unsaved have in sin. Of course, sin's pleasures are temporary, soon they will end. The joy of the Lord is continuous. Thus let me urge you to commit your life fully to Christ. If you know Him as your Saviour, let Him have full possession of all that you are and have. Claim Him as the Lord of your life. For remember, "ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils

## THE EFFECTUAL LIFE

*1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1*

"**ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL** for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." The apostle continued his instruction concerning the eating of meat offered to idols. He emphasized that though we might partake of such meat without any real harm to ourselves, we must constantly think of those around us. Though

we have liberty in Christ and everything is allowable, yet some things are not profitable because they might injure the conscience of the weaker brother.

We are not legalists bound by a long list of "Do nots." On the other hand this does not mean that we are free from restraints. If something is good and harmless to us, we must always consider the effect it will have on others. Thus Paul wrote, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." "Own" as used here refers to one's personal interest or advantage. The believer must not consider things in respect to personal advantage. Rather at all times he must be mindful of others and their welfare.

All of us are familiar with the fact that one of man's chief sins is that of selfishness. The devil knows this too, and often uses this evil as an inroad into our hearts. Many centuries ago Satan said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2:4). Most men will not give all they possess for the lives of others, but readily they will for their own lives, because innately they are selfish. Only Jesus Christ can help us to overcome this sin. At the same time, there must be a willingness to permit Him to do so.

The fact that the gospel has been available for two thousand years and that multitudes have never yet heard the name of Jesus tells me that we who name His Name are selfish. Is it not pathetic that in a very definite sense the communists have outshone us in the art of selflessness? Our country is in a mad race with the communists to gain leadership in the world of science. Some authorities have declared that the communists are far ahead of us. This is debatable. But one thing is not debatable: the communists are years ahead of Christians in the propagation of what they believe. All over the world they are outpreaching us, outsacrificing us, outworking us, outplanning us, outpropagandizing us, and outdying us in order to gain their ends. The communists are a long way ahead of us in the business of winning converts. Even if Christians were to awaken right now and decide to

mean business for God, we would still be a long time catching up to the communists in the business of spreading the message we believe to be truth. Do you know why? So many of us who name the name of Christ have been guilty of seeking our own advantage rather than the welfare of others. We have lived for self. With our money and our time we have catered to dying flesh.

Let me ask you, have you experienced Calvary's love? You say you have? What did Paul say about this love in 1 Corinthians 13:5? It "seeketh not her own." Calvary's love is concerned about others. The Lord Jesus proved this when He died for others. Oh, believer in Christ, let the Holy Spirit fill your heart with a new love for the perishing millions that need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, we have liberty in the Christian faith; we have the liberty to sit still and do nothing. Though this is allowable in God's economy of grace, it is neither profitable nor plausible. The Lord Jesus did not save us merely to be comfortable or to live for self, He saved us that we might be usable. In Philippians 2:4 He says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

In the third chapter of the book of Acts there is a very familiar story. We see Peter walking up the steps of the temple where a lame man had been carried in order to beg. Who the man was or where he came from we do not know. He was a familiar figure of his day, a picture of poverty and rags, hunger and despair, holding out his long, bony hand for alms. Seeing Peter approaching him, the beggar probably thought, "Surely this man will be kind enough to help." Peter was more than kind, for though he had no money he had what the man needed most—the healing touch. Hear his words, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).

Keep this picture in mind as we bring it forth through the centuries down to our present day and consider it in the light

of your own church. There is not only one needy beggar but millions of them outside your church door, representing the greatest need in the world today. Physical bread is not the most needed; it is the spiritual bread, the Bread of Life. The perishing millions need to hear about Jesus Christ who loves them and desires to give them eternal life. Some of them are very close to your doorstep. Some are separated by only several hours in a jet. Distance does not alleviate their need.

Few of us could honestly say today, "Silver and gold have I none." But even if we could, how many of us would be willing to say, "Such as I have give I thee"? It would seem from our failure in world-wide evangelization that most Christians have said, "Such as I have I will spend on myself." God will not force us to carry the gospel to the lost. He has commanded us and commissioned us to go into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature, but His ministry is one of grace, not coercion. Thus He will permit us to die in our materialism, but such a life will not be profitable, it will not be expedient, for we have not been called to live for self but for others. Oh, hear Paul's message! Arise from your lethargy! Sacrifice for Christ and for those for whom He died.

Now going further in his teaching regarding meat that had been offered to idols, the Apostle Paul said, "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake." Christians should not cause trouble but avoid it if at all possible. When the Corinthian believers went to the market place to buy meat, they were not to ask, "Has this meat been offered to idols?" For what did it matter? It was meat, was it not, God's meat that He had created? "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

The same procedure was to be followed by Christians who were invited into the homes of unbelievers for a meal. They were not to be "picky" or cantankerous, asking whether the meat had been offered to idols. "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake."

They were to thank the Lord for the food and proceed to eat. Suppose the meat had been offered to idols originally; if this was unknown to the believer, there was no harm done, for his conscience was clear in the matter.

If the Christian were told that the meat had been offered to idols, then the situation was changed completely. "But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" It is not the believer's conscience that is affected here but that of the unbeliever. If the Christian were to partake of meat offered to idols, then the unbeliever might conclude that the Lord Jehovah was just one of the gods, that the Christian believed in honoring all gods. Paul realized the dangers of such a practice, thus he warned the Corinthian believers to have nothing to do with such meat under these circumstances.

I have heard Christians say on occasion, "I don't care what people think about me." Child of God, we must care, for the other person is our care. We are obligated to think of others. Paul said, "Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" At no time must the child of God put himself in such a predicament that the conscience of the unbeliever would be offended. What our Lord said in Matthew 5:16 about letting "your light so shine before men" is not without purpose and meaning. We are to live for the Lord wherever we are, in the home, in the office, on the highway, in the school, or any other place. This we should do because we never know who is watching. The Christian should always live with the thought in mind that he is under careful scrutiny by the eyes of others.

On one occasion when I drove into a service station to buy gas for my car I was reminded of this fact in an unusual way. Attached to my license plate I had a small emblem with

the word "Clergy" on it. As the gasoline was being pumped into my car, the attendant, noticing the clergy sign asked, "What kind of clergyman are you?" Of course, what he wanted to know was my church affiliation. But as I drove away from that gasoline station I thought of that question and I began to ask myself, what kind of clergyman am I? I was thinking not of my affiliation with a church but rather with God. Was my life one that was drawing people to the Saviour or was it turning them away from Him? I did not have in mind my preaching, but my life.

We might even become more general with this question and ask, what kind of Christian are you? Every Christian is obligated to live not for himself but for the Lord.

One time Dr. George Washington Gladden was being introduced to various people attending a gathering in Columbus, Ohio. One of those, not knowing Dr. Gladden, asked, "Doctor, where do you practice?" Very quickly he replied, "I don't practice, I preach."

I wonder if it could be said about some of us that we do not practice but we preach. To convince the unsaved of the reality of Christ we must do more than preach; we must practice. Unless we become practitioners for God, what we preach will have little meaning. Paul tells us in Titus 2:11-13: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." This is a high calling. Those who say "Yes" to God are compelled to say "No" to many things. We must say "No" to ungodliness and worldly lusts if we are to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. It costs nothing to *become* a Christian, but it costs much to *be* a Christian. Someone has said, "Since seeing is believing, what do my friends and neighbors believe about the reality of my profession?" It is important that we care what other people think,

for every believer is obligated to his neighbor to manifest the glory and the holiness of Christ.

For many years David Livingstone offered the following prayer every morning, "Oh God, help me to resemble Jesus Christ." After his death, when Dean Stanley went into the heart of Africa, seeking as best he could to examine the natives as to their understanding of the Christian faith, he asked them to describe Jesus Christ. They said in a hesitant way, "We are not sure that we can describe Him, but we think He must be like David Livingstone." What greater testimony to a man's life and character could be given than that?

Let us be sure that we do not wound the conscience of those who observe us, for Christian liberty must never jeopardize the hopes of the unbeliever. It might be well for all of us to look into our own hearts in the light of the glory of God's perfection and see if there is anything turning our neighbor from the Saviour because of our failures.

Let the Holy Spirit deal with your heart. Be willing to forsake anything that might hinder the work of God.

Regarding meat that had been offered to idols, Paul asked, "For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" As Christians we have liberty. If we do things we feel are right, such as the giving of thanks for meat, what difference does it make if it had been offered to idols? Paul answered his question: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This is a most important verse, for it provides the answer to so many questions bearing on the Christian life.

So often the question is asked, "Will this be harmful to me as a Christian?" Actually what we should ask is, "Will this help me to grow in grace as a Christian?" This is the test we should apply to every practice. Things can best help us when they glorify God. Thus Paul said, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Christians should abstain from those things which appear questionable. Everything should glorify our Saviour

and Lord. The question is not how far can I go and still be a Christian; it is how may I best glorify God? Such an approach will provide an answer for many of our problems having to do with the Christian life and practice. When we do the things that glorify God, we may be sure that we are pleasing Him. This is the best test I know to apply to anything questionable—does it really glorify God?

Little Billy and his teammates were utterly disappointed at losing a game of basketball to a team guilty of resorting to unnecessary roughness. He went home and said to his mother, "God was on the side of the bad boys and they won. We decided in the game to try hard and not to cheat or say bad words, but every fellow on the other side used profanity and cheated and they won." When Billy's father came home, mother related the case to him. He thought about it carefully.

"Well, my boy, I hear you won today," he said cheerfully to Billy.

"Then you heard wrong, because we didn't," Billy replied.

"Oh, but I heard there were two contests. Which did you lose?"

"I don't know what you mean," replied Billy.

"You lost the game, but you won the big, important thing. You conquered all the anger, unfairness, and bad language. Congratulations, my boy, you won and I'm proud of you."

"Why, that's so, Dad," said Billy joyfully, "I didn't see that. And God was on our side after all, wasn't He?"

Yes, God is always on the side of those who attempt to exalt and magnify Him. We have been saved to glorify God. For this reason the Apostle Paul said in Acts 24:16, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." We are not to live for ourselves, we are to live for Christ and exalt Him in whatsoever we do.

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." Here are the three classes of people in the world today: Jews, unbelievers, and true

Christians. The Christian is not to offend any of these in any way. But someone asks, is it possible for a man or a woman to live without offending others? I am quite certain that it is not. Even the Lord Jesus Christ offended some when He was on this earth. Actually, the word "offence," as it is used here, has a meaning other than the usual. The idea Paul sought to convey is, do not cause others to stumble by inconsistencies in your own life. Thus we must keep on guard before those who know the Lord as well as those who do not know Him.

Paul added the third group, the Jews, because there were so many of them forsaking Judaism at Corinth to become members of the Body of Christ. Thus before all men we are obligated to glorify the Saviour. In his attempt to do this, Paul declared, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." He sought to please others, even though in doing so he was misunderstood on occasion. In pleasing others, of course, he did not at any time sacrifice Christian principles, but where possible he sought to please all men in all things. This he did for the unsaved, "that they may be saved." In other words, Paul did not always use his Christian liberty. He guarded his lips and his actions carefully, that he might not appear displeasing to the unsaved, having their soul's salvation at heart.

This is the price for witnessing which many Christians are not paying today. Peter put it this way in 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Peter realized that the first step in his witnessing was to give the Lord the supremacy in his heart. Paul did the same. As the Lord is given first place, we will not live for our own selfish interests. This is the only way we can bear an effective testimony to those around us.

Actually, verse 1 of chapter 11 belongs to chapter 10, "Be

ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." The word "followers" as used here is the word "imitator." Paul urged the Corinthians to imitate him to the extent that he imitated Christ. It was not easy for Paul to say this, for he had many critics. But notice he did not say, "Be imitators of me." That would have given rise to many questions on the part of the critics. Actually what he said was, "Wherein ye see me imitate Christ, in that same manner imitate me."

How important that we who are in the Saviour imitate Him in every way possible, that we might lead our loved ones, friends, and those about us in the way of the Lord. Is your life a challenge or a reproach for Christ? It is said of Enoch in Genesis 5:24 that he "walked with God." Be sure, if you are a believer, that you too are walking with Him. If you are not, ask Him to take full possession. Give Him the right of way. He wants to live through you, but you must be willing.

## SUBORDINATION OF WIVES

### *1 Corinthians 11:2-16*

IN CHAPTER ELEVEN Paul dealt with several other disturbing problems of the Corinthian church, such as the subordination of women to men and the Lord's Supper.

Before plunging into these two difficult and severe problems he put the people in a good frame of mind by praising them for their favorable response to his former teachings. "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." "Ordinances" as used here is really the word "traditions," referring to apostolic teachings in word and in writing. Many in the Corinthian church had great respect for the Apostle

Paul and were commendably responsive to his advice.

Having praised the Corinthians, the apostle proceeded to state an important principle that was to have direct bearing on the subject to be discussed. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." It should be kept in mind that the apostle was addressing Christians. Born-again believers are directly responsible to Jesus Christ for everything. Christ is the believer's Master. But you may ask, "Is this not true of the woman as well? Why does Paul say that the head of the woman is the man?" Most assuredly the woman is to give all due respect and honor to Christ. As in the case of the man, Christ is the Lord of the believing woman.

Paul was dealing, however, with a problem resulting from the woman's place in society. Thus he declared that "the head of the woman is the man." In her spiritual relationship to God, Christ is her head; but in her physical relationship to society, her husband is her head. Regarding her physical relationship, God said to the first woman, Eve, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16). It should be understood that this is not a place of inferiority, but of subjection, which teaching is found throughout the Scriptures. In fact, this is the main teaching of the passage we are now studying, that in her physical relationship the wife is to be subordinate to her husband.

Lest there be any misunderstanding as to what it means for a wife to be subordinate to her husband, Paul was quick to add that "the head of Christ is God." The woman's relationship to the man should be similar to Christ's relationship to God. Likewise, the husband's relationship to the woman should be like that of God to His Son. Christ respected the Father's will always. In the hour of deepest sorrow as He faced the cross, He prayed, "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). When it came time to offer up Himself for our sins on the cross, Paul described this

experience of Christ by saying, "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). In the same manner, the subordination of the wife to the husband should be grounded in love, with no trace of cruelty or selfishness on the part of the husband. The Christian husband should always treat his wife with all due consideration. Peter expressed it well when he said, "Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7). God's command, as found in the Scriptures to husbands, must never be forgotten: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). With this kind of love on the part of the husband, many of the problems now found in our homes would be nonexistent. Let me ask, what kind of love is your love for your wife? Is it the kind that seeks to understand her nature, her failures, her problems?

Every once in a while I hear a husband boasting of the fact that the Bible teaches that man is to be the head of the house and that the wife is to obey the husband. Usually the men who have the most to say regarding this know the least about the scriptural teaching on the subject. Certainly the wife is to obey the husband, but she is to be drawn to him as the husband was drawn to Christ. "He drew me with the cords of love, and thus He bound me to Him," the hymn writer declared. This should be the same experience in the marriage relationship. As the head of the wife, the husband is to be her protector, her provider, her intercessor. Christ gave Himself for the Church, "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26-27). Husbands should apply these words to themselves. From the way some husbands treat their wives, you would never know these verses are in the Bible. Some men seem to delight in magnifying their mate's shortcomings and blemishes. Christ died that He might

blot out the blemishes of the Church. This was the kind of love He exercised. This is the kind of love husbands should exercise toward their wives. Rather than adding to their weaknesses, Christian husbands are to cover them over with love. They are to use speech that will build up, not tear down; that will create greater love, rather than destroy; words that will cause others to understand that they respect their wives.

Consequently before Paul entered into the subject of the subordination of the wife to the husband, he would have us understand what believing husbands should be like. The wife should be subordinate to her husband under all circumstances, but the scriptural teaching is that the husband should be worthy of her subordination. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Here is the perfect foundation for a successful and happy marriage: Christ the Lord and possessor of the man, the wife in loving subjection to her husband's spiritual leadership, all in the same manner in which Christ is submissive to the will of the Father, and the Father exercises His love toward His Son. If these principles were established in our homes today, divorce would be unknown, sorrow would be banished, and the love of God would be manifested.

Paul then went into much detail as he faced the particular problem of willful insubordination on the part of some of the Christian women in the Corinthian church. We need to remind ourselves that Corinth was an extremely godless and immoral city. It is very difficult to live in such an environment and at the same time keep one's self free from the practices and habits of the ungodly. For centuries the veil worn by women had been a mark of dependence and submission to one's husband. But with many of the styles that appeared in Corinth, some of the women threw aside the veil and became more brazen, not only in their living but in their dress. This created quite a problem, for women who appeared on the streets without their veils were considered immoral. It was a

very serious thing for a woman in Paul's day to appear without a covering such as the veil over her head.

To add to the confusion of the Corinthian church, which seemed deluged with problems, some of the women began to appear in the congregation without their veils. Because of the liberty believers possessed in Christ, and since there was neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female in Christ, why should they be bound to tradition? Thus they laid aside their veils, which, of course, was the laying aside of the symbol of their submission to their husbands.

Paul faced the issue by saying, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head." The word "prophesying" used here is really the word for "preaching." Thus, if a man were to pray or preach with his hat on, he would bring dishonor to the most important member of his body, the head or the mind, through which he received the message from his real Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason it would be wrong for a man to cover his head. But, "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." If the woman were to do the same thing the man does, pray and preach with her head uncovered, she would bring dishonor to her head, that is not only to her head, but to the head of her family, her husband, as well as Christ. She would overstep the bounds of her subjection to her husband. Consequently, as important as it was to witness to Christ, her witness would be meaningless because of her failure to comply with the law of God to obey her husband.

Paul said further that, if the wife does not want to wear the veil, she might just as well go all the way and get her hair cut off, or even shave it off so she might look like a man. "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered." Many of the worldly women who had no respect for their husbands or the home, not only laid aside the veil

but were cutting their hair, giving them the appearance of men. Thus Paul argued, "Why stop halfway? If one desires to bring disrepute on the home and marriage, he might just as well go all the way."

Further, Paul emphasized the fact that it was wrong for a man to cover his head but scriptural for the woman to cover hers. "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man." When God announced the creation of man He said in Genesis 1:26, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." When it came time for the creation of woman, however, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and He took one of his ribs; and out of this rib He made woman. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23).

Man is the glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. And as Paul said, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Again the apostle was making it clear that the woman's place is one of subjection and subordination to the man. "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." The word "power" here is "authority." The veil on her head suggested her subjection to the authority of her husband. Paul's statement relative to the angels suggests that as the people of God worship, the angels are looking down upon them and the heavenly messengers are made glad as the Lord's people respect and honor the truth of God in worship. To cast aside the veil, or the covering, would be dishonoring in worship.

When one realizes how many men are failing in their responsibility of being God's spiritual leaders in the home, it is understandable why so many wives desire to side-step the important obligation of subordination. All of us know of so-called Christian husbands giving mere lip service to God,

while their wives are zealous and desirous of pleasing and honoring the Lord. It would seem that, if more Christian men would follow the Lord as they should, there would be no problem about their wives rendering loving obedience to them.

The story is told about the husband who was sitting in the den one evening reading a book entitled *The Wonders of Nature*. Suddenly he turned to his wife, who was sitting nearby.

"My dear, nature is marvelous. When I read a book like this it makes me think how pygmy, how insignificant is man."

"Huh," said his wife, "a woman doesn't have to wade through four hundred pages of a book to discover that!"

Many men are failing to set a godly example in the home. I plead with you to let God examine your heart. Are there things that irritate your wife? Are there sinful habits that cause constant friction? Oh, let the Lord have the place He desires in you, that you will be the kind of husband who will not demand respect, but deserve respect. Remember, you are created in the image and glory of God. You owe it to your wife and family to be like your Master, Jesus Christ, in every respect. Let Him have full possession of your life. Yield yourself afresh to His control.

Paul was quick to add that even though the wife is in subordination to her husband, there is a certain sense of equality between them. "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God." There is mutual responsibility to each other. Those who are "in the Lord" must respect this fact. Even though man has been ordained to be the head of the house, he must always fulfill his responsibility, humbly reminding himself that he was born of woman. Though there are mutual responsibilities between husband and wife, both are to give all due honor and deference to God, because all things come from God. These verses emphasize the extreme importance of having Christ in the home. There are so many homes today marked by misery and un-

happiness simply because Christ has not been respected as Lord of all.

In all the gallery of Biblical portraits, few people are more typical of modern man than Esau. He was likable and generous-hearted, a virile kind of a person who loved good food, enjoyed outdoor life, and was willing to do his share of work. Yet the Scriptures pass an unfavorable judgment upon him. God said of Esau in Malachi 1:3, "I hated Esau." And then again in Romans 9:13, "Esau have I hated." The question is, why? Hebrews 12:16 furnishes the answer, where we are told that Esau "for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Further in this verse Esau is termed a "profane person." The clue to Esau's character is found in the word "profane," which comes from two Greek words meaning "before" and "temple." The term was applied to the ground outside sacred enclosures, the unfenced area which might be trampled on by careless feet. A profane man is one who has nothing sacred about his life; there is no inner shrine, nothing which is regarded as holy. No protecting wall has been built around his character. His life is wide open to all the evil influences that may come surging in.

The Old Testament indicates that Esau became a profane man because he lived in a profane home. The love of Isaac and Rebekah began as a beautiful romance, but degenerated into sordidness and tragedy. The marriage which was entered into so hastily resulted in a divided family, with the father and older son on one side, the mother and the younger son on the other. There was no bond of love and loyalty which came from common obedience to the purposes of God. The father, controlled by his physical appetite, was unable to bless his son until he had enjoyed a particular food. The mother was a lying and deceitful woman who did not hesitate to take advantage of her husband's blindness to secure what she wanted for her favorite child. The home was a place of low ideals, selfish in its outlook, careless of moral values, and lacking in any central sanctity. Living in such an environment,

Esau became a profane man and one of his descendants was the unscrupulous Herod who killed the children of Bethlehem.

But is it not true that many of our present-day homes are no better than Esau's? Thousands of young people are being reared in homes where Christ is unknown and disregarded as the Lord of all. Until the home is put in order, how can we expect to rear children properly in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? How can we produce any more than atheists and ungodly young people who have no regard for the truth of the Scriptures?

That is why it is imperative for you as a parent to respect your God-given obligation to let Christ be the head of your home; for, never forget it, all that you have and all that you are has come from almighty God. James said in his Epistle, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17). Do not boast of your achievements. Do not glory in your treasures. All you have is because of the grace of God. As Paul said regarding everything, "all things of God."

In reminding women of the importance of covering their heads, Paul wrote: "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." Here Paul appeals to the natural sense of propriety and respect. It is only natural that a man have short hair and a woman long hair. Yet in this age in which we live, what do we find? Men trying to appear womanly and women trying to appear manly. Probably nothing is more abominable than either one of these. A womanly man or a manly woman is far from the standard God has set for men and women. Paul says that a woman's long hair is her glory. It is given to her as a covering, or more literally, as a natural veil. Why should you try to destroy this God-given favor? Thus we might conclude by saying that a woman's hair is the veil God has given to distinguish

her from man and to mark her respect or reverence to her husband. Her hair is her crown of glory and should be respected as such. She should not try to duplicate all the practices of worldly women, but seek to make her hair attractive for God, respecting the Word of God, realizing that her hair is her glory.

"But," said Paul, "if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." Concerning Christian practices, the apostle recognized that Christians do possess liberty in Christ. He was not willing to make an issue of the matter he had just discussed. But as far as laying aside the head covering by means of the veil, "we have no such custom." As far as he knew, none of the Christians in other churches were dispensing with the veil.

Paul indicated that this should not be a matter for division among the people of God. One must follow his conscience in the matter. This passage has caused many difficulties in our present-day churches. Some Christians feel that women must wear hats to every service for a covering of their heads. Others say a woman must never cut her hair. Still others cast aside this portion of Scripture altogether, saying that it was meant for another age and has no meaning for us today. We are dealing with the Word of God; we cannot treat it lightly. Doubtless the basic teaching of the passage must apply to all believers. The wife is to be in loving subjection to her husband, and the husband is to love the wife even as Christ also loved the Church. Further, Christians are not to be guided primarily by the fashions of the world but by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Christ is to be their Lord. Things are to be done not to please those around us but most of all to please God.

May I ask, is your life pleasing to God? Maybe you have been more concerned about your brother's practices and habits than about your own. Search your own heart in the light of the Holy Spirit. Let God have His perfect way in and through

you. And, if you do not know Christ as your Saviour and Lord, realize that He wants you as His own. Believe on Him now and confess Him as your Saviour from sin.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

*1 Corinthians 11:17-26*

THROUGHOUT 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 Paul dealt with the subject of the subordination of women to their husbands, stressing the use of the veil as an evidence of this fact. In the remaining verses of the chapter, the apostle treated another problem that had arisen in the church, that of the Lord's Supper.

"Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse." His approach here was the direct opposite from the one he used when facing the problem of subordination of women. As you may recall, at that time Paul praised the Corinthians for giving attention to his advice about some of their other problems. But at this point he seemed to be greatly disturbed. Doubtless it was because the Corinthians had carelessly abused one of the most sacred ordinances of the church, the Lord's Supper.

Paul reminded the believers at Corinth that they came together "not for the better, but for the worse." If the elements provided in the Lord's Supper are not received sincerely, with all gratitude and honor to God, they will be of no value. In fact, even worse, they will prove injurious. If one does not partake of the Lord's Supper in the manner in which God has outlined in His Word, he would be far better to refrain from receiving the elements at all.

Paul proceeded to state the problem: "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it." The feast that was instituted to draw the people of God together was being used in Corinth to create schism in the Body of Christ. The apostle said regarding the report that had come to him, "I partly believe it." That is, it seemed incredible to Paul; it was hard to receive. It appeared almost impossible that children of God, born of the Holy Spirit, would join together to partake of the Lord's Supper while divided among themselves. Nothing could be more unscriptural, for the Lord's Supper itself speaks of unity. How could there be blessing with so much disunity?

The major problem seemed to have resulted from the combining of the love feast with the Lord's Supper. Jude in his Epistle described the love feasts as "feasts of charity" (Jude 12). They were common among the early believers. But like most good things, they too were abused. Believers from all walks of life would gather together in these feasts, which were intended for fellowship as well as for praise to God. The difficulty that soon arose was the result of the various social positions represented in the feasts. Each one brought his own food. The wealthy brought much, but the poor could bring only little. Soon those who could bring much came only to eat and drink. They lost the spirit of the feast altogether. The wealthy grouped together, leaving the poor to themselves. The whole spirit and purpose of the love feast had been lost. Usually at the close of these feasts the Lord's Supper was observed. Those who partook of the love feast were in no position to gather about the Lord's table. They were divided in interest and purpose. Many who gathered to partake of the Lord's table were the victims of gluttony, drunkenness, and selfishness, having made no provision for the poor in their midst.

But what about us? As we gather in our fashionable churches for the blessing to be received in the Lord's Supper, are we guilty of approaching the Lord's table as did the Corinthians? What thought do we give to the poor in our midst?

What help do we render? Furthermore, do we have hatred within our hearts? In many instances our condition is not much different from the Corinthians. I have known churches where God's people gathered in an orderly fashion. All was reverent and honorable on the surface. The quiet music was perfect for the occasion. The worshipers were seated in their pews while God's servant broke the bread and offered the wine to them. But oh, their hearts, their lives; there was so little of love one for the other.

I have heard that Fidel Castro used, among many things in his overthrow of Dictator Baptista, a most deceptive kind of warfare. Castro had as his leading lieutenant and right-hand man a former Spanish revolutionary with a bag full of tricks. One of his strategies in his guerrilla warfare was to sally forth from his mountain hideout, locate two squads of government troops, and slip into the bushy no man's land between them. First, he would pour forth a volley of shots at one group; then turn and do the same to the other. After alternating this machine-gunning for a few moments, he had the two squads firing at each other, while he made his escape and chuckled because of what he had brought about.

This type of warfare is not new. Satan has been using it for many ages past. Christians all over the world are still being duped by this trick of the devil. What does Satan do? One of his most clever stratagems is to get Christians fighting one against the other. As long as he can keep them fighting one another, he keeps them from fighting him. Thus he gets Christians doing his work for him. That was something of the situation at Corinth. The Christians were fighting each other. For this Paul said, "I praise you not."

Further, the apostle declared, "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." The "approved" were the saints of sterling worth who did not follow along with the general run of the party spirit, resulting in division. These were the ones who stood true to God. Paul declared that it was through

the divisions among the people of the Lord that these trustworthy saints became even more distinguished. They were the ones who did their best to keep things moving on an even keel. They refused to be a part of the unkindness that was prevailing.

How we need these kinds of men and women in our churches today, who in the midst of division and disunity will stand true to Christ and will manifest the love of God. Consider our Lord's appeal as we find it in 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Here is an important test of your faith: do you love the brethren? Are you doing all that you can to draw the people of God closer together? If so, you too are one of the "approved" of whom Paul speaks, refusing to have a part in the "divisions among you." May the Lord keep your eyes fixed on Christ; for, you may be sure, as your gaze is focused on Him, His love will be evidenced through you.

Paul informed the Corinthians that their motive in gathering about the Lord's table was wrong: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper." In all probability had it not been for the love feast preceding the observance of the Lord's Supper, there were some who would not have come. They remained for the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine out of mere obligation.

The real reason many came to the Lord's Supper was to gratify their own fleshly lust. "For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken." Some ate greedily of the sumptuous provisions they had brought, while others were neglected and uncared for, having little of this world's goods. Paul told the gluttonous believers that they might just as well have stayed at home, for the Lord's Supper was without meaning to them. He became very stern in his rebuke. "What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and

shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." Doubtless there were carnal Christians in the congregation who were interested in taking only what the church had to give, but they gave very little.

This same form of carnality is so prevalent in our day, perhaps even more so than in Paul's. It is far easier to become a member of a church now than it was during the time of the Corinthians. Often people are taken into the membership without any real heart experience with Christ. No wonder we have so many problems in our churches. As long as our churches are cluttered with carnal Christians, we shall always have problems. Satan revels in seeing unsaved people get into the churches. He knows that they will be used to help wreck the testimony of God.

Actually we face about the same problem in the present-day church as Paul faced in his day. We announce a prayer meeting, we advertise it, and plead with people to come, but what are the results? Usually God's faithful few are there. But announce a supper of some kind (I do not mean a supper for the purpose of making money, but rather a fellowship supper), and my, how the people flock to feed their stomachs. Some say, "That is the way you get them there. Church suppers are a good means of making contacts." But I have not found too many converts as the result of church suppers.

Now please do not misunderstand me. I do not believe the Apostle Paul is condemning fellowship suppers in this passage. He is treating the abuse of the Lord's Supper because of combining the two. In the fourth century at one of the important councils the love feasts were disjoined from the Lord's Supper and forbidden ever after. Fellowship suppers were not forbidden, but the combining of the two was. Thus a supper among God's people may be used for the glory of the Saviour. But like anything else the Lord has given, it may be severely abused, as was the case in the early Church. As believers we must beware of the devil's tactics. Remember

he is out to destroy our testimony for Christ. He does this frequently by the abuses that come from divisions among the saints. It is a good policy never to permit yourself to become a part of a division, unless it is a division from sin. Do all you can to strengthen the testimony of your church. Do not be a stumbling block; be a builder.

It is pathetic that troubles can begin so easily in our churches. I heard one time of a Christian who was advancing the idea that pastoral preaching was wrong. In fact, he felt that the whole idea of church was a mistake. After one became a Christian, according to him, he should get out and win souls and not sit in church on Sunday. As an argument to prove his point, he used the example of the farmer who candles his eggs only once. He does not candle them every week. As soon as the eggs are candled they are crated and then shipped off to market. They are not brought out and candled every week.

Thus, according to this Christian, there ought not to be any more preaching to those who have believed the gospel. The argument sounded convincing, but there was a serious fallacy. Jesus did not say to Peter, "Candle my eggs"; He said, "Feed My sheep." Believers are not eggs to be candled; they are sheep to be fed with the Word of God. They need the preaching and teaching of the truth week after week.

Do you see how easy it is for Satan to move into a congregation and create division and disharmony? The brother I mentioned got a following. Others joined him in his belief. You can get a following for almost anything these days. But again I say, we need to keep close to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then there will be no divisions. The principle of Matthew 16:25 will become evident in our lives: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." We should be willing to lose our lives for Christ and each other. Then, to be sure, we shall find real life, life to the fullest extent.

Does the Lord Jesus Christ have complete control of you

at this moment? Is He the Lord of your life? Maybe you do not know Christ. Perhaps you have never been born again. You need the Saviour. You may be in a church, hindering the power of God in that church simply because your name is on the roll but your heart has never been transformed by the power of Christ. Why not enter into a heart experience with the Saviour? He loves you, He gave Himself for you, and wants to save you. But you must be willing to let Him do it. He died at Calvary for your sins. All you need do to be saved is to receive Christ into your heart.

Considering verses 23 through 26, we find the Apostle Paul giving one of the most complete accounts, to be found anywhere in the Bible, of the purpose of the Lord's Supper. Obviously Paul had a special revelation from Christ Himself regarding the Lord's table, for he wrote, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread."

In his attempt to correct the abuses of the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian church, Paul reminded the Corinthians of the sacredness of this observance. It was instituted the same night in which our Lord was betrayed. The observance of the Lord's Supper was born at the time of Christ's betrayal. Do you think there is any connection here with the problem existent in the Corinthian church? Is there not a sense in which their division at the Lord's table was a betrayal of Christ and His love? It seems obvious to me that it was.

Paul said, Christ "took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." Even in the midst of His betrayal, Christ gave thanks. As He stood in the shadow of the cross, He offered praise to God the Father. The bread represented his body. Think of it—giving thanks to the Father for a body that was to be crucified on a cross for fallen humanity! Oh, what grace, what mercy!

When Christ said, "Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you," it is obvious that the bread He offered was

not his actual body because He was still with them. The bread He gave the disciples represented His body. It was a symbol of His body. Notice, too, that before He offered this bread, "He brake it." Christ did the breaking. How prophetic this was of His own words found in John 10:18, "No man taketh it [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Christ did the breaking of His own body, according to the will of God. The cross was not an accident; it was a part of God's eternal plan. Had there been no cross, there would be no salvation for you and me.

"After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." The words, "when He had supped," refer to the love feast they had enjoyed prior to the institution of the Lord's Supper. Literally it might be read, "When the meal was over, He took the cup, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood." The cup was the new covenant, and Christ's shed blood was the pledge that all the blessings provided by Christ are received by faith.

Twice we are told in this passage that every time we partake of the elements in the Lord's Supper, we are to receive them "in remembrance" of Christ and His sacrifice for us. Thus let us understand that the Lord's Supper is not a memorial sacrifice wherein we offer the body and blood of Christ for sin time and time again. We do not partake of these elements to *remind* Him, but to *remember* Him.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." The word "shew" as used here is really the word "preach." One translator renders it "retell." In other words, every time we partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper, we are telling and retelling the truth that Christ died for our sins. The Lord's Supper reminds us of the fact that there is only one way of salvation, the way which was made possible through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since it is blasphemy for one to partake of the elements of the body and blood of Christ without ever having been born again, it might be well for you to examine your own heart. Have you had a personal experience with the Saviour? Can you say, I know I am saved, I am sure I have been born again? If not, give heed to three simple truths found in the Scriptures. First, you need to be saved. God says in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." This need is universal because sin is universal. All men are by nature sinners needing a Saviour. Secondly, salvation is free: Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Thirdly, consider the simplicity of salvation: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). To believe means to receive. To believe and to receive is to commit one's self entirely to the eternal keeping of the Saviour who redeems by His precious blood. I urge you to give due consideration to these facts which are found in the Word of God.

Have you believed on Christ? Are you a Christian? The proof is seen in a transformed life. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

I read recently of the conversion of the owner of a large grocery store. Shortly after, he put a full page advertisement in his local newspaper, part of which read: "As the result of my recent conversion . . . it is my desire to transact my business on thorough Christian principles. As of March 13, no beer will be sold at any of my business places." Indeed, scriptural salvation results in transformed living. Every time we partake of the Lord's Supper we should be reminded of this important fact.

But not only that; "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." The Lord's Supper assures us that Christ is coming back again. When He returns, there will not be any need to observe the

Lord's Supper any longer, for we shall have Him.

When I travel I usually carry a picture of my family. When I am home I rarely even think of the picture, for I have my wife and daughters in person. The Lord's table is like a picture in the sense that our Saviour is absent at the present time. Soon, however, He is coming back. Then we shall not need the picture any longer.

Marvelous promises pertaining to future things came from the lips of our Saviour while He was on this earth. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, He said, "I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7). Then He declared, "Upon this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). And before leaving this world He promised, "I will come again" (John 14:3). Three great promises, "I will send My Spirit"; "I will build My church"; "I will come again." The first has been fulfilled; the second is being fulfilled; and the third is yet to be fulfilled. Some seem to think because the third has not been fulfilled up to the present that it will never be fulfilled. If two of these wonderful promises given by our Lord have and are being fulfilled, you may be sure the third will not be overlooked.

It seems that the words of Matthew 24:30 will soon become a reality: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Praise God, the Lord is coming back. What a blessed hope this is! Living in a world torn asunder by strife, distressed by grief, and burdened with misery, how thrilling to know that the Lord will return to put all things in order, that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in Heaven. How do we know this? The Lord's Supper tells us so. Every time we partake of the elements, we are reminded not only of the death, burial, and resurrection of our wonderful Lord, but of the certainty of His soon return. Thus let us live, work, and watch in anticipation of His glorious appearing, that we might reign with Him forever in the joys of eternal life.

## SELF-EXAMINATION

*1 Corinthians 11:27-34*

PAUL STRESSED the importance of one's careful preparation in coming to the Lord's table. The communicant should give much thought to the state of his heart before partaking of the elements.

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." This word "unworthily" has oftentimes been misunderstood. There are those who feel that because they are not perfect, they are not worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper. If the receiving of the elements depended upon human worthiness, who of us would dare go near the Lord's table? We have "sinned, and come [far] short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "Unworthily," as used here, means "in an unworthy manner." Paul was dealing with the particular problems of gluttony and drunkenness. From our study of the previous verses, we have seen that the Corinthians had combined their love feasts with the Lord's Supper. These feasts degenerated to such a low level that people actually came to eat and to drink with but a passing interest in the observance of the communion service. Such an attitude of mind and heart was poor preparation to partake of the elements representing the broken body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. To turn from the levity of the feast to the solemnity of the Lord's table was definitely wrong.

When one comes to the communion service, he should do so with the desire that the Holy Spirit might be permitted to search out his heart revealing anything that might be hindering spiritual growth and progress in the Lord. There could be

no better preparation for the communion service than much time in the Word and prayer, permitting the Holy Spirit to deal with personal sin. Too many of us are like the Corinthians, rushing into the communion service with no advance thought or preparation. It is for this reason that Paul exhorted, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." It is God's will that all Christians participate in the communion service. But it is also His will that before they do so they examine themselves. To examine one's self is more than the recognition of personal sin; it is confessing it and putting it under the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Paul instructed further that, after the believer examines himself, he is to "eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Thus it is certain that the examination demands heart searching and confession to God. The communicant must be in fellowship with the Lord, for only then will he be in a position to partake of the elements. If he partakes without being rightfully prepared in heart and life, he will be guilty of doing so "unworthily."

With this in mind, someone may say, "Well, that being the case, I had better not partake of the elements. I might do so 'unworthily' and be in danger of judgment." No, that is not the solution; Christ has commanded that His followers come to the Lord's table, as He said, "This do in remembrance of Me." Thus, if one truly believes on Christ and refrains from partaking of the elements, he misses the promised blessing and grace that results from the communion service.

There are two evils that must be avoided: the absenting of one's self from the Lord's table, and the partaking of the elements unworthily. One is as bad as the other. Thus it all comes down to the fact that self-examination is a requisite for the believer; not only prior to the communion service, but frequently he should take time to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any traces of hatred, unholy desires, selfishness, unkindness, and the many other sins that plague the people of God.

It is so easy for what may appear to be a small sin to get a

hold on one's life. Oftentimes it is unnoticeable. But Satan uses it as a wedge to influence the believer to worse evil. Soon the believer's testimony is hampered. Lives that could otherwise be reached are neglected, so that unless there is daily heart examination, the believer may soon find himself a castaway. Thus Paul said, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Maybe you ought to have a time of self-examination as soon as possible. Could it be that your life has been ineffective? There was a time when God was using you to touch lives; but lately you have felt cold and indifferent toward spiritual things. You may have heart trouble, that is, spiritual heart trouble. The Holy Spirit is the doctor and the surgeon. When He operates, rarely does He use an anesthetic. He probes deeply as He goes to the root of the matter, but oh, it is so worth while. How needful that we pray as did David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). Unless the heart is clean, the hands will not be clean. Then, of course, our service for Christ will be totally ineffectual. Likewise, with unclean hearts our lips will be unclean; our words, even though spoken in the name of Christ, will be of little benefit.

Are we not touching on the secret of revival as we consider the need of clean hearts? God has said in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." We need to examine ourselves before God. Are you willing to submit to this self-examination? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything contrary to the will of God in your life. Then, after sin is revealed, confess it to the Lord. Get right with Him, that God might take you and use you as a Spirit-filled servant of Christ.

Why is it so serious to eat of the bread and drink of the cup "unworthily"? Paul answered this question: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." The word "damnation" here is really the word "judgment." This does not refer to the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the age when all the wicked will stand condemned before God. Rather, it has to do with God's present judgment on believers, which He gives in the form of chastening. In other words, if one should partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily, he would bring trouble upon himself. This is oftentimes serious trouble. The apostle continued, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Some there are of the people of God who, because of sin in the life, are weak and sickly in body. This sickness is in the form of judgment from God because of the failure on their part to denounce personal evil. In fact, Paul said "many sleep." That is, they even die because of their sin. It must be said that not all who die young are being judged for sin. There have been many sincere, godly saints who were taken to Heaven in their younger years. Thus let us not be quick to judge.

It has been said that the good die young. But it is true that the wicked die young, as well. The point the apostle was making was that, if one persists in partaking of the Lord's table with an unprepared heart, that is, with unconfessed sin in his life, he may be in danger of God's judgment in the form of sickness or even death.

Do not be misguided by the word "sleep" as used here. This is not soul sleep as some have erroneously stated; it is body sleep. This was one of Paul's favorite expressions as he spoke of the death of the believer, but it never referred to the soul. The apostle was very careful to make this distinction. When one dies in Christ the body goes back to dust to await the resurrection. This Paul referred to as "sleep." The soul, on the other hand, does not sleep at any time, for it goes to be with Christ immediately at death. This was Paul's earnest desire, as

expressed in Philippians 1:23, "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." In writing to the sorrowing believers at Thessalonica, Paul comforted them by saying, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). Paul assured the sorrowing saints that their loved ones in Christ who had died would be awakened out of the sleep of death at the rapture, in fact, that the "dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). There is not the slightest suggestion here that he was referring to the soul. The context is clear. It is the body he was speaking about, in the sleep of death, that will be raised to meet the soul that is already with the Lord, having gone into His presence instantaneously at the moment of death.

The apostle was emphasizing above all else at this point that it is a very dangerous thing for believers to continue on with unconfessed sin. Probably one of the most notable examples in Scripture is that of David. What misery he brought upon himself because he refused to give in to God. With sin in his heart he lived for an entire year under the judgment of God. Very briefly he described his days of sorrow and woe saying, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Psalm 32:3-4). Can you not sense something of the awful agony he endured as conveyed in these words? How foolish, when we realize that simply by going to his knees and confessing, he would have been forgiven. Finally David did this and God forgave him. In Psalm 32:5 we read, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Immediately David was back in fellowship with God, enjoying the Lord's blessing.

It is very possible that you are in the same sad state David was before he confessed his sin to God. You are all too familiar with the sin in your own life. Why not get right with the Lord at this moment? He is ready; He will forgive, for this is the promise of His Word. In Psalm 86:5 we read, "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee." Call upon Him and get everything straightened out. God will hear you and He will cleanse you from all sin. Then your life will be useful and effectual for Him.

Again Paul emphasized the need for self-judgment, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." How does one go about judging himself? What should be our standard of judgment? We cannot look to other Christians for our pattern. Such procedure is very dangerous because believers have varying standards of holiness and righteousness. Paul spoke of those comparing themselves by themselves and then he added that they "are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

The standard should be the Word of God. This should be our criterion for judgment. That is why it is so important that every believer take adequate time each day to search the Scriptures, for it is through the Word that the Holy Spirit speaks regarding personal sin. The Psalmist asked, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" He answered this question, "By taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Psalm 119:9). God's Word acts as a mirror to reveal our true selves. If we neglect the Word we are tempted to have a better estimation of ourselves than we should. It is the truth of the Word that brings us face to face with God. Thus, if one is to judge himself, he must be a man of God's Word.

God uses every measure possible to preserve His people from catastrophe. "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." "The world," meaning *the ungodly*, must ultimately suffer the eternal judgment of God. The true believer in Christ will

never be a part of that judgment, but he cannot escape the chastening of the Lord, which God uses to keep us from the course of the world.

But even chastening is not without the love of God, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6). While enduring chastening none of us can fully appreciate it. But afterwards we enter into the experience of "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" God speaks about in Hebrews 12:11. We find the trials of life to be so purposeful, frequently producing in us the righteousness of God which because of sin we had overlooked.

So often Christians have the wrong attitude in times of testing. Most of us feel that God is angry with us, that He is punishing us. But it is not so. In fact it is just the opposite. God is concerned about us and does not want to see us follow along in the paths of the ungodly. Rather, He wants us to enjoy His blessing and power.

A friend tells of her little twelve-year-old neighbor who lost her pocketbook. The loss was especially hard to bear as the purse contained three dollars of her own "earned" money. All efforts to find it failed, and little Susie went to bed that night in tears. The next morning a friend of the family asked her to come and stay with her small children. While she was there Susie helped clean the house and when the mother came home she gave Susie two dollars. Later in the day a neighbor needed her help and paid her another dollar, so that the loss of the previous day was soon made up. When she went to bed that night she remarked to her mother, "You know, Mother, yesterday I began to think God didn't like me very well; but today I guess He does after all."

How many of us, with a far greater number of years' experience behind us than little Susie's twelve, are prone to judge God's "liking" of us by the circumstances of the day or hour. God's attitude toward us never changes. He is love, always love, and can be nothing else but love. But, if we do not judge ourselves, He must judge us; and He does this by

means of chastening. Usually when He uses the rod it hurts; but it is effectual, and very often we are brought back into a happy relationship with Him. If we have wandered and strayed, having followed along in the course of the world, we usually get back on God's chosen paths which, of course, are the paths of blessed enjoyment.

Maybe you are in the midst of some deep trial. Perhaps God has been speaking to you. He has been speaking for some time, but you have been so far from Him that you have not heard His voice. Thus He found it necessary to speak more harshly, that you might hear and that most of all you might heed His voice. Maybe you say like some in the hour of trial, "Well, I have committed it all to the Lord." In 1 Peter 5:7 we read, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." That is all well and good. It is wonderful that you have cast your burden on the Lord, but it may be that you have overlooked something of importance. The verse I just quoted is only part of a sentence. Many Christians overlook the first part which reads, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." Along with the casting process is the humbling process. As I have said before, many of our trials are the result of our sins and our failure to judge our own hearts. Thus before we can cast our care on the Lord we must be willing to get right with God and to acknowledge the fact that we have sinned. We must humble ourselves in His sight. The humbling is the first step in unloading our burden of care.

More anxious care than we realize comes from pride; when we give up the desire to "save face" and to stand upon our own rights, some of the burden drops right away. It may be that we have been contending with God on some point. When we give up our own will and acquiesce to His, more of the care falls off. Heed the condition, humble yourself, cast your care on Him, and then comes the exaltation, the position of blessing and power. Let the Lord have His perfect way in your heart and life. Judge your own self, that you may escape

God's judgment which can be painful and severe.

Paul summed up what he had written in this chapter, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another." That is, consider each other. Let the Lord's table be a time of fellowship together in the name of Christ. "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation." Give all due respect to the purpose of the Lord's table. Let no one partake unworthily. Then Paul added, "the rest will I set in order when I come," that is, relative to some of the problems that had risen regarding the Lord's table.

Indeed, Paul has given us some very important admonitions here, probably the greatest being the essential of frequent heart examination. Maybe at this moment you need to go before God and let Him show you wherein you are failing Him, that you might be more usable. It is very possible too that you may not know the Saviour. It is essential that you go before God and say, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." You need Christ in your life. Take Him into your heart. He can provide lasting happiness. He can take away lust, a craving for alcohol, and others of the many evils of this world that bring suffering to so many. Let Christ have His way in your life.

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### *1 Corinthians 12:1-11*

WE COME TO ANOTHER very important chapter, which deals with spiritual gifts. This chapter is important because there are many in our day who seem to be as confused as the Corinthians were in regard to the gifts of the Spirit. Consequently we should do well to seek the Lord's guidance as we prayerfully examine the truths set forth.

The apostle began, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." The church at Corinth seemed to be plagued with about every problem known to any church. The question of spiritual gifts was no exception. Facing the difficulty realistically, Paul desired to clarify their misunderstandings on this subject.

First of all, the apostle reminded them of their past: "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." The majority of those in the Corinthian assembly had been influenced by idol worship at some time in the past. Idol worship was known for its strong emphasis on emotionalism with an almost complete disregard of reason. Keeping the Corinthian believers free from the influence of their past idolatry was a constant problem. Repeatedly the Apostle Paul sought to get them to face scriptural soundness while guarding against satanic delusions. His words "carried away" suggest the diabolical power of the wicked one who had blinded them to the extent that they willingly listened to the soothsayers and divines as they advocated their false worship.

Strongly influenced by their past, the Corinthian believers came to think that to believe on Christ and follow Him meant the complete rejection of anything that appealed to the reason or intellect. At the same time, it was thought that the fullness of the Spirit had to do with a wild, frenzied, aesthetic experience that gave no regard to wisdom or knowledge. Paul informed them that this may be the method of worship in bowing before "dumb idols," but it was certainly not God's plan for worshiping Him in the power of the Spirit.

Before listing the nine gifts of the Spirit, Paul pointed out several fundamentals regarding the Holy Spirit: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." There is a distinct line of demarcation between belief and unbelief. The true believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and one indwelt by

the Holy Spirit will never speak disrespectfully or disparagingly of Christ. One who has been born from above through the Holy Spirit will endeavor to be loyal to Christ and seek to glorify and honor Him. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus said, "He shall glorify Me" (John 16:14). This provides a clear-cut test for faith. Does one truly believe in Christ? If he does, his life will prove it. The indwelling Spirit will glorify Christ in a holy life. It is blasphemy for one to say he believes while continuing on in a life of sin. Does the Holy Spirit live in that kind of life? The answer is certain.

Further the Apostle Paul had a word to say about the lordship of Christ. Have you ever noticed how many times he speaks of Christ as Lord throughout his Epistles? The apostle knew well that, if he was to enjoy the fullness of the blessing and power of God, Christ had to be Lord of all. Such an experience was not achieved through mere human effort: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Only as the believer submits to the indwelling power and work of the Holy Spirit can he know Christ as Lord. In Ephesians 5:18 Paul said, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit. As we yield continually to the Spirit's control, Christ will become everything to us.

It is not by accident that before the apostle spoke specifically about spiritual gifts, he reminded his readers of the importance of being in a proper state to receive the gifts. It is for this reason that each one of us should ask, "Am I filled with the Holy Spirit?" Understand, you cannot be filled with the Spirit until you are empty of self or anything that might hinder the Spirit's control. Also realize that you cannot fill yourself with the Spirit. You cannot fill yourself, but you can yield yourself to the Spirit's control.

There are two requisites for the filling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus stated this in John 7:37, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst,

let him come unto Me, and drink." To thirst is to be empty. We must ask God to cleanse us from all sin. To drink is to receive or to believe. By faith we appropriate the gifts of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Christ made the procedure very simple. Nothing more need be added. It is useless to think about gifts of the Spirit until these requirements are met. For the gifts are a result of the fullness of the Spirit, not a requisite. No one can be filled with the Spirit of God unless he is willing to surrender everything to the Spirit's control. This is the price one must pay for the fullness of the power of God.

A well-known Scottish university professor was once asked to give a religious address at a fashionable and select club in the west end of London. This is how he began: "Gentlemen, the entrance fee into the kingdom of Heaven is *nothing*; the yearly subscription is *everything*." Indeed, this is well put. We can also say, if one desires the fullness of the Spirit, this likewise demands *everything*, full submission to the control and work of the Spirit of God. Would you receive the gifts God has for you? Then submit to the Spirit's control.

The apostle continued, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." Not all believers have the same gifts. All should have some gifts but not necessarily the same. But though the gifts are varied, there is only one Spirit.

As there is a variety of gifts, so there are divers "administrations, but the same Lord." This means that God uses the gifts in various manners through His people. Not all of us are called to perform the same service. But whatever the service may be, spiritual gifts are essential if Christ is to be the Lord of the life.

Further, "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." The "operations" spoken of here, have to do with the effect of Spirit-directed and -controlled service for God. As one permits the Holy Spirit to work through him in the exercising of the gifts, the results will be varied. But let it not be forgotten that it is the same Lord

even though the results of service among God's people may be widely different.

Why does God give gifts to His people? Certainly it is not that we might boast of our spiritual possessions through the Spirit. Paul made it clear that they are given to honor and glorify the Lord in effectual service: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Of course this is not primarily for the profit of the possessor of the gifts, but for the welfare of others, for the edification of the Body of Christ, and for the glory of God. No man filled and controlled by the Spirit will dwell upon his own wants and interests; his heart concern will be to let God work through his life to the benefit of needy souls about him.

The Rev. William K. Eddy, loved and revered in the villages and hamlets of southern Syria, has told of a thrilling experience under the guidance of the Spirit. Late one night, asleep in his home in Sidon, he was awakened suddenly by an unusual sound. He sat erect in bed. The room was dark and a heavy rain was falling outside. He heard a distinct voice saying, "Go to the house of Elder Najeeb in Mukdouski." Immediately he arose, dressed, went out into the storm, saddled his horse, and rode through the city streets and along the narrow mountain trails to the village where the elder lived. As he dismounted, the door was opened by the elder and his brother. They said to Mr. Eddy, "We were expecting you. Father is dying, and you know he has never come to Christ. We have been praying for you to come and lead him to the Saviour." Mr. Eddy spoke with the father about the way of life and prayed with him. Before long, the old man, with radiant face, went to his heavenly home a newborn babe in Christ.

How does one account for the fact that Mr. Eddy was directed to go to this man in the middle of the night and lead him to Christ? Paul answered this question for us: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

When one is walking with the Lord, living in the power of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling Spirit will prompt that one to exercise the God-given gift to the profit of destitute and needy souls.

Paul enumerated the gifts of the Spirit. The first of the nine gifts Paul mentioned is that of wisdom. How necessary is this gift. Most of us make so many foolish mistakes. We need to pray for the gift of wisdom. God desires to give this gift through His Spirit, but we must ask for it and be willing to receive it. We read in James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

A missionary tells of his experience of crossing a dangerous swamp in Africa some years ago. A native guide preceded him, and stepping from one clump of grass to another, the missionary and the guide made their way across the swamp. The missionary said, "Every clump looked alike to me, but repeatedly the guide warned me not to step on certain clumps of grass which seemed to be just as secure as those we were standing on. Through long experience he had learned which clumps were safe and rooted to solid ground, and which were merely floating clumps that would have sunk beneath our feet and permitted us to fall into the deadly quicksand."

The Holy Spirit is the believer's guide. Endowed with the gift of wisdom through the Spirit, the child of God will have discernment. Walking through the paths of life with their many pitfalls, he will know when to go and when to stop. He will know where to walk and where not to walk. The wisdom of God through the Holy Spirit will be used to direct his steps.

The second gift mentioned is knowledge. Obviously this has to do with a knowledge of the Word of God. In Psalm 119:130 we read, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." God has given some of His people the gift of knowledge of the Scriptures, but not without hard work. As we pray for this gift and study

God's Word, our hearts and minds will be saturated with the truth. Recall the condemnation Jesus made of the religionists of His day: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). Because they knew not the Scriptures they knew nothing of God's power. Knowing the Scriptures is imperative for every believer, but this is impossible apart from the supernatural power of God through the Holy Spirit. Knowing only the Scriptures without the power of God plagues us with the "letter that killeth." To know only the power of God without a knowledge of the Scriptures leads to fanaticism. One group has no fire, the other wild fire. There must be balance, and there can be balance through the Holy Spirit as we pray and seek the gift of knowledge.

The gift of faith, Paul said, is "by the same Spirit." This is another much needed gift. What accomplishments, what advances could be made if Christians were to receive and exercise the gift of faith through the Spirit. This, of course, is not saving faith but the faith that enables us to move mountains for God. This is the faith spoken of in 1 John 5:4: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." This is overcoming faith that can surmount the obstacles, the hardships, the difficulties that confront the believer in his daily walk. This gift will enable us to trust God for everything and doubt Him for nothing.

The fourth gift is the gift of healing. This is not some unusual or magical power possessed by a few, but it is a power intended for God's people through the Holy Spirit to help sick and suffering believers. We are to pray for one another and with one another in times of illness, that God will heal if it is His plan and will. How effectual is the man or woman filled with the Spirit who possesses the gift of healing.

Next Paul told of the gift of the working of miracles. Here is another important gift. How is the believer in Christ to accomplish the work of God? "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the **LORD** of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

We cannot perform miracles through mere human strength and power. As one is yielded to the control of the Spirit, that one should be seeing the "great and mighty things" spoken of by the Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 33:3).

The gift of prophecy is next in order. This need not be a foretelling but rather a forthtelling of the truth of God, that believers might be strengthened in the faith, and that the unsaved might be reached for Christ. How we thank God for His servants who have this gift of prophecy.

The seventh gift enumerated by Paul is the discerning of spirits, to distinguish the true from the false. Satan has deluded many carnal Christians into becoming easy marks for error. The Spirit-filled believer, possessing the gift of discernment, will be able to recognize heresy easily and quickly.

Then there is the gift of tongues, which was used by God to reach many with the gospel. When this gift was given on Pentecost, the yielded believers in the upper room "were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Curious observers from "every nation under heaven" listened as "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:5-6). The Holy Spirit gave these men of God a special manifestation of this gift, that unsaved men and women might hear the gospel in their own languages.

Some have placed a special emphasis on this gift, while it seems that they give little thought to the others Paul has listed. Still others have declared that speaking in tongues is a requisite for the filling of the Spirit. Why should we take one of these gifts and overemphasize it to the exclusion or neglect of the others? Paul placed the speaking of tongues at the bottom of the list. All the gifts are important, and we need to pray that God will endow us with these essential gifts for the work of the Lord.

There is just one more mentioned by the apostle, the interpretation of tongues. Other passages of Scripture would have us understand that, as one speaks in tongues in the as-

sembly of the people of God, there must also be someone present to interpret the message that has been spoken. If no interpreter is present, "let him keep silence in the church," Paul declared, "and let him speak to himself, and to God" (1 Corinthians 14:28).

The apostle continued, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." God is the giver of gifts, and they are given according to His will. Again we should be reminded that our hearts must be prepared to receive of the fullness of His Spirit and the gifts that accompany the Spirit's fullness. It might be well for us to pause to ask ourselves the question, "Am I filled with the Holy Spirit?" Every believer should be able to answer, "Yes." If there are any doubts about it, yield yourself fully to God's control, and by faith receive of the Spirit's fullness. Many Christians are weak and ineffective for God because of the lack of the power of the Holy Spirit.

In a Northfield conference some years ago, Dr. Wilbur Chapman and Dr. F. B. Meyer were walking together through the grounds.

"Dr. Meyer, what is the matter with me?" Dr. Chapman asked. "So many times I seem half empty and so utterly powerless."

Dr. Meyer turned and looked at him in a queer way, and putting his hand on Dr. Chapman's shoulder he asked, "Have you ever tried to breathe out three times without breathing in once?"

Dr. Chapman thought he was changing the subject rather quickly and wondered if this were some kind of new breathing exercise.

"I do not think I have," he replied.

"Well," said Dr. Meyer, "try it."

Dr. Chapman breathed out once, and then he breathed out again.

Noticing the struggle, Dr. Meyer asked, "Don't you know that you must always breathe in before you can breathe out,

and that your breathing out is in proportion to your breathing in?"

He left Dr. Chapman at that point, but God's servant said later, "I had my lesson, and knew that I had been trying to breathe out more than I had breathed in."

Spiritually, Christians are doing this all the time. They are trying to serve God; they are trying to read the Bible; they are trying to pray; breathing out but not breathing in. They are not receiving of the Spirit's fullness. With self-effort they are availing nothing. Oh, believer in Christ, breathe in of the Spirit's fullness. Receive this gift of God by faith. Be filled with the Spirit, and with His fullness ask God for these gifts that are so essential to fruitful service for Christ.

## THE ONENESS OF BELIEVERS

### *1 Corinthians 12:12-25*

NUMEROUS HAVE BEEN THE OCCASIONS when the subject of spiritual gifts has created division within the church, such as was the case at Corinth. But Paul indicated that this should never be.

Beginning with verse 12 and through until the end of chapter 12 the apostle emphasized the importance of unity among the believers and illustrated this from the unity of the human body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." The human body is composed of various muscles, bones, nerves, the circulatory system, and many other parts, yet all work together in harmony. Actions are controlled by one mind, and life is sustained by one

heart. There is perfect unity in the physical body. Paul declared, "So also is Christ." In the Body of Christ, Christ is the head, and every true believer is a member of His Body, so there ought to be perfect harmony in every relationship among the people of God.

Paul told how believers became members of the Body of Christ: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." This verse makes the fact indubitably clear that there is only one possible way to become a member of the Body of Christ, and that is through the work of the Holy Spirit: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." No amount of good works could ever justify sinful flesh, for the Lord Jesus declared in John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." Education, reformation, cultivation, or training of the old nature cannot produce salvation. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. Thus, the moment one believes on Christ, he is placed into the family of God by the Holy Spirit. The touch of God comes upon his soul. The power of the highest overshadows him, so that he is born, not of the flesh but of God.

The same Spirit that brought the Lord Jesus into the world must come into our lives, making us new creatures, effecting a new creation and providing us with a new nature so that we are made one with the eternal God. It is better for one not to have been born at all than never to have been born again.

The Apostle Paul declared that the moment one believes on Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, he is baptized by the Spirit. That is, he is placed into the Body of Christ. A union is established with the Saviour that can never be broken. We often hear the baptism of the Spirit described as some special experience believers should seek subsequent to the new birth. Converts are urged to "seek the baptism." First of all let me say, nowhere in the entire Bible are the people of God exhorted to "seek the baptism." Probably a better expression to use would be "the filling of the Spirit." In Ephesians 5:18 we

are explicitly told to "be filled with the Spirit." There can be many fillings but only one baptism, and that is the baptism that takes place at conversion when the believer is made one with Christ.

To be filled with the Spirit means to be controlled by the Spirit. Indeed, this is the experience every believer needs. If he is to know the power and blessing of God, he must live in the fullness of the Spirit. Each believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but not every believer is controlled by the Spirit. We must resign ourselves to His will, His guidance, His power. Probably there is no greater need in the Church of Christ today than that of believers to be possessed and controlled by the Holy Spirit. We have all the materials with which to work, but because we are not Spirit-controlled we lack the power.

I am told that the popular television program "Candid Camera" tried a unique experiment. As a practical joke a young lady at the wheel of a beautiful automobile was instructed to drive it down a hill and into a gas station and ask for an oil and water check. The car was deluxe and complete in every detail, with but one exception—it had no engine. The young lady coasted into the filling station, and when the attendant arrived she asked casually, "Please check my oil and water." Quickly he lifted the hood, and with a pause and a look of consternation on his face he exclaimed, "Madam, you ain't got no motor!"

That automobile had everything one could expect in an automobile but one thing—it had no power. Is this not a striking likeness to most of our churches today? We have attractive buildings, well-planned and arranged programs, and in many cases good music and good preaching, everything, but one exception—no power. Why? Because the people of God in the Body of Christ are not yielded to the control of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that I say that probably the greatest need in the Church of Christ today is for God's people to be filled with the Spirit.

But there is also another weakness in many of our churches and assemblies. You find scores of people who are lacking not only in the fullness of the Spirit; but they have never even been baptized by the Spirit. They are not members of the Body of Christ. They are members of their local churches, but they have never been joined in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit because they have not received Him as Saviour and Lord. This may be true of you. Are you willing to ask Jesus Christ to come into your life? There is no better time than now. You have waited too long already. Do not delay any longer. Let the Son of God become your Saviour and Lord as you say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart."

Those who believe are baptized into the Body of Christ. This experience is for all, "Jews or Gentiles, bond or free." All must come to God the same way and be saved in the same manner. After a man comes to Christ, we no longer think of him as a Jew or Gentile; he is a fellow believer in the Lord.

Well do I remember when a prominent Hebrew Christian visited us while I was serving a pastorate in Flushing, Long Island. Because of his zeal and witness for the Lord, I arranged with one of the Jewish missions in New York City to have him give his testimony in one of their services. We attended the meeting together and I was invited to introduce my friend. I spoke of him as a Hebrew Christian, saved by the grace of God. On the way home from the service he corrected me very kindly.

"Allen," he said, "please do not speak of me as a Hebrew Christian. I am now a brother in Christ, for in Him there is neither Jew nor Gentile." In the Lord Jesus Christ we lose our identity. It is no longer what we were but rather what we are in Christ.

The same is true regarding one's position in life. Paul spoke of the "bond and the free," that is, "servant and master." One may be obligated to work eight hours a day for his employer, taking orders and faithfully performing duties. But as the

employer and employee gather in the house of God for the breaking of bread, they are no longer employer and employee, they are brethren in Christ. The ground around the cross is always common ground. Masters and servants lose their identity at the foot of the cross. Together we worship the Lord in complete self-abasement, recognizing Christ as the Lord of all. We "have been all made to drink into one Spirit." We labor together for the Lord, each dependent upon the other, giving praise to our God in Christ.

In spite of this perfect bond and union we have with Christ and with each other, because of the flesh divisions arise from petty jealousy and selfishness. Forgetting our oneness in the Spirit, oftentimes there is enmity and strife. Revealing the ridiculousness of this evil, Paul argued again for the oneness of the body, "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" Paul's argument is quite clear. Imagine one's foot refusing to work because it was not a hand, or an ear refusing to function because it was not an eye. If the body were just one big eye, how could we hear? If it were just one big ear, how could we smell?

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him." Do not overlook that last phrase, "as it hath pleased Him." As it is not for any member of the human body to choose its function, in the same manner no believer has the right to choose what he will be or how he will serve God. The Lord places His people in the Body of Christ according to His will and plan. Few seem to realize this. The ineffectiveness of the Church in our day proves it. Many of us are not where God wants us, or doing what He wants us to do.

Moses, that wonderful Old Testament servant of God, has

given us a perfect example of Christian service. He went up into the mount to be with God alone for forty days. There the Lord gave Moses a pattern. He came down from the mount with his pattern and built the Tabernacle in God's way according to God's specifications. There was no waste of time, materials, energy, personnel, or anything else. The secret lay in the fact that before his service, he had waited upon God.

There are two special advantages in this procedure. First, when difficulties and problems arise later, one does not doubt the rightness of the past. There is an inner strength through the Holy Spirit that those who have waited on God possess when the trials come. Because of that quiet inward certainty, they are confident that they are in God's path. Secondly, those who have waited upon the Lord for His plan for service are utterly unscathed and unharmed by the opinions and criticism of others. When one has heard the voice of God, his ears are dull to the voices of men.

There is nothing more important for you or for me than to be where God wants us to be, doing what God wants us to do. The servant of Abraham put it wisely when he said, "I being in the way, the **LORD** led me" (Genesis 24:27). This is the place of blessing and fruitfulness. You will not be jealous of what others are doing. You will be concerned only about your own work, for you will know it is God's work for you.

Let me ask, are you in the place God wants you to be today? If you are, child of God, are you busy working for Him? He says in His Word in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Are you abounding in the work of the Lord, or have you permitted yourself to become so occupied with things that do not and will not count that you have overlooked the importance of serving God according to His will and plan? If you have deviated from God's desire for your life, pursue the old path no longer but begin immediately in His strength to honor Him and do His will.

Paul continued to speak of the unity of the human body

in its likeness to the Body of Christ: "And if they were all one member, where were the body?" It seems almost impossible for us to think of the body as being just one member, such as an eye, an ear, or a nose. It is equally incredible for us to think of a church as being just one person, and yet, in a sense this is not an impossibility. I have known churches which seemed to be run by one person, perhaps one who was very wealthy or influential. Everything had to go his way. This, of course, is not scriptural, nor is it practical. As Paul said, "But now are they many members, yet but one body." Though the body is composed of many parts, yet all the members work together in harmony. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Though we may be independent as individuals in the Body of Christ, never forget that at the same time we are interdependent. Every believer is important in the sight of God. Thus we should be equally important in each other's sight. Whether educated or uneducated, wealthy or poor, gifted or not gifted, each believer has an important place in the Body of Christ to perform his God-given task. This thought alone should banish criticism forever, for we are not to criticize our brothers in Christ. We are to be sure in our own hearts that we are fulfilling the plan and purpose of God for ourselves.

So often we know what the other person should be doing and we tell him so. God says in Philippians 2:14, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." Do not complain about your neighbor, but do your job as unto the Lord. If you do what you should do, you may be certain that God will reward you for it. Recall how the master rewarded his faithful servant who had gained five talents more than had been entrusted to him. "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

Some years ago there was a young fellow just out of high

school who could find no better job than water boy for a section gang on a railroad. But he resolved to be the best water boy that section gang ever had. He worked hard and was faithful. After a short while he was promoted to a much better job in the office. By the time he was grown and mature in years, he became an executive, and finally the president of the company which was one of the greatest railroad systems in the United States.

We may be sure that as men and women are rewarded for their diligence in business, God rewards His own who are faithful in doing His appointed tasks. You may not consider the job the Lord has given you to be very important, but He does, and you should. By the grace and strength He gives, you should do your very best. In due season, God will give you a greater responsibility. How often we have seen Christians trying to escape their service for the Lord. Many are willing to let somebody else do their job. Of course, in such cases someone else gets the blessing as well.

One time a wife said to her husband, "I am afraid our Junior is lazy. He persuades little Freddy to do all his work."

"That's not laziness," replied her husband, "that's executive ability."

Such may be executive ability in business, or other places, but usually it is laziness in the church. Rather than assume their personal labor for Christ, many are doing their best to shift the responsibility. This is tragic. No one in all of God's universe can do the work of God assigned to you as well as you. Never forget this! God has called you to do a specific job. You are a member of the Body of Christ. What you do is important, that the Body of Christ might continue to perform its entire purpose effectively.

Sometimes I hear people say, "There isn't very much I can do. I do not have many talents or gifts." Listen to what Paul said, "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we

bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked." Do not judge your work to be unimportant, for in God's eyes it is important. At the same time, do not lament the fact that you are not gifted as others. What you have, God gave you. He made you as you are.

Never was this so true as it is in the ministry. I have heard other preachers teach the Word in Bible conferences, and I have said to myself, "I wish I could teach the Word like that man." Then I have had to realize that I could never teach the Word as these others. God did not make me that way. He did not equip me with the gifts He has given them. But one thing is certain, I must use all that God has given me to teach the Word to the best of my ability, that I might be faithful in all things. This is true of all believers. God will accept nothing short of faithfulness. For we read in 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

In one of our pastorates we used to have a dear colored girl who came in once a week and helped my wife with the cleaning. She worked very slowly. In fact, sometimes it became disconcerting. She used to say, "Ah don't work very fast, but yo sho' can see where I'se been." She was absolutely correct. Several times we were tempted to let her go, but because she was so thorough and careful we were always encouraged to keep her on. Likewise, it might be said of some of us, we cannot produce like some of the others of God's people. But if we are faithful in doing the appointed task in a way that will honor and glorify Christ, there is nothing more important. You may not have many gifts, but you have some. Use what God has given you for His glory.

Paul gave the reason for believers to be faithful in service to the Lord's calling: "That there should be no schism in the

body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." When each believer is faithful to God, fulfilling his individual responsibility to God, you may be sure there will be harmony in the Lord. We shall labor together in love seeking in the guidance and power of the Spirit to fulfill God's chosen plan.

It may be that you are not one of the Lord's chosen ones, simply because you have never believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me urge you to trust in Him that you might be eternally saved.

## NO DIVISIONS

### *1 Corinthians 12:26-31*

PLEADING FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY, Paul pointed out that since every member of the human body is an essential part of the whole, so likewise in the Body of Christ every true believer has his work to do. For this reason we must labor faithfully as unto the Lord, working harmoniously with all the saints in Christ. This we must do, "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." Did you notice those words "no schism"? There is *never* any place for division among true believers. You may be certain that all division is satanical. How the enemy has deceived God's people! How many Bible-believing and Bible-teaching churches have been wrecked by divisions!

Not only does Paul say there must not be divisions in the church; he tells us how to prevent them. God's people must "have the same care one for another." We can do this only

as our hearts are filled with His love. There must be a daily application of God's abundant love to our own personal lives, that we may truly love each other. "Beloved, let us love one another," the Apostle John pleads (1 John 4:7).

Without God's love flooding our hearts, we shall say unkind things that hurt and injure other saints. Who could begin to estimate the damage caused by uncontrolled tongues? Our tongues are uncontrolled because our hearts are not filled with the love of God. Many of us are like the woman who came to the late Billy Sunday lamenting the fact that she had a bad temper.

"But," she said, "it is usually over in a minute." Billy Sunday looked at her thoughtfully.

"My dear lady," he replied, "so is a shotgun, but it blows everything to pieces."

Paul declared that "there should be no schism in the body." This task is too great for frail humans, but not for our Lord Jesus Christ. As we yield to His control and lordship, He will give us the love we need, that we may "have the same care one for another."

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." This verse suggests the practical outworking of the heart filled with the love of God. If a member of the Body of Christ stumbles or falls, immediately his Christian friends should pray for him, seeking to lift him up to get him re-established in the things of the Lord. At the same time, if a believer is exalted and blessed, those by his side will rejoice in victory with him. There is no room for jealousy in the Body of Christ. There is no jealousy if all Christians keep in mind one great truth: that we are laboring together in one body for one purpose and that to glorify our Head, Jesus Christ. Whatever we do in the service of our Lord is for Him, and we must never lose sight of the fact that it is His work, not ours.

One time a superintendent of a Sunday school in Canada

felt that he was not receiving sufficient cooperation from the parents, teachers, and officers of the school. In order to have the individual responsibility better realized by these friends, he assembled the entire school and started by asking very emphatically, "Whose Sunday school is this?" For a moment there was silence and then a tiny hand was raised. Leaning down to its little owner in the front seat the superintendent said smilingly, "All right, Mary, you tell us." The child raised her blue eyes and in a tone so soft that the superintendent had difficulty in hearing, said, "It's Jesus' Sunday school." The unexpected reply inspired the entire membership to a new spirit of consecration as the leader, parents, teachers, and officers recognized alike that they were coworkers with God in glorifying Christ.

There is a tendency among God's people to feel on occasion that what they are doing for God is their own work. If anyone offers criticism or advice, there are unkind words. And frequently out of this jealousies arise. Never forget that all we are doing is God's work. We are laboring to one end. Thus we must work shoulder to shoulder, unifying our efforts, pooling our resources, that Christ may be lifted up and that hearts may be won to Him. Thus Paul said, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Here is a paradox—one, yet many. God sees us as one great body—His Body, the true Church, with Jesus as the Head. Yet each one of us has his separate responsibility as an individual to perform the task God has outlined for him.

Someone tells of the old mantel clock: "Like the little tin soldier it was faithful and true. It stood on the same mantel and merrily ticktocked the seconds off when I was a little boy. Its face is now yellow and faded with age. Its hands are etched by rust. Its case is corroded and has lost all its original gleam and beauty. It is only an old alarm clock that for many years told us it was time to go to bed, and in the morning rang its warning that we had better hurry or we would be late. Just a clock, but for years it has been the meter

of our lives. It has never ticked the same second twice. It has ticktocked the ruthless march of time." This friend goes on to say, "Some day I must stand before my God and give an account for every minute marked off by the old clock." "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad [worthless]" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

What will be the nature of your account? Remember, we shall be examined as individual members even though we are one Body in Christ. The *motive* of the work done will be noted, for it must be done in His Name, as He has said: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mark 9:41). The method of work done will be considered: "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Timothy 2:5). To strive lawfully means it is to be done according to the pattern laid down in the Scriptures. The measure of the work done will be noted: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). There is no place for laziness, indifference, or slothfulness in the work of the Lord. Thus ours is a tremendous responsibility, believer in Christ. Are you being faithful to God? We are not to be eye-pleasers, working to satisfy men; we are to be obedient to God.

In 1 Corinthians 12:27 Paul stressed the fact that even though believers are members of one body each believer has his individual responsibility before God to serve the Lord faithfully. In order to fulfill our responsibilities in our service for the Lord, God has provided us with special gifts to do the work for which we are called. In verse 28 is a list of some of the gifts He has bestowed upon His people. This particular list is so arranged that the gifts are named in order of their importance to the Body of Christ.

At the top of the list we find apostles, the founders of the Church. Like the prophets who are mentioned next, the apostles continue to speak to us from the Word of God. Their admonitions will never be silenced, for as God says in Isaiah 40:8, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Skeptics and critics may question the Scriptures and thrust their fiery darts of unbelief against the unfathomable truths therein contained, but this Book will stand as will the Church, the Body of Christ. Even though the writers of the Bible and the founders of the Church have been silenced, their words and works continue according to the promise of God. Thus, in the face of the events of the day, true believers need not be alarmed. For the true Church can never be destroyed. Our foundation is secure, for the Church of Christ is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Next Paul listed teachers as being of supreme importance, after apostles and prophets. It would be impossible to overestimate the significance of this gift. Indeed, every pastor ought to be a teacher. God makes this clear in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where, in speaking of gifts, the apostle lists "pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). These are not two gifts, but one. Those whom God calls to be pastors, He also calls to be teachers, endowing them with the necessary gifts to build up His people in the Word.

The great tragedy in many pulpits today is that pastors are not exercising the gift of teaching. They are preaching but not teaching. Paul gave valuable advice to young Timothy when he wrote, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:1-2). Further in the fifth verse he wrote, "make full proof of thy ministry." No

pastor can ever make full proof of his ministry without exercising both gifts of pastor and teacher.

In one of his early pastorates, we are told, Dr. G. Campbell Morgan had an impressive experience. At the close of a Sunday message, as he sat alone in his study, the question came to him as clearly as though spoken by someone in the next room, "What are you going to be, a preacher or My messenger?" He went back over the evening sermon and was convinced that he was wanting to be known as a great preacher. For hours he sat pondering the question and praying. Finally he gave his answer, "Thy messenger, my Lord. If Thou will give me Thy words to speak, I will utter them from this day forward, adding nothing to them, taking nought away." From that time on G. Campbell Morgan began to teach the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. He became one of the greatest expositors and teachers of the Word of God ever to be heard. His books, unfolding the truth of the Scriptures, have blessed thousands of saints for several generations. Doctor Morgan had to make the decision in his heart to be not a pastor-preacher but a pastor-teacher.

It is not always easy to teach the Word of God. It is much easier to preach clever and interesting sermons that will tickle the ears and minds of the listeners. But to feed the flock on the Word demands long hours of study and preparation. Oftentimes ministers fail to establish proper study habits or to reserve necessary time to prepare themselves to teach the Word. On the other hand, some congregations will not give them the time they need because they force upon their pastors numerous details and responsibilities that could be handled by others. They leave little time for their pastors to prepare themselves to be teachers of God's Word. Someone has said, "The pastor's study hours are the gardens where he raises his fruit for the pulpit. No one has a right to keep habitually trampling and trespassing in this garden. These are important hours." It is sad but true that some churches make errand

boys out of their pastors who have been gifted to shepherd and to teach the flock. We need to realize that the ministry is a high calling.

I am quite sure if a man is called to the office of pastor and he ignores his responsibility of teaching his people, God will remove the gift of teaching and then he will be a helpless individual. But on the other hand, if a man will apply himself to the task, the Lord will increase his gift, so that he will become more and more effective for the glory of God. If you are a pastor, I beseech you to be faithful in the exercising of the gifts the Lord has entrusted to you. Make full proof of your ministry. Let God use you in the fullness of His power.

Next Paul wrote of the gift of "miracles." God enables some believers through His power to perform mighty miracles of grace. I believe that numerous Christians possess this gift but they have never really exercised it. What is the key that unlocks the door to miracles? Faith! God says in Matthew 17:20, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." What is faith? Faith is the assurance we have in Christ that what God has said in His Word is true and that God will act according to His Word. But how few of us are willing to trust the Lord for the great and mighty things He has promised in His Word. Ours is still a miracle-working God, but we are of such little faith. How we need to pray as did the apostles of old, "Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

"Then gifts of healings." It would seem, considering the attitude of some Christians, that this reads, "first gifts of healing." So much stress is placed upon the healing ministry on the part of some that it would seem that this is the only gift. Surely God can heal, but the Scriptures are full of examples to prove that it is not always the Lord's will that the believer be healed. The soul is of far greater importance than

the body. The apostle makes this clear in 1 Timothy 4:8 where he declares, "For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." That is why God precedes the gift of healing with apostles, prophets, teachers, and miracles, which all have to do primarily with the strengthening of the soul. Let us not suppose, as some do, that every case must be healed. The greatest missionary who ever lived went to his grave in an afflicted body. When he prayed for healing God answered his prayer but not with healing; the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Indeed, healing is an important gift, but it is not first in order of importance.

Further, the apostle listed "helps." What is this gift? Every pastor praises God for those who are thus gifted. These believers have no "special" abilities. They are humble saints of God who are willing to fit in wherever they can be of service to the Lord. I have known some in the ranks of believers who, if they could not serve God in a particular way, refused to serve Him at all. Likewise, all the circumstances had to be of a certain nature or they would not participate. Not so with those possessing the gift of helps. Often-times they come to the pastor and say, "I cannot teach. I cannot preach. I do not play a musical instrument. But if you can think of anything I can do, I shall be glad to do it." Here is the exercise of the gift of helps. How essential it is! God says in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." This is what those with the gift of helps do. They are on the job rain or shine, doing their best for their Master.

Another gift is that of "governments." This refers to the gift God bestows upon those called to oversee the work of our local churches. God raises up deacons and elders, endowing them with wisdom to guide the flock of God in the way of the Lord. Some officers act in name only, but others accept

their responsibility as a call from God and the Lord entrusts to them the gift of government in the house of God. The first deacons were "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). These are unquestionable evidences of one who possesses the gift of government.

Now notice the last mentioned gift, "diversities of tongues." One of the problems that had risen in the church at Corinth was the result of the gift of tongues. It was thought by some to be one of the most important of all gifts, but in this divine list, God has placed it last. The gift of tongues, when given on Pentecost, was a most necessary and practical gift. Jerusalem was crowded with visitors from all over the known world. When the Spirit of God fell upon that holy gathering of waiting saints, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). But notice, these were understandable tongues. Here were strangers of the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia and Judaea, in Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene; strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians. And what was the testimony? "We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11). The Lord endowed these humble saints with the gift of tongues that they might speak forth the gospel of truth so that it might be heard by every foreigner assembled in the crowded city of Jerusalem. Like many of God's gifts, it is often abused. Such was the case of tongues in the Corinthian church.

Paul restated the gifts in the form of questions. "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" The apostle declared that no one person possesses all the gifts. It is for this reason that we are dependent upon each other in the Body of Christ. This is a re-emphasis of the admonition previously stated, "That there

should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." How we need to heed this truth and then join hands and hearts together to do the work of the Lord.

Some years ago a little boy wandered out into the wheat fields and got lost. His parents and friends searched in many directions in vain. The next day practically every person in the little town came out to search for the lost boy. They formed one long line, joined hands, and marched through the fields, combing them carefully. It was not long until the child was found, but he was lifeless. One of the men, who discovered the body lying on the ground, with tears in his eyes cried out, "Oh that we had joined hands sooner." I am sure that you will agree that as we consider the church's failure in reaching the world for Christ you will say with me, "Oh, that we had joined hands sooner."

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." What is the more excellent way of which the apostle spoke? It is the way of love which he told about in the next chapter. Of what value is any gift without a heart filled with the love of God? Seek the best gift God has for you, but do not forget to open your heart to the fullness of His love, that your service may be effective and fruitful.

## THE GREATEST OF ALL

*1 Corinthians 13:1-13*

WE COME NOW to one of the most cherished chapters of the New Testament. Possibly this chapter has been memorized by more of God's people than any other chapter in the Bible, except the twenty-third Psalm. In concluding chapter

12, the apostle spoke about a "more excellent way." Then in painstaking detail he described this "more excellent way"—the way of love. Unfortunately, in our King James Version the word for "love" has been translated "charity."

The love spoken of here is not human love to be generated within the bounds of our sinful hearts. It is God's love, the gift of the Spirit received at conversion. Paul tells us in Romans 5:5, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This love is not worked up, but sent down from Heaven above.

It may appear surprising to some that the scholarly and austere Paul was chosen to write this unexcelled chapter on the theme of love. It might rather be expected that John, the apostle of love, should be the author. But let us not overlook the fact that the Apostle Paul was not only a man of great wisdom and eruditeness. Indeed, he was courageous and bold in defending the gospel, but at the same time he was tender-hearted, a man of sensitive feelings, with a sincere concern for others.

The chapter seems to divide easily into three parts: the domination of love, verses 1-3; the description of love, verses 4-7; and the duration of love, verses 8-13.

Paul made it clear that not only is love indispensable in the exercise of spiritual gifts, but it must have the ascendancy in everything. It is requisite that the love of God dominate every situation that is to be blessed by God. Many of the Corinthians thought speaking in tongues was of greatest importance to the believer, but Paul emphasized that, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." It is amazing, even in our day, how many are seeking the gift of tongues and how few are seeking the gift of love.

There were others in the Corinthian church who emphasized eloquence on the part of their pastors and teachers. Yet one may possess a form of eloquence which is merely the result of talent, and preach out of a heart totally devoid of love.

Such eloquence is useless. Preachers have been known to stir the hearts of their hearers with mere emotion, but the results were temporary. Only as one preaches in the power of the Spirit out of a heart overflowing with the love of God will the results be lasting and effective. Had there been more of this kind of preaching in the church at Corinth, carnality would not have been as marked. Abuses of the Lord's table would have been unknown. True Christian liberty would have been experienced and heresy would not have abounded.

The words "sounding brass" and "tinkling cymbal" suggest a loud noise, devoid of music. It is true that, when one preaches and teaches without a heart impregnated with the love of God, there is no satisfying music for needy souls. There may be a temporary stirring of emotion but no real consolation which comes only through the love of God. We must keep in mind that it is not the loud lip that will draw men to Christ, but the loving life. It is for this reason that God's people need to examine their hearts daily to see if they are controlled by the flesh or the Spirit. The Spirit-controlled life is the loving life.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing." Paul listed several extremely valuable gifts here, but without love they become useless. One may be endowed with the cherished gift of prophecy, able to look into the future and tell of coming events. He may be able to explain clearly some of the deep and profound truths of the Scriptures. Likewise, he may be the possessor of the mighty miracle-working faith spoken of in chapter 12. Yet without the love of God flooding his heart and soul, all his efforts will be in vain.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Benevolence may be a sham to cover up the evil of a proud and selfish heart. Generosity is not

always sincere. If it is not prompted by the love of God, there is no question about its insincerity. One may be willing to offer himself up for a cause, as many have. Some in our day have burned their bodies for a principle. But of what profit is this? Fanaticism shall receive no reward from God.

Indeed, in everything love must dominate. Without it our efforts are worthless and our Christian testimony is mere pretense. During the war in Korea several years ago, a South Korean Christian civilian was arrested by the communists and ordered shot. But when a young communist leader learned that the prisoner was in charge of an orphanage caring for small children, he decided to spare him and kill his son instead. So they shot the nineteen-year-old boy in the presence of his father. Later the fortunes of war changed and the young communist leader was captured by the United Nations forces, tried, and condemned to death. But before the sentence could be carried out, the Christian whose boy had been killed pleaded for the life of the killer. He declared he was young, that he really did not know what he was doing.

"Give him to me," said the father, "and I will train him." The United Nations forces granted his request and the father took the murderer of his own son into his home and cared for him. Today that young communist is a Christian pastor.

It is this kind of love in these first three verses of 1 Corinthians 13. Love is more important than anything else. It is greater than eloquence, prophecy, knowledge of the Word, faith, benevolence, even martyrdom. Is your life motivated and controlled by God's wonderful love?

Let us consider the description of love as the apostle portrayed it in verses 4-7 with minute detail—one of the most graphic accounts of God's love to be found anywhere. These fifteen qualities of love are not merely for our knowledge; they are for the purpose of encouraging an examination of our own hearts. If we read these four verses every night before getting into bed, with the prayer that God might examine our hearts in the light of them, we would be different in

many respects. Readily we would consider how far and how greatly we fall short of the glory of God.

There is only one who can stand the test of this description of love completely, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God. You and I could not place our names here, but the name of Christ could be substituted for the word "charity" in every instance. Let's read it that way: "*Christ* suffereth long, and is kind; *Christ* envieth not; *Christ* vaunteth not Himself, is not puffed up, doth not behave Himself unseemly, seeketh not His own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." But lest you be discouraged, realize that, if you are a believer, you are in Christ! You possess His power to live in His victory. So let us not be quick to say, "That is too much for me. I could never live that way." Do not forget, "Our help is in the name of the **LORD**" (Psalm 124:8).

Let us consider Paul's vivid picture of the love of God. "Love suffereth long, and is kind." In other words, love can take a lot. It can endure abuse, criticism, untruth, and at the same time pay back with kindness. The believer is never to retaliate with evil but always with good. In Romans 12:20-21 we read, "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

"Love envieth not." That is, true love is never jealous. It never begrudges another the prize or the credit. Envy is a very serious sin in the eyes of God. He says, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" (Proverbs 27:4)

"Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." Pride and arrogance are opposites of love. He who always speaks of himself and his accomplishments has not come into the full realization of divine love. We are not to praise ourselves, for

God says, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips" (Proverbs 27:2).

Love "doth not behave itself unseemly." Love is courteous. It is never rude or thoughtless of others. A man possessed with love will always be a gentleman; a woman filled with God's love always will be a lady. Under all circumstances the Christian should be polite and gentle, considerate of others.

Love "seeketh not her own." Love is never selfish. The loving heart is not concerned about who gets the credit, for self has been crucified and Christ is in control. Probably selfishness is the root sin that prevents most of us from experiencing the life of love. Have you come into the full meaning of Calvary? Why did Christ die? The Bible gives several reasons, but here is one: "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Love "is not easily provoked"; most Christians are, however. Let the tide of circumstances change against their wishes and what happens? Or let them be criticized for their work which they did in good faith. Is there a display of temper or ill feeling? What about you? Are you angered at the slightest provocation, or does love have the pre-eminence so that you are mastered by the quietness and confidence of your Saviour?

Love "thinketh no evil." Maybe you can control your temper. You are not guilty of a display of unkind words. But what about your thoughts? God's love runs deep. It is important that our thoughts be brought under the mastery of Christ, for God says of His own in Proverbs 23:7, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity." Love is grieved to see fellow believers fall into sin. A man of love will be quick to appear on the scene to help a fallen brother. Not only will he pray but he will extend the helping hand in an attempt to lift him from his sin. He will not gossip or talk about the

needy Christian. Prompted by love, he will be ready to assist in whatever way possible. This is scriptural, for God says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

Love "rejoiceth in the truth." Love longs to see truth prevail. "Whatsoever things are true," God says, "think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). A man of love will have nothing to do with falsehood, but rather he will be found "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Falsehood cannot stand where love abounds. Truth should be spoken under all circumstances, even though it might result in embarrassment.

A Western politician running for an important office was highly indignant at what the local paper had said about him. Rushing into the editor's office he burst out, "You are telling lies about me in your paper and you know it!"

"You have no cause for complaint," the editor calmly replied. "What in the world would you do if I told the truth about you?"

Love "beareth all things." That is, it beareth up under anything and everything that comes along. Regardless of what others may say, love bears the consequences, refusing to retaliate in any way.

Love "believeth all things." Love always believes the best about everyone, refusing to lend an ear to gossip.

Love "hopeth all things." Love never gives up. It is never pessimistic.

Finally, love "endureth all things." Love does not weaken under strain or stress. It is full of patient endurance. One filled with the love of God has his eyes fixed upon Christ. Nothing else matters. Come what may, he can persevere because of a heart of love. Without becoming discouraged he looks for a brighter hour soon to come as the result of the grace of God.

What a description of love Paul has given. Indeed it could not be improved upon. The question we must ask ourselves is, have I experienced this love? Have I realized it in its fullest measure? Having considered these fifteen properties of the love of God, should we not fall upon our faces and repent, beseeching our gracious Lord for a fresh measure of His immeasurable love?

Let us consider next the duration of love. Spiritual gifts will serve their purposes in time, but love will remain throughout all eternity: love "never faileth." This means that love never becomes obsolete. Whether before the law was given, during the age of the law, the age of grace, the kingdom reign of Christ, or throughout eternity in the new Heaven and new earth, love will abound.

"But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." The last phrase is literally, "shall be done away." This is not to suggest any unimportance regarding prophecies, tongues, or knowledge. Paul was simply contrasting the temporary nature of gifts with the permanent. Even after Christ's return, love will continue. The day is coming when prophecies will no longer be needed, for they will all be fulfilled. Tongues will cease, for they will have no further purpose or value. Our present knowledge, which is imperfect and limited, will be superseded by boundless knowledge. Many things will change; but God's love will never change. How consoling it is both to sinner and saint to realize that God's love is unchangeable.

One time Charles H. Spurgeon saw on a country home a weather vane with what he thought was a strange motto, "God is love." He asked the farmer if he meant to imply that divine love can be as fickle as the wind.

"No," said he, "this is what I mean: whichever way the wind blows, God is love. Through the cold north wind, the biting east wind, still God is love as much as when the warm, genial south wind blows." This is indeed a thrilling and

comforting truth. God said to His people Israel in Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Never forget that God's love does not change. We change in our love toward Him, but regardless of how far we may drift from His grace and truth, He still loves us and will receive us if we turn to Him in repentance.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." Knowledge possessed by the most spiritual of men is at its best limited and imperfect. Even the scores of prophecies throughout the Scriptures concerning Christ are not to be compared with Christ Himself, who has promised to come back again. When He returns, all will change immediately: "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

To clarify further the fact of the discontinuance of spiritual gifts in relationship to the permanence of love, Paul used two very practical illustrations. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." All of us readily realize the contrast between the immaturity of a little child and the maturity of an adult. During the years of growth, one's thinking changes. The thoughts of full-grown women are not dominated by dolls and childish games. Full-grown men do not usually come to blows with each other as quickly as they did when they were little children. One kind of life passed away, and over the years another developed.

Regrettably, the spiritual transition in many Christians is not always as distinct and visible. All of us know Christians who after twenty or thirty years have remained as babes in Christ. This was one of the difficulties in the Corinthian church. Paul wrote to them saying, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not

carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) Carnality and immaturity go hand in hand. The Apostle Peter exhorts us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Christian, are you growing in the Lord or are you still a babe in Christ? Do your feelings get hurt easily? Do you pout and complain? Are you fearful, filled with worry, having not yet learned how to lean on the everlasting arms? Get into God's Word and feed on the truth, that you may become strong. Take the necessary time to wait on God in prayer. Tell others about Christ, that you might get the necessary spiritual exercise that will enable you to grow in the Lord. Let us "put away childish things," that we may be men and women of God.

Reverting again to Paul's analogy, let us be reminded that just as definitely as there is a normal change from childhood to adulthood, there will also be a change spiritually from the old to the new. Prophecy, tongues, knowledge will no longer be needed, but love will continue forever.

Concerning his second comparison the apostle said, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Reflection can never be as clear as direct vision. The contrast presented here was even greater in Paul's day. Corinth was well known in commercial circles for its highly polished Corinthian brass, which was used extensively for mirrors, among many other things. But the best of these mirrors were highly imperfect, bearing only faulty reflections. In comparison to the direct sight of the eye, they were cloudy and dim. In contrast to the future after Christ returns, our present, even with the gifts God has given, is as though looking into a clouded mirror.

There is much we know about the Word of God, but there are so many things we do not know. The most profound Bible scholars of every age have confessed their complete ignorance of many of the truths of Scripture. But this condi-

tion will not continue, for, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). With Paul we can say, "but then shall I know even as also I am known." There will no longer be limitations and imperfections, for we shall be like Christ. All things will change, with but one exception: love will remain the same. For the love Paul was speaking about in this chapter is not human, but divine.

In conclusion came the apostle's grand climax: "And now abideth faith, hope, love these three; but the greatest of these is love." Of these three cardinal Christian graces, "the greatest of these is love." Why is this the greatest? Because "God is love" (1 John 4:8). It is well to note that all three of these graces, faith, hope, and love, will continue throughout eternity. But of the three, love is of supreme importance.

Since love is the greatest of gifts, should it not be evidenced in your life and mine? Should we not manifest the love of God? Above all else it is by love that we shall convince the unsaved that we belong to Christ. As John said, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Should it be that you have never experienced God's gift of salvation made possible by His love, I urge you to make your decision to receive Jesus Christ into your heart and life. With Him, love will enter. Without Him, there can be no experience of divine love. Let Christ become your Saviour and Lord, as you by faith receive Him into your heart.

## THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

*1 Corinthians 14:1-25*

It is quite obvious from the chapter we are about to study that the Corinthians had overemphasized the gift of tongues, while at the same time they overlooked the value of the various other gifts. Tongues seemed to be far more sensational and spectacular than the other gifts, thus it was more popular.

The chapter opens with a continued plea for love. "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." The apostle wanted it understood that whatever gifts we have or desire, our greatest aim should be the fullness of the love of God in our hearts. Without love, even spiritual gifts will be grossly ineffective in strengthening saints and helping sinners.

Prayerfully the believer should seek after the spiritual gifts Paul outlined in chapter 12, but especially should he seek the gift of prophecy. Prophecy as used here means more than the foretelling of future events. Though the prophets of the Old Testament were enabled to do this, their ministry was not limited in this respect. Many of their writings record the stirring of the hearts and minds of their hearers as through the Spirit they expounded the Scripture and told forth the truth of God. How we need to pray for this gift of prophecy in our day, that when the Word of God is proclaimed there might be deep conviction, and a sincere repentance.

Paul emphasized further the greater value of the gift of prophecy as compared with the gift of tongues. "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the

spirit he speaketh mysteries." Paul was not discrediting the gift of tongues, but simply comparing it with the gift of prophecy. When one speaks in unknown tongues he speaks to God, but what the speaker says is unintelligible to himself and those around. The gift of prophecy is not restricted in this manner, for "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

The apostle made clear the significant value of prophecy, stating that it "speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." To be really effective, all preaching and teaching should combine all three of these essential factors. Our hearers should be edified, that is, built up and encouraged in the faith. We must not stop here, however, for they are to be exhorted and challenged from the Scriptures to deeper and holier living. At the same time, everyone needs the ministry of comfort. Amidst the stress and strife of life, troubled hearts must hear of the solace that only the Scriptures can give.

How easy it is for God's ministers to overlook this three-fold emphasis. There are some who edify only. Those who listen are blessed but not challenged. Others have pursued the path of constant exhortation, overlooking the importance of building up the saints and at the same time providing comfort for their troubled and care-filled hearts. Still others have gone to the extreme of simply trying to alleviate the afflicted and troubled while neglecting faithfully to teach the Word and to exhort men and women to follow in God's chosen paths. We are to seek the gift of prophecy that will enable us to be well-rounded teachers and preachers of the truth.

A famous English scholar one time said of Phillips Brooks, the famous Boston preacher, "This man is just like a great water main attached to the everlasting reservoir of God's truth, grace, and love; and life-giving streams by heavenly gravitation pour through him to refresh the weary soul." From this description there seems to be no doubt that Phillips Brooks

possessed the gift of prophecy. Oh, how we need to pray for this gift which Paul has so strongly emphasized in this chapter.

"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." Let us not overlook the merit of divine exercises for one's personal value. Yet as we consider ourselves and others, do we not repeatedly find in the Scriptures that the greater obligation is to others? Should we not be concerned then about the gift that will be of greatest benefit to the Body of Christ?

Paul assured the Corinthians it was not his intention to discourage their quest for the gift of tongues, but rather he longed for them to place a stronger emphasis on the gift of prophecy. "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying." As we have seen before, the gift of tongues as given on Pentecost was given to the eleven in the form of definite, understandable, and intelligible foreign languages that were understood by the unsaved from all nations. Yet if one has this gift, of what value would it be to use it in the congregation if there were no one to interpret the strange language to the hearers? Is it not of far greater importance to preach and teach the Word of God in an understandable language that all might hear and be blessed?

One wonders, however, if much of our present-day preaching is not in a sense as a foreign tongue insofar as hungry and needy hearts are concerned. Sometimes our preachers are so scholarly and theological that men and women in the pew have not the slightest comprehension of what is being said.

On an outdoor bulletin board there appeared this sermon title, "Christ's Chief Competitor." Immediately below that title was the name of the minister. It appeared that inadvertently and unconsciously he was telling the community that he was Christ's chief competitor! To be sure, this is not altogether in error, for in many churches the sermons are completely Christ-

less. They actually make competitors with Christ, leaving the man in the pew looking to our pulpits, saying, "Sirs, we would see Jesus." There is an answer for such preaching in our day. It is found in full surrender to the control of Christ, with earnest prayer for the gift of prophecy so strongly emphasized by the Apostle Paul, that we who stand before men to teach or preach might speak as Paul has said, "to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

"Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" Here again Paul sought to stress the importance of prophecy in comparison to tongues when used in a congregation. It would be of greater value for him to preach to them from the revelation of God's truth in a language they could understand than it would be to minister to them in a tongue they could not understand.

To illustrate this fact, Paul used two analogies by asking several questions. "And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?" If one were to play on an organ or a harp in which all the keys or strings played the same note, how would those listening know what melody was intended? "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" If the trumpeter calling the army to action does not play on the trumpet in such a manner that the soldiers can recognize the call, how will they know when to arise? "So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air," or more literally, "for ye shall speak in vain."

Digressing for a moment from the general theme of the passage, consider the trumpet with "an uncertain sound." Is it not true that there are many professing to be followers of Christ who are well described by Paul's analogy? By their inconsistent living they offer no clear-cut call to others to follow

Christ in the battle against sin. They are well described by the apostle's words in Titus 1:16: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

At the West Point Military Academy a group of students in one of the rooms of the barracks were discussing the question of whether there was really anything in Christianity. Some maintained that it was simply a good code of ethics. Others claimed that it was merely an outgrown superstition. Still others contended that it was a real power in one's life. One of the men who had stated that Christianity was a spent force sought to silence the advocate of Christianity's power by propounding what he thought to be a question too difficult to answer. He turned suddenly on one of the young advocates for Christianity.

"What is a Christian anyhow?" he asked.

As quick as a flash the Christian answered, "Oscar Westover." And there was silence.

If this Christian had tried to give a metaphysical definition of Christianity, there would have been argument until midnight. But when he gave the name of the fellow student whose standing in scholarship, whose splendid athletic ability, whose genuine moral principles no one for a moment could question, it settled all argument. Whatever the skeptical student might say about definitions of a Christian, here was a concrete case that was unanswerable, for Oscar Westover's life was one of a "certain sound" for Christ.

There is nothing more convincing than a life of obedience to the will of the Lord Jesus. God says in 1 John 2:6, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." To be sure, if we walk as Christ walked, we shall not give an uncertain sound to those who need the message of God. Can it not be said that those who possess the gift of prophecy will speak not only by words, but by life? No wonder Paul emphasized the importance of this gift so strongly.

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." Paul pointed out here that there are many languages in the world, but if he does not know and understand those languages, those who speak them will be to Paul as a barbarian, and he who speaks to them will be likewise. For this reason he said, "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." In other words, seek those gifts that will be of the greatest advantage to the largest number of believers.

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Paul was saying that the greatest blessing in praying with tongues is to be able to understand what one is praying. Without this knowledge, one prays in the spirit, but it is important to have a knowledge of the prayer. Thus he said, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."

Paul made mention further of those who "sing with the spirit" and those who "sing with the understanding also." Of course, many times we sing a congregational hymn without the spirit and without the understanding, giving little thought to mere words that are coming from our lips. The same can be true in our praying, that we pray neither in the spirit nor with our understanding, offering up to God well-worn, trite phrases falling from our lips without any real heart concern or burden in prayer. It would seem to me that not only is there a need for the gift of interpretation of tongues but for the essentials of reality and sincerity in all of the practices of our faith.

In the concluding verse of the Epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul spoke of "all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Ephesians 6:24). Do you fall within this realm? Is your profession real? Are you sincere? Some possess a Christianity merely of talk, while others have a Christianity of walk. Which is yours? God wants the latter. We are to "walk in the light as He is in the light" (1 John 1:7).

"Else, when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified." It was a practice in the early church, as is the case in many assemblies of believers in our day, that if one led in audible prayer, the others followed with an occasional "Amen" to express their unity of thought in the petitions that were being offered to God. However, if one prayed in an unknown tongue, without someone present who had the gift of interpretation, the others could not pray with the leader.

Though praying in an unknown tongue reaches the heart of God, it provides little edification for the people of God. It was for this reason that Paul declared, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." This certainly makes evident the place the gift of tongues should have in the church.

The apostle made several other truths clear. One was the fact that he had the gift of tongues and when in the presence of those who were able to understand the particular tongue that God had given he proclaimed the gospel fervently in this tongue. But when he was in the midst of a congregation of believers unfamiliar with the tongue he spoke, he refrained completely from the use of the gift so that he might use his gift of prophecy to the greatest advantage in teaching his hearers in the truths of God.

The next verse suggests the apparent abuse that had taken

place in the Corinthian church regarding the gift of tongues. "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." He suggested that they had become childish in their attitude toward this matter. Paul pled with them to face the issue as full-grown men in the faith, to be mature in their thinking regarding this problem that was creating division in the Corinthian church. Regarding evil, Paul desired that they remain as innocent babes, but regarding the abuse of tongues he implored them to consider what he was saying.

Next the apostle drew on the Old Testament for a vivid illustration. "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear Me, saith the Lord." Long ago when the sin-hardened Israelites rejected Isaiah's message he assured them that the Lord would speak in another manner. Soon He did, for the Assyrians swept down upon the Israelites, proclaiming words of doom and judgment. But in spite of all this, Israel refused to listen.

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." Tongues are not for the edification of a body of believers but for reaching unbelievers, as was the case on Pentecost.

Further Paul wanted it understood that if tongues are used in a congregation incorrectly, unbelievers might be turned away. "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" If an unbeliever were to come to a church service and the Christians began to rise to their feet and talk in unknown tongues, what would be the normal reaction in the minds of the unbelievers? In some churches where speaking in tongues is a common practice, there are other things that go along with this, such as shouting, screaming, rolling

on the floor, hysterical laughter. Paul was correct. The unsaved would go away saying, "Ye are mad."

On the other hand, prophecy will have another effect on the congregation. "If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." The speaker, exercising the gift of prophecy in the power of the Holy Spirit, will proclaim the truth of God in such a manner that the conscience of the unsaved will be pricked and he will cry out to God in repentance. This will not be the case through the use of tongues. It is for this reason that we must emphasize the gift of prophecy. God honors the faithful, zealous, sincere, and sane declaration of His Word. Not only will believers be established and strengthened in the faith, but the unsaved will be brought to a realization of their vital need of salvation through Christ. God declares in His Word in Hebrews 4:12 that "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." God's Word must be proclaimed to believers and unbelievers alike, for it is the Word that opens the heart to the great truths of God.

E. L. Langston in one of his books wrote: "There is a strange plant in Jamaica called the 'life plant.' It is called this because it is almost impossible to kill or destroy any portion of it. When a leaf is cut off and hung by a string, instead of shriveling up and dying like any other leaf, it sends out white threadlike roots, and thus gathers moisture from the air and begins to grow new leaves. The gospel," said Mr. Langston, "is the life plant of the moral and spiritual world. Circulate the gospel anywhere and it will soon take root in the affections and heart of mankind and send out

tendrils of life in the heart of Africa or among the aborigines of Australia or among the Eskimos of the Arctic Circle. It has the same quickening power which no climate or heathenism has the power to kill."

This gospel is found in the Word of God. It is the message that must be preached. For this reason we need the gift of prophecy above all other gifts. It is true, as Paul said in the opening verse of 1 Corinthians 14, "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." Pray that God will give you the gift of prophecy, that you might proclaim His Word wherever you go. Whether it be to an audience of one or to an audience of one thousand, in the power of the Holy Spirit make known the truths of the gospel and the Lord will bless and honor you for it. Do not be ashamed of Christ, but boldly stand for Him and make His truths known.

## BEWARE OF CONFUSION

### *1 Corinthians 14:26-40*

PAUL HAD STRESSED the importance of the prophetic gift. Next he cited the need for order in the house of God, laying down certain principles that are imperative for harmonious and effectual worship.

Evidently there was a great deal of confusion in the stated worship services of the assembly at Corinth. "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." From this verse it is clear that worship at Corinth was marked by wild confusion. One person wanted to sing a psalm, another wanted to exercise the prophetic gift, still another wanted to speak in an unknown tongue,

someone else was anxious to tell of some special revelation he had received, while another brother desired to be the interpreter for the one who spoke in tongues. Everyone wanted to participate and speak at the same time. Paul admonished them to "Let all things be done unto edifying." In public worship we are not to satisfy our own desires but to be considerate of others. What is said or done should be useful and helpful to the greatest number.

It is obvious from the next verse that the worst confusion came through the abuse of tongues. "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret." The number of those speaking in tongues in a service was limited to two or at the most three, also those possessing the gift were not to speak while another was speaking. If there was no one present to interpret, then they should refrain from speaking in tongues in the congregation: "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God." Everything was to be done orderly in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

These verses suggest to me the supreme purpose of our worship services. They should honor God and edify man. The Lord Jesus declared in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Christ is the unseen guest at every service of worship. Everything done should be to His honor, but how often in our present day so many churches have descended to mere pageantry, a display of the flesh. Many of those who attend do not come to the house of God with prepared hearts. Theirs is a mere display of fineries while they permit their minds to be occupied with things that have little to do with the spiritual. So often the preaching does little to challenge or inspire. The sermon consists of mere humanism, lacking in a dynamic approach to the Word of God. It is no wonder that churches are cold, bearing no impact on the neighborhoods surrounding them. Scores of churches can

operate for an entire year and not name a single convert. How tragic that lives are not being pointed toward God. Indeed, our confusion seems as bad or worse than that of the Corinthians.

There is no greater need among Christians today than revival. We hear talk about a great religious revival that is supposedly in full swing. I do not want to be a pessimist; surely we are willing to give the benefit of the doubt to any inclination on the part of our churches to move toward God. But are we not reading far more into the situation than should be there? Simply because a well-advertised movie star or an outstanding business man or a prominent politician has a good word for the Lord, it is no indication that we are moving heavenward.

Toy shops sell dolls that kneel and pray. Most of our secular magazines carry articles dealing with religious subjects. Church membership is greater than ever, and our churches are handling more money than at any time in history. In fact, scores of people are riding the religious bandwagon. But is this revival?

It is impossible to have a revival without repentance. Even though church memberships may be doubling, to have a true revival, souls must be crying out to God in repentance. Irrespective of all our form, if we do not get right with God and walk in His divinely chosen paths, even though our church buildings may be as large as the Pentagon, the word "Ichabod [inglorious]" will be written over the doors of their entrances.

Many sermons are being preached on the subject of revival these days. Most of us are expecting it to fall from the blue sky, little realizing that there is a price to be paid by all of the people of God. In the midst of the depression, which began in 1929, a group of bankers held a meeting in Washington, D. C., in an attempt to find a way back to prosperity. Many suggested their remedies, and the meeting continued until late in the afternoon, when the chairman rose to his feet, drew from his briefcase a black-covered book, and read,

"If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). Placing the book back in his case he added, "That is the only way out," and took his seat.

What this banker had to say about the only escape from depression we may repeat as the only escape from our spiritual lethargy and indifference. The Corinthian congregation was too enthusiastic. But if anything, we have gone to the opposite extreme. There is one need above all else, and that is revival for survival.

Dr. R. A. Torrey has given us a prescription for revival: "First, let a few Christians (they need not be many) get thoroughly right with God themselves. This is the prime essential! Secondly, let them bind themselves together to pray for revival until God opens the heavens and comes down. Thirdly, let them put themselves at the disposal of God permitting Him to use them as He sees fit in winning others to Christ. This is sure," Dr. Torrey said, "to bring a revival to any church or community."

Are you willing to try it? Maybe the greatest need in your congregation or your assembly is for you to get right with God. Let the Lord deal with your heart! Submit to His control. Let the power of the Holy Spirit possess you and use you.

The apostle emphasized the essential of orderliness for those exercising the prophetic gift. "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." Like those speaking in tongues, the prophets were to be orderly and limited in number. Paul said there were to be "two or three"; he did not add, "at the most," as in verse 27. Thus it would seem that having only two or three prophets speak was not a hard and fast rule. There could be more, but for all practical purposes, it would be well not to exceed three.

While one prophet was speaking, neither of the others nor

anyone in the congregation should interrupt. Those listening were to judge what was being said. The word "judge" as used here means to discern in a spiritual manner. They were to consider what the speaker was saying in the light of the Scriptures. The Christians at Berea followed this practice in a splendid manner. We read in Acts 17:11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." One reason so many of our present-day congregations are bound by liberalism is that they have not applied this important principle. In listening to their pastors they took too much for granted. Rather than compare Scripture with Scripture to test the teachings they heard, they simply received the preacher's message as the final authority. This can result in grave error, as has been the case on numerous occasions.

If congregations are to test the teachings they hear in the light of God's Word, the members of these congregations must be familiar with the Word of God. Too few of those who call themselves Christians spend the time they should in the Word. Some read it, but they do not study it. Others do not even read it. They depend entirely on what they hear from the pulpit for their spiritual food. This is a great mistake, for God has commanded each believer to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15). Unless we become students of the Word, spending time in it daily, we are in no position to recognize truth from error. We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Many sincere, devout people are believing lies simply because they are not familiar with the truth of God's Word. In Psalm 36:9 David said, "In Thy light shall we see light." Further, we read in Psalm 119:130, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light." Light comes from the Word of God. As we possess the light received from the Scriptures, then we shall recognize the darkness of error.

Americans are prolific readers. Last year they read eight hundred million books, more than twenty billion newspapers, and over a billion magazines. But how much time have they spent reading and studying the greatest book ever given, the Word of the living God? The Bible speaks authoritatively, and people are listening for the voice of authority. They have tried the scientists, the politicians, the philosophers, and others, but they want something upon which they can stand. The Bible is it. The Lord Jesus spoke with authority. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of Christ's saying, "I think so," or, "Maybe this is the answer." In the Old Testament the Lord Jehovah declared, "This is the way, walk ye in it." In the New Testament Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." It is for this reason that you and I need to study God's Word. We need to be prepared to face the many false teachings of our day with the truths of the eternal Word.

Concerning the exercise of the prophetic gift Paul said, "If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." Here again is the exhortation to orderliness. Each speaker was to have his proper time. No one was to interrupt. Everyone was to have his turn. "For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." What will be the result of this orderly presentation of the Word through God's servant? The people of God will "learn" and be "comforted."

Every once in a while I meet professing believers who do not recognize the importance of faithful church attendance. They contend that they can be just as good Christians as those who are always running to church meetings. Doubtless they overlook the fact that God has declared in His Word, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Hebrews 10:25). Believers are expected to gather together for fellowship in the Word. Not only that: they are to come together to be instructed and comforted. How we need this instruction and comfort received through the

teaching of God's Word. In these days of stress and toil, many are suffering breakdowns. Why? There are several reasons, but I am sure one is that oftentimes they have not been faithful in attending a Bible-teaching church whereby week after week they could be instructed and comforted from the Word of God.

A faithful Christian woman was stricken by a dread malady. She had, in her helplessness, pre-eminently one sorrow and one joy. She enjoyed beyond measure the gatherings of God's people, and as her pastor talked with her she wept in deep sorrow because she could not go to the meetings at the church any more. In connection with that sorrow she said, "It is a great joy and comfort to me now that I did go when I could."

Many of God's people cannot say that. They have neglected the privilege of worship. They have overlooked the importance of being instructed and comforted from the Word. Do not miss this priceless opportunity that is yours. Be faithful in attending a church where you can be taught in the Word on the Lord's day and prayer meeting night.

As to the relationship of speakers with each other in a service Paul said, "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." There must be a kindly attitude among those who proclaim the truth. They should have respect for each other and exercise their gifts with love.

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." Here again the apostle stresses the importance of the Lord's people worshiping together harmoniously.

Paul directed attention to another important issue, that of women exercising the gift of prophecy in public gatherings of worship: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." Some have ignored these verses, reasoning that Paul was an old bachelor who did not like women. Such was not the

case. Remember, what is said here is the inspired Word of God. Paul did not give us this teaching; God gave it. The apostle was simply the medium through whom God spoke.

What is taught here is not to imply that women cannot pray or testify in public, but they are not to exercise the preaching or teaching gift in worship services. In writing to young Timothy the apostle gave like instruction, saying, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11-12). When it comes to the preaching of the Word in public gatherings, the Lord makes it clear that this is the man's responsibility.

But what about the women? What are they to do? The Scriptures are indubitably clear. We read in 1 Timothy 5:14, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." This same truth is enlarged upon in Titus 2:3-5: "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." A woman's gifts are not to be exercised as much in public as in private. Her divinely prepared field of service is the home. How often we have seen women running here and there seeking to serve God, oftentimes to the sheer neglect of the service of God in the home.

The most important institution in the world is the home. That does not minimize the position of the church and state, which have also been ordained of God. But the Lord places the home first in time, as well as in importance. It is the foundation upon which all other institutions are built. Upon it the church and state will either stand or fall. What the homes are, our churches, schools, and government will be. Every place where there has been a neglect of home respon-

sibility there has eventually been a crumbling of the nation. Indeed, Paul must have had this in mind when he stressed the woman's responsibility in the home. The Bible does not excuse husbands from their domestic responsibilities. On the other hand, when it comes to the wives, theirs is the supreme task in the home. They are not to be the preachers, but they are to guide the house in the way of the Lord and to rear their children in the things of God. I am sure, if more wives had been faithful in fulfilling their divine calling, there would be more husbands walking with God.

Not long ago a woman was converted, chiefly by reading the Word of God. She suffered much antagonism from her husband.

"When your husband is angry and unkind, what do you do?" a friend asked.

"I cook his food better," she replied. "When he complains, I sweep the floor cleaner. And when he speaks sharply I answer him mildly. I try to show him that when I became a Christian I became a better wife and a better mother." This husband could stand all the preaching from the pulpit, but he could not stand this practical Christian living. Soon he gave his heart to God.

When Paul declared, "Let your women keep silence in the churches," it was not that he was being hard on women. He knew that if they were doing what they should be doing in the home they would have little time to preach. The preaching was to be left to the men.

Further the apostle said, "And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." My, how things have changed. In these days it seems to be the men who are asking the questions. The wives in most cases know so much more about the Bible than men. But in Paul's day, after men were converted, they recognized their obligation before God to study the Scriptures. They became diligent students of the Word and went forth to proclaim the truth.

Many of the women could not read or write. They were held in subjection to men. Frequently when something was said by the preacher, they would turn to their husbands immediately asking what was meant, creating disorder and confusion in the service of worship. Consequently Paul made it clear that their questions should be asked of their husbands at home and not in the worship service.

It would seem that the Corinthians were not altogether in accord with Paul's instruction, for very pointedly he asked, "What! came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?" His language here is rather sharp, rebuking them for their narrowness. Did the Corinthians think that the truth originated with them? The way some reacted to Paul's teachings, it would seem so. But Paul reminded them that, if there were spiritual people among them, they would not reject his teachings but receive them, recognizing them as divinely inspired. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

There were some who rejected Paul's teaching, but he refused to argue with them, saying, "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." When one refuses to believe, argument is of little value. Pray for him, but do not argue with him.

"Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order." Here again the apostle emphasized the importance of the gift of prophecy. At the same time, he said, if someone had the gift of tongues and exercised this gift, it should be done according to the Scriptures, in a manner pleasing unto God. Whatever we do in God's program must be done in a way that will bring honor and glory to Him. "Let all things be done decently and in order."

This admonition is so essential for our present-day churches. We have our programs and methods, which we describe as unique. Some use even strategy to effect their purposes. But

what about the Holy Spirit? Long ago God declared, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). If we are to experience the power of God and to see His mighty hand at work, all things must be done decently and in order. Without the power of God's Spirit this is impossible. How needful that we come to Him afresh, asking Him to remove anything that might be hindering His work. Let us pray that we might be filled to overflowing with His blessed Holy Spirit.

Should it be that you have never experienced eternal life through Christ, may I say, you need Him. You may be a church member. You may even be an officer in your church. If so, you will be a hindrance to the work of God until you get converted. Turn to Christ and let Him show you what He can do through you. Take Him at His Word. "Believe on Him."

## THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

### *1 Corinthians 15:1-11*

WE COME now to one of the pinnacle chapters of the New Testament. There were some in the Corinthian congregation who, because they were influenced by their pagan past, were denying the truth of the resurrection. It was this unbelief within the church that prompted the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to write the most complete compendium on resurrection truth that can be found anywhere. One is almost tempted to be grateful for the error in the Corinthian church, for had not some been mistaken on the doctrine of the resurrection, it is possible that we would not have within the pages of the sacred Scriptures this remarkable chapter dealing with the resurrection.

Paul began by speaking of the gospel, the good news of God: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand." The apostle reviewed the transforming message that made possible not only the assembly at Corinth but every assembly of believers. Without this message, there would be no Christians. As Paul reminded the Corinthians of the relativity of the gospel to their existence, in like manner congregations in our present day need to be awakened to the importance of the gospel.

In his book, *One World in the Making*, Dr. Ralph Barton Perry says that after teaching philosophy at Harvard for forty-five years he is convinced that what we now need is the adoption of a "religion of humanity." He proposes getting up one that will work and that will have "equal and undiscriminating appeal to all nations and races." In addition to Dr. Perry, we are hearing from other philosophers about "world religion" based on the idea of "social morality" that will be palatable to the unregenerate mind. The notion seems to be that the Christian gospel does not work.

If given an opportunity, the gospel will work. But there is one place it cannot work: it can never work in unregenerate, unbelieving, faithless hearts where there is no willingness to believe. For God declares in Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Professor Perry, like many liberals in our pulpits today, has no time for the gospel which Paul declared to the Corinthians, simply because he is unwilling to acknowledge the truths of the Bible and bow to the Son of God. Many preachers are substituting a social gospel for the true gospel. Theirs is a salvation of works, of being kind and helpful to one's neighbor. Of course, one who is truly born again will be concerned about his brother's needs, but without a heart experience with Christ through the gospel, one's concern for others will be very shallow. Social service can put a new

coat on a man, but the gospel of the grace of God can put a new man in the coat.

Thus with unbelief within the bounds of the Corinthian church, Paul reminded the Corinthians of the gospel, "which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand." He went on to say, "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." Some might gather from this verse that salvation depends upon one's "holding on." But it does not mean that at all. If one has truly believed the gospel, he will continue on in the faith. If his belief is not sincere, then he will either neglect or deny the faith. One of the tests of Holy Spirit conversion is perseverance. The Lord Jesus declared in Matthew 10:22, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." One is not saved because he endures to the end; rather, one who is saved will endure to the end. All others will fall by the wayside.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke about the seed that "fell upon stony places" (Matthew 13:5). He likened this to one who heard the Word, but when tribulation or persecution came he did not continue on; he failed to endure. Also our Lord said that some of the seed "fell among thorns" (Matthew 13:7). Likewise, this person heard the Word, but worldliness and the deceitfulness of riches crowded the Word out of his life so that he did not endure. It is obvious that these of whom our Lord was speaking were not converted in the first place. They only appeared to be converted.

Thus in attempting to combat the error of the denial of the resurrection, Paul reminded the Corinthians that, if they had truly believed the gospel of God as he had proclaimed it, they would not have denied this precious fact of Scripture, the resurrection from the dead. It was highly probable that those who denied this or any other truth of the Scriptures had never really believed the gospel. It is possible to be a member of a church, an officer in a church, even a pastor of a church, without ever having believed the gospel.

A prominent pastor told me of a close friend who was

pastoring one of the largest churches in the state of Iowa. The church was very wealthy but at the same time extremely worldly. Trying to fit into the situation the pastor drifted further and further away from the fundamental truths of the Bible. Many miles away, he had a godly father living alone, who years before had retired from the ministry. He had served one church for many years, and after his retirement was asked by the congregation to continue to live on in the parsonage.

When vacation time came the son and his family went to visit the aged father. The first evening they had a grand visit. But the father, who was an old-fashioned gospel preacher, sensed the coldness of his son's heart. He readily recognized the liberal tendencies.

Very early the next morning the father was up as usual kneeling by his bedside crying aloud unto God in prayer. With a burdened heart he prayed, "Oh, Lord, bring my son back to the place where he will preach the gospel, the truth of the Scriptures." He continued to plead with God, repeating this request again and again. The son, who was sleeping in the next room, was awakened by his father's praying. He listened. The aged father's prayers began to grip his heart. The young preacher tried to sleep, but he could not. He got up, dressed quickly, and went out under a big cherry tree in the back yard, and there knelt and got right with the Lord.

After several weeks the young preacher and his family returned home. He went back to his church a new man on fire for God. He proclaimed the gospel of Christ without any restrictions or limitations. But he did not last long. The people of that congregation had been steeped in liberalism for so long that they had no interest in the gospel. It was not long after that they asked their pastor to leave. Though he is now in a smaller church, this minister is still preaching the gospel. Souls are being saved. Lives are being changed. Indeed, the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

Paul reported that he received the gospel by divine inspiration: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." Further, he said in Galatians 1:11-12, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Consider now the first great fact of the gospel: "Christ died for our sins." There is nothing unusual about one's dying. Millions have died. Many good people have died. Some have laid down their lives for worthy causes. But Christ's death was different from all others. He gave His life for the sins of all who would believe on Him. He did not die for His own sins, for He had none. He paid the price for your sins and mine, that we might become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We read in 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Christ died for our sins that we might be saved for all eternity.

Christ's death for our sins was "according to the scriptures." For every earnest seeker after truth, Christ's death on the cross should have been no surprise, for in type and prophecy this grandiose truth is found in the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi. Probably the most notable and most familiar passage is the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Of whom else could the prophet be speaking, if not about the coming Messiah, when he wrote, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6). There can be no question as to whom this detailed account refers. It clearly

depicts Christ who "died for our sins according to the scriptures."

Various theories have been offered by the skeptics in disbelief of the bodily resurrection of Christ. Some have declared that Jesus merely swooned, that He was not really dead: after being placed in the cold tomb He revived and came forth. Following this, a false report was circulated that He had arisen from the dead but that He had not really died in the first place. Such a fanciful theory may satisfy unbelieving minds but God's Word declares that "Christ *died* . . . And that He was buried." Those who took Him from the cross and placed Him in the tomb knew that He was dead; that is why they buried Him.

Further we are told that Christ "rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Of course, it was Christ's body that died and rose again. His spirit did not die. The same body that was taken from the cross and placed in the tomb rose again. This, Paul declared, like Christ's death was "according to the scriptures."

Let us turn our attention to the Old Testament to one of the many prophecies of the resurrection of Christ. "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the **LORD** shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10). God did this for His Son when He raised Him from the dead. There have been many self-styled saviors in the world, but there is only one true Saviour. The proof is His resurrection. God says of Him in Romans 1:4 that He is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It is the resurrection that distinguishes Christ from every other person, declaring Him to be the Son of God with power to forgive sin and provide everlasting life.

How do we know Christ arose from the dead? Simply because we have the factual proof of witnesses. Not all the witnesses are listed here; Paul mentioned only six. The women

to whom Christ appeared are not mentioned; many others are not listed. Paul was merely offering evidence to substantiate the fact.

First he stated that Christ was "seen of Cephas." This, of course, is Peter. Paul used Peter's prophetic name which had been given to him by Christ. Peter had denied Christ, but after our risen Saviour had appeared to him, he was never the same again.

Next our Lord appeared to "the twelve." Not all twelve were present at this appearance of our Lord. Judas had gone, and doubtless Thomas was not in the audience. Regardless of their number, the disciples were often called "the twelve."

"After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." This is believed to have taken place on a mountain in Galilee. What convincing proof! Could five hundred people be deceived? Would that many be willing to be guilty of fraud? Of course not.

"After that, He was seen of James." This is the brother of our Lord who wrote the Epistle, who apparently was an unbeliever until the time of the resurrection.

Next Christ was seen "of all the apostles." This could refer to several incidents, but it probably had to do with the last forty days of our Lord's life on earth. Not only does this refer to the twelve, but obviously to "the seventy" as well.

"And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Paul referred to himself as "a child untimely born." He was not privileged to associate with the other disciples in their fellowship, walking and living with our Lord. His was of later birth. But nevertheless, his experience was as wonderful and glorious. On the Damascus highway Paul met Christ face to face; he saw the resurrected Christ. Unworthy though Paul was, a blasphemer, hating and despising Christians, after seeing our living Lord he offered his life to Jesus in sacrificial service, stopping at nothing to make known the living Son of God.

In stressing the fact of the resurrection of Christ, Paul informed us of six witnesses to this great truth. He listed himself as the sixth. "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Paul felt that he was the least of the disciples, not because his salvation was any less effective, nor because the appearance of Christ to him was any different from the appearance to the others, but because of the heinous sin that he committed of persecuting those who loved Jesus. Doubtless he was never able fully to recover from his experience of standing by and giving consent to the stoning of Stephen. It seems that Paul could not erase the picture of those circumstances from his mind. He was "not meet to be called an apostle."

But as we think of the Apostle Paul, who of us is any better? Is there any believer who deserves to be saved? Surely not! If we got what we deserved, all of us would be doomed to hell; but, like the Apostle Paul, we are saved by the grace of God. It is as he said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." We cannot blot out the thoughts of our wicked past, but God has blotted out our sins with the blood of Christ that was shed at Calvary. Thus we are forgiven, never again to be judged for our wickedness. How wonderful is the message of grace!

Thinking of the grace of God I am reminded of the little boy who was invited to a friend's house for Thanksgiving dinner. Before he left, his mother warned him to mind his manners, and gave him all sorts of advice about how to be polite. When the little boy returned home his mother asked him if he had been a good boy and if he had thanked his hostess for the dinner.

"Oh yes," exclaimed the little boy, "I thanked her and I told her I had more to eat than I expected."

I am sure every Christian can say that in Christ he has received far more than he expected. Even more than this, we can say without any doubt whatsoever that we have received far more than we deserved. This is all because of the grace of almighty God. The Prophet Micah, in writing of our Lord, said,

"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 for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18-19).

Have you experienced this marvelous grace of our living Lord? Have you permitted God to cast all your sins into the depths of the sea? If not, He wants to do so right now. To enter into the joy of this marvelous experience, you need to open your heart to Jesus Christ. Remember, as Paul has written, He died for our sins and rose again. He did this that we might become possessors of life eternal. God's grace is sufficient for you. Regardless of your past, if you are willing to trust in the living Christ you can say with Paul, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." God will make you a new creature in Christ. At the same time, He will forgive you for all the past.

The apostle continued, "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain." Had Paul rejected our Saviour, the grace of God would have been bestowed upon him in vain. It would have been useless to him. But in Galatians 2:21 he wrote, "I do not frustrate the grace of God." Many do frustrate the grace of God today because, unlike Paul, they do not bow to the Lord Jesus. They try to save themselves. Others neglect to give any thought to salvation. God wants to shower His grace upon everyone. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). But man must come of his own will; God will not force anyone.

In concluding this particular thought of the resurrection of Christ, Paul said, "But I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Even though his was an untimely birth, regardless of the fact that he did not serve Christ along with the other apostles, this did not in any way deter his labor for Christ. In fact, the contents of Paul's Epistles prove that he did far more than any of

the other apostles, though he was quick to add, “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” Paul took no glory for his exploits, but gave God all the praise and honor. “Therefore,” he said, “whether it were I or they.” It mattered not to the apostle when or by whom the work was done so long as it was done. Irrespective of the time or person, they all preached the same message. “So we preach, and so ye believed.” He was speaking of the gospel. This is the great truth that must be proclaimed in our day as well as in the apostle’s day. There has never been a change in the plan of God. As this gospel is preached, upholding a resurrected Christ, souls will be saved: “So we preach, and so ye believed.” The response to this kind of preaching will be believing hearts.

God forbid that any minister should enter his pulpit to preach any message other than the gospel of the grace of God, for this is the only message that can transform lives. This is the only truth that can draw hearts to repentance and belief.

Have you believed in the Christ who rose from the dead? This is the true Christ of the Bible, the One who lives at this moment in the same body that was taken from the tree, the Man in glory who is concerned about your soul. Have you trusted in Him? If not, I invite you to ask the Lord Jesus to come into your heart. God promises in His Word in Romans 10:9–10, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” The Holy Spirit has made clear that there is no salvation for anyone who does not believe that God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. You must believe this glorious truth to be saved, for this is the heart of the gospel.

## THE CAPSTONE OF TRUTH

### *1 Corinthians 15:12-19*

BECAUSE OF THEIR PAGAN PAST, many of the Corinthian Christians denied the resurrection. It is not supposed that they doubted the resurrection of Christ, but they refused to believe that His followers would be resurrected. Assuredly, they were convinced that the soul of man was immortal, but they believed that at death the body would decompose into ashes and never again be made alive.

Beginning his argument with the fact of Christ's resurrection Paul declared, "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" After Christ was raised from the dead, this impelling truth became the heart of the message the apostles preached. We read in Acts 4:33, "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." This being the case, Paul asked, "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" They could not question our Saviour's resurrection; the facts were too convincing. Consequently, since the evidence was unquestionable that Christ arose, how could anyone say, "There is no resurrection"?

For anyone who would deny the facts of Scripture regarding the resurrection of Christ, there is one question he must answer: What happened to the body of Christ if He did not rise from the dead? Since the tomb was empty, only one of two things could have happened. Either His body had been stolen from the tomb, or He had risen from the dead. Only one of two groups could have stolen His body—His enemies or His friends. His enemies would not have taken His body; His

friends could not have stolen His body. The very last thing His enemies wanted to happen was to have His friends steal His body. To guard against this, they very carefully sealed and guarded the sepulcher. Thus, since His enemies would not take the body away, and since His friends could not take the body away, only one possibility is left: Christ arose from the dead as He said He would.

In every generation there have been critics of this glorious truth of Scripture, but their shallow arguments do not in any way alter the facts. Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, two of England's most eminent legal authorities, were champions of rationalism and denied everything supernatural in the Bible. They arranged for a combined attack on God's Word. Lyttleton was to write a book showing that the conversion of Saul was nothing but a myth, and West was to prove that the resurrection of Christ was only a legend. Being lawyers, they knew it would be necessary to study the evidence advanced in the Bible in order adequately to refute its teachings. So they had to read the Bible carefully, something they had never done before.

When they met again several months later, West told his friend, "As I studied the evidences for Christ's resurrection and weighed it according to the acknowledged laws of evidence, I became convinced that He really rose from the dead as the Bible records. My book is a confession of my belief in it." Lyttleton likewise arrived at the same conclusion: that what he had studied concerning Saul was factual in every way. He too was convinced that the Bible speaks with authority and that it is the Word of the eternal God. Both of these books confessing their authors' faith in God and the Bible were printed and may still be found in many libraries today.

"If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." Thus Paul pointed out the inconsistency of some of the Corinthians. To believe that Christ rose from the dead and at the same time to say there is no resurrection would be inconsistent. If there is no resurrection, then Christ was not raised. On the other hand, if Christ was raised, then resurrec-

tion from the dead is tenable. There can be no question about it—Christ was raised from the dead, and it is this great truth that provides hope and assurance for life eternal for all who believe.

It is said that Thomas Jefferson developed his own bible, but he was concerned merely with the moral teachings of Jesus. His bible was the same as our Bible, but with all the references to the supernatural eliminated. The closing words of Jefferson's bible were, "There laid they Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the mouth of the sepulcher and departed." What a tragic end! If Jesus is still in the grave, the rest of the Bible is only a myth. Then, of all people, Christians are the most miserable, for they have no hope whatsoever. But the glory of Christianity is its living hope. In the Bible life is never viewed as being complete in this world. The Christian faith lifts our eyes so that by faith we may gaze into eternity.

It is not enough to speak about a crucified Jesus, for the Bible tells us of a resurrected Christ. We read of Him in Romans 4:25, where we are told that He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Here are two central truths of Scripture: Christ died for us; but He also arose from the dead. To die would not be enough; the efficacy of His death was proved by His resurrection.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, we Christians have no message to preach: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain." The resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel of salvation. If Christ did not rise from the dead, there would be no good news for lost and dying humanity. All of our efforts to preach would be in vain, meaning that they would be but useless and false claims. The Christian message would be no different from any of the thousands of philosophies that have been promulgated down through the centuries.

But Christ is risen and His resurrection established, beyond any contradiction, the fact that "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Thus

we can go to the four corners of the earth declaring the gospel of the good news of God, knowing that Christianity is not simply another religion, but the heaven-sent way of life, proved by the resurrection of Christ.

A Christian woman sought to lead a Chinese man to Christ several years ago. Because of his lack of interest, she used a peculiar method to point him to the Saviour. Somewhere she had heard that the Chinese were known for their prodigious feats of memory. Also realizing that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), she got him to promise to memorize the first three chapters of John's Gospel. Before the week was over, he appeared at her door, his face radiating. Said he, "I knocked one day at the door of Confucius and cried, 'Explain to me the dynamic of your teachings that I might obey them.' But there was no answer save the echo of an empty tomb. It was the same with Buddha, and the whole world knows where Mohammed lies buried. But as I read this Book, I was suddenly seized by the overwhelming conviction that its Author was not dead but alive." And then he declared, "I have taken Him as my Saviour."

Yes, Jesus Christ is alive, and it is this great truth that gives life to Christian doctrine. Ours is a message different from all others, for it overflows with hope. It is a message of hope because Christ is risen. Oh, that we might determine afresh to get this message to those who have never heard before it is too late. There are millions in the world who need to hear that Christ is alive. It was after His resurrection that He commissioned His own to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). This commission has never been altered or abrogated. Have we done what Christ told us to do?

When you realize that a large denomination, one of the wealthiest of all churches per capita, sends out only 270 missionaries, it is obvious that many of us just do not care very much whether the gospel gets to "all the world." Christians need to realize above all else that we are called to proclaim

the good news of God to the lost. Nothing must interfere with this highest of all callings. How many of us have become so interested in the temporal that we have overlooked completely the crying need of perishing millions.

Dr. William Carey, the pioneer missionary, was a shoemaker, or rather, as he himself put it, a cobbler, before he left England in 1793 to go to India. He used to go about from village to village preaching, for his soul was filled with the truth of a resurrected, living Christ. One day a friend came to him.

"Mr. Carey, I want to speak to you very seriously."

"Well," said Carey, "what is it?"

"By your going about preaching as you do, you are neglecting your business. If only you would attend to your business better, you would get along and prosper. But as it is, you are simply neglecting your business."

"Neglecting my business!" exclaimed Carey. "My business is to extend the kingdom of God. I only cobble shoes to pay expenses."

Oh, that there were more Christians with this same vision. Our preaching is not in vain. There must be men and women who will rise up and tell the world that Christ lives; and because He lives, He will save every one who will trust in Him. Have you trusted in Him? Then tell others about Him! Live for Him! Preach the gospel to everyone you can! If our Saviour remained in the tomb, we would have no message; but He is alive and we have a glorious message to proclaim.

But not only is our preaching vain if Christ is not risen; as Paul wrote, "your faith is also vain." If Christ did not rise, church attendance is a waste of time. By giving your money to the work of God, you are throwing it to the wind. For, if Christ is still in the tomb, the Bible would be a mere delusion and prayer would be useless. There would be nothing to do but live and die like an animal.

But Christ is risen. This changes the entire picture. The subject of faith becomes one of supreme value. For one to live without a personal relationship to Christ is to miss the best

in life. The Lord Jesus declared in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." How wonderful it is to possess the "light of life," to know that Christ will direct our steps, that He will provide for our needs, that He will preserve us from evil. He can do this because He is alive.

Continuing, the apostle reasoned that if ours is a dead Christ, "We are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." If Christ was not raised, every preacher, missionary, and Christian witness is a liar. Even Christ Himself was a liar if He did not rise, for repeatedly He made such statements as, "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again" (Matthew 17:22-23). If Christ did not rise from the dead, then He was an impostor. In listing the commandments to the rich young ruler our Lord stated, "Thou shalt not bear false witness" (Matthew 19:18). Would He teach this and expect all of His followers to obey it while ignoring it Himself? Of course not. Christ is risen.

Paul repeated his thought of verse 13, saying, "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised." There must be a resurrection from the dead: Christ was raised, and so will all Christians be raised. If this is not true, Paul stressed, "Your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." If Christ is not raised, all of us must go to hell, for God has made it clear in Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." This is not only physical death but spiritual, eternal separation from God in hell.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead changed the whole picture. There is deliverance from the penalty, power, and ultimately the presence of sin. When one is in Christ, he can claim the glorious truth of Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." At no time following conversion need one be dominated by sin, neither in life nor at death. At death the be-

liever goes to be with the resurrected Christ in paradise. The believer's sins were nailed to the cross with Christ, and God will remember them no more. All of this is not only because of the cross, but also because of the empty tomb.

Paul further pointed out that if Christ is not risen, there is no comfort at the time of death. "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." The grave is the end without a risen Christ. How consoling it is at the funeral service of a believer to read the words of truth as found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Oh, what marvelous comfort this passage brings to the sorrowing heart, realizing that death is not the end for the true child of God, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." These weak, frail bodies that will some day go down into the dust will come forth glorious bodies, like unto Christ. As John tells us, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

It is wonderful to walk with God day by day, living in the light of His love and care. But how much more wonderful it will be when we step from earth's darkness to Heaven's glory

to take His hand and hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). A noted preacher once said, "Death brings down the curtain, but does not mark the end of the play. The scenes are just shifted, and we step out on a stage of far grander dimensions." How true and how wonderful! All of this is made possible because Christ arose from the dead.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Every true believer walking with God faithfully day by day knows in his heart that it is a thrilling life to be a Christian. No sincere saint born of the Spirit would want to revert to the old preconversion days. The believer experiences miracle after miracle as the result of answers to the prayers of faith. To think that all this would end at death would cast a note of gloom over everything. It would produce misery in our life. But, praise God, it will not end at death. "But now is Christ risen from the dead," Paul declared. There is no doubt about it. We rejoice in anticipation of eternity with Him.

A small Norwegian vessel lay in an English port for several days. One of those days happened to be Good Friday, and the chief officer carelessly said to the captain, "Shall I hoist the flag at half-mast today?

"Why?" asked the Captain.

"Well," replied the officer, "they say Jesus died today."

"Jesus, who is my Saviour, is a living Saviour, not a dead one," replied the captain, who was a Christian. "If you put out the flag at all, you must hoist it right to the top of the mast."

Yes, Christ lives. Personally, I know He lives, because He lives in my heart. Does He live in your heart? Have you ever invited Him in? If not, let Him become your Lord. Remember, He died and rose again that you might be the possessor of eternal life. Receive Him as your very own!

**LORD OF ALL***1 Corinthians 15:20-28*

PAUL OUTLINED some of the tragic consequences that would have taken place had Christ not risen from the dead. But quickly he turned from this note of despair to an assuring fact, declaring, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." The contrast Paul used is emphatic. What he stated regarding the tragic effects if Christ had not risen was mere supposition. As though he had wasted valuable time in useless argument, he stated the unquestionable fact that "*now is* Christ risen from the dead."

Christ's resurrection was only the beginning of much that was to follow. It was the pledge of the resurrection of all those who have fallen asleep in Christ. The figure Paul used here is taken from the Old Testament. The "firstfruits" refers to the sheaf of ripe grain plucked by the Israelites at harvest time and taken to the priests to be offered to the Lord. Not only was this an act of gratitude to God on the part of each Israelite, but it was also recognized as a pledge that the harvest would soon follow. With this in mind, the apostle spoke of Christ as the sheaf of grain, "the firstfruits," His resurrection being the pledge that all of those who have died as believers would come forth from the graves. The Lord Jesus declared in John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." His resurrection is not only the pledge but the proof of the believer's resurrection.

How does a farmer know that, after he has toiled long hours preparing the soil and sowing the seed, he will have a crop? He waits patiently and inspects the ground at regular intervals. After awhile he detects a tiny blade of corn pushing its way up

through the soil. This is just one single blade of grain, but that is enough. He needs no more. His hopes are established. He is confident that, if one blade has come, the rest will come. Likewise, God has given us the assurance of the believer's resurrection in the person of Christ. He is the firstfruits. Because He arose from the dead, millions who have trusted in His redeeming grace will be raised from the dead.

It was a man who put us in the grave, but it is also a man who will take us from the grave. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Adam, as the federal representative of the entire race, when subjected to temptation yielded and, as a consequence, sin and death were the marks placed upon every human born thereafter. Paul, in writing to the Romans, declared, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). As Adam was the representative man who provided death, God sent another, the God-Man, Christ Jesus, who provided life. Everyone born into this world is a member of the family of Adam. Those who are born again become members of the family of God, and at the same time become heirs of eternal life. Of this we are certain because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let us not misconstrue the meaning of the phrase, "even so in Christ shall all be made alive." This is not to suggest a general resurrection at which time everyone will be saved. Paul was writing to believers. He began this great chapter by stating that "Christ died for our sins." He was referring to those who had placed faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. To them he said, they "shall all be made alive."

There are several great facts to be recognized here. One is that Adam, the first member of the human race, chose sin, resulting in death. But the second Adam shunned sin, providing life. Another great fact we should note is that only those born again will receive the life the second Adam provided, and

only they will be participants of the resurrection of life.

God has made it clear in His Word that there will be two resurrections. In John 5:28 and 29 He says, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." These resurrections will be separated by a thousand years. Those participating in the first resurrection will be true believers in Christ whose bodies will be raised and joined to their souls when Christ returns for His own. The second resurrection will take place after Christ's millennial reign on this earth. At that time the bodies of unbelievers will be called forth from their graves to be joined to their souls returning from hell. They will then be judged at the Great White Throne judgment, after which they will be cast into the lake of fire.

In Revelation 20:6 we read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Are you going to have a part in the first resurrection? When Christ returns will you be ready to meet Him? You can be ready only as you know Him in your heart. You can know Him in your heart only as you receive Him by faith, acknowledging the fact that He died for your sins and rose again.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." In his statement, "every man in his own order," Paul used a military expression. More literally it might read, "every man in his own rank." The Captain of the Lord's host is first; then follows His army of saints. There is also a point of time evidenced here. Christ is first, and then later, at His return, His own will be resurrected to meet Him in the air. Paul made it clear when the resurrection of the saints will take place—"at His coming."

There are some who teach that the second coming of Christ takes place at the time of the believer's death. Jesus said, "And

if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). This, we are told by some, is what takes place when a saint of God dies. Christ comes to receive the soul of the departed to usher that soul into paradise. Such teaching is unscriptural, for Paul, in speaking of the resurrection, tells of the physical dead who have died in the Lord, then he tells that they will be resurrected when Christ returns. For these saints the second coming of Christ cannot possibly mean death, for they have been dead for centuries.

The second coming of Christ can never be interpreted as death in the Scriptures. The testimony of the angels recorded in Acts 1 substantiates this fact. As the bewildered disciples gazed heavenward at the ascending Christ, the angels declared, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Christ ascended into Heaven bodily and visibly. The Word of God informs us that He will return in the same manner.

"Then cometh the end," Paul declared, "when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet." "The end" spoken of here will be the consummation of things. Redemption will be completed for those who have believed on Christ. This will also be the end of the rebellion of wicked hearts against God, for man's dominion will give way to Christ's reign. This will be the fulfillment of the time spoken of in Philippians 2:10 and 11: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Christ will rule and reign on this earth for a thousand years. All of civilization will bow to His control. This will be followed by the Great White Throne judgment

when the wicked dead will be raised to stand before the Lord in judgment for having failed to believe on Christ. Following judgment they will be cast into hell. God will then provide a new heaven and a new earth, and the saints of God will reign with Christ for eternity.

Every age of history has been marked by bloodshed and persecution as pertains to the Church of God. Our present age is no exception. Untold numbers of saints have suffered martyrdom under the iron rule of communism. But this will not always be the case. "For He [Christ] must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet." Christ is coming back to this earth, and then the sword will be in His hand. No longer will His saints be persecuted, for judgment will be poured out on the enemies of the cross.

Many years ago the Prophet Zephaniah spoke of this day of judgment saying, "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy: for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land" (Zephaniah 1: 14-18).

No, things will not continue as they are now. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet." This day prophesied by Paul many years ago cannot be far away. The time when Christ

will return to execute judgment upon the enemies of the cross is near at hand.

Who are the enemies Paul was speaking about in this passage? Do you think this refers only to those who have persecuted Christians? Surely it does not. The enemies of Christ are those who have failed to become His friends. They have not yet acknowledged Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. There is no other way of salvation, for God "commandeth all men every where to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). Have you repented of your sins and turned to the "man whom God hath ordained" to be the Saviour of all who believe?

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Even while Christ is reigning upon the earth for a thousand years, death will still hold the wicked in their graves. But at the end of that thousand-year reign of Christ, the Lord will speak and the wicked dead will come forth to be judged. Then will come the second death, as we read in Revelation 20:14-15: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." At this time the enemy, death, will be destroyed.

Think of it: for those who have trusted in the resurrected Christ, the great enemy, death, is already destroyed. It is true that believers die. Their bodies go back to dust, but only for a short while. We shall be raised from the dead, even as "Christ the firstfruits."

What comfort it must have been to sorrowing Mary and Martha when Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). What Christ meant was that believers would not actually die, experiencing eternal separation from God.

For when the believer dies the soul goes to Heaven while the body "sleeps," awaiting the shout from Heaven above when the "dead in Christ shall rise first." Indeed, this is not the kind of death those outside of Christ experience. What a wonderful provision God has made for those who love Him—to realize that death is not the end, that we shall some day meet Christ and gather with our loved ones in Him. Millions in this world know nothing of this comforting hope. For them death is misery and torture. But for the child of God, the Bible declares, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (Revelation 14:13).

Two Korean women stood watching a funeral procession on its way to a cemetery.

"Who is this?" asked one.

"The missionary's son," answered the other.

"That is very sad," replied the first.

"It is not as sad for them as it is for us," said the other. "They know something that makes them sure they will get their son back some day. We know nothing about how to get our children back."

There are millions in the world who do not know that there is a way to meet their loved ones again. They have never heard the gospel story telling of Christ's death and resurrection. We who are believers, having experienced eternal life, must be zealous in publishing the glad tidings, that lost and dying men might experience the eternal hope we possess in Christ.

"For He hath put all things under His feet." Not only is Christ the mighty conqueror of death, but all things are under His control. He said in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Of course Paul did not mean that Christ the Son ruled over God the Father; "But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also

Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Though the Father and the Son are of one substance and coequal, yet there is a very definite sense in which the Son subjects Himself to the Father. It would seem from what Paul said here that in the new heaven and the new earth this relationship will become even more pronounced, "that God may be all in all."

A perfect relationship exists between the Son and the Father. They live and act in unparalleled harmony. At no time did the Son ever resist the will of the Father. As the Son is related to His Father, so believers should be related to Christ. Our attitude toward the Lord Jesus should be the same as that of Christ toward God the Father. Above all else, we should desire to please Him and to fulfill His holy will for our lives. Any trace of rebellion within our hearts is a matter of distinct disobedience to the plan of God. No believer can live in such a state and be happy. The joyous Christian will say, as did the Psalmist, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (Psalm 40:8).

One time J. Hudson Taylor was heard to say, "It makes no matter where He places me or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for the easiest positions He must give me grace, and in the most difficult, His grace is sufficient. So, if God places me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible, or so difficult; but the weight and strain are all gone. His resources are mine, for He is mine."

Indeed, Mr. Taylor knew the blessing of complete submission to the will of God. No man could speak like this if he were of a rebellious heart. Child of God, is Christ reigning in your heart? Is He the Lord of all in your life? If not, you are missing much. It is far better to let God lead and plan everything than try to do it yourself. Maybe at this moment you are dwelling in agony and misery because of the fruition of

selfish planning. Let God have His perfect way in your life. Do not resist His will any longer! Submit and yield in perfect obedience to Christ, your Lord.

Should you not be a child of God, will you turn to the Saviour? He is waiting for you to come. He longs for you to come and be saved.

## WORTH DYING FOR

*1 Corinthians 15:29-34*

WE HAVE CONSIDERED the great fact that all things will be subdued under the power and rule of Christ. Paul resumed his argument for the resurrection, which was laid aside following verse 19 in favor of a parenthesis. The great truth of Christ's resurrection is now seen in its practical relationship to the believer.

The passage begins with several widely interpreted questions. There are no less than thirty different interpretations of verse 29, some of them being extremely fanciful and imaginative. It is quite obvious that the apostle was not referring to some unique kind of baptism that was practiced in favor of those who were already deceased. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any suggestion of such a baptism. What then did Paul mean when he asked, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" Frankly, I must admit that I do not know what he means. I can only tell you what I think he means.

It seems that the apostle was referring to our identification with the crucified and risen Christ which is symbolic in water baptism. When one submits to the ordinance of baptism,

he is testifying to the fact that he has died, has been buried, and has risen again with Christ. Paul expressed this great truth in Romans 6:3-6: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Water baptism cannot produce the transformation described in these verses. Baptism is a testimony to the fact that the believer has experienced the reality of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ spoken of in this passage. Thus in this sense we have been "baptized for the dead," that is, in behalf of Christ who died.

But even baptism would be worthless and meaningless were it not for the fact that Christ rose from the dead. For if Christ remained in the tomb, there would be no transformation of life. It would be useless to be baptized in behalf of the death of Christ. Since He did rise from the dead, this great truth becomes meaningful, for we are baptized not only for the dead, but also for the living. Christ died and rose again. As the result, those who have been born again submit to baptism to give forth witness to the fact that they have been crucified with Christ, buried, and raised from the dead, with the assurance that through this new life they are enabled to walk circumspectly.

It is because of the resurrected life that Paul and the other followers of Christ were willing to risk their lives. Rarely do you find men and women willing to die for a lie or for false teaching. The dangers surrounding believers at the particular time of the writing of this Epistle were innumerable. Do you think anyone would be foolish enough to take his stand for a mere theory that he knew to be a lie? These dauntless men and

women risked their lives to witness faithfully to the saving grace of Christ because they knew He had been raised from the dead.

Doubtless you will agree that somewhere at some time we have lost this fervor to tell forth the truths of the gospel. Are you convinced in your own heart that Christ rose from the dead? Have you been identified with Him? Are you one with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection? If so, this fact in itself should constrain you to use every gift God has given and every facility He has provided to point others to our Saviour and Lord. In Acts 4:20 we read of God's servants, Peter and John, who declared, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." These men had seen the risen Christ. Though in danger of imprisonment and even martyrdom, they were constrained to witness. You and I need this same compassion, prompted by a holy boldness to tell the lost about our risen Redeemer.

The story is told of old John Vassar who spent his entire time going from house to house trying to engage whoever came to the door in conversation about the Lord. He had an uncle who founded Vassar College, but he used to say, "I would rather be old John Vassar than the man who built the college." One day he knocked at the door of a very beautiful home where lived a wealthy man and woman. The woman was alone at the time when John knocked. Vitally interested in what he had to say, she invited him in. For two hours he talked to her about a crucified and risen Christ. Later that day when her husband came home, she told him about this unusual man and of his deep sincerity.

Greatly disturbed, he shouted, "Why didn't you tell the old man to go about his business?"

"If you had heard him talking," she replied, "you would have thought he was about his business."

What was old John Vassar's business? Telling the lost about Christ! Indeed, this is your business and mine if we really know Christ. God has said in Isaiah 43:12, "Ye are My wit-

nesses." Let us not try to sidestep or shirk our responsibility before the Lord. We have been baptized into His death and resurrection. Thus with fearless courage we must go forth to tell those who have never heard the good news that Christ lives and that He desires to save all men.

Paul spoke of the constant jeopardy he faced because of his true stand for Christ: "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." Paul was under constant fire by his enemies; that is, those who hated and despised Christ. He suffered manifold hardships and severe trials, not necessarily because he had to, but because he was desirous of telling the world of a resurrected Christ. In his second letter to the Corinthians he wrote: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Corinthians 11:24-27). From the persecutions and the privations he suffered, it would almost seem that he died time and time again, even daily.

Paul's statement, "I die daily," has a very literal meaning, but I am sure it means more. For Paul declared in Romans 6:11, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is highly probable that each day the apostle went before the Lord in prayer, reckoning himself to be dead with Christ, praying that he might die to self and all of its sensual and lustful desires. At the same time, he committed himself afresh to his ever-living and ever-reigning Saviour, giving Christ the first and absolute control of his heart. If our Lord had remained in the tomb, this would be a worthless and useless procedure.

Since Christ lives, it is not only necessary but mandatory that

every true believer "die daily." It is highly improbable that one can know real victory in Christ without this daily experience with Him. Many believers are weak, living in constant defeat, simply because they are ignorant of the power they might possess through our resurrected Lord. Columbus discovered America, but how much did he know about our lakes, rivers, and forests? He died knowing very little about what he had discovered. In a similar manner, many of the Lord's people have discovered something of the love of God, but there are heights, depths, and breadths of it they do not know, simply because they are unwilling to do as Paul did, to "die daily." Those of us who submit to a daily experience with Christ in prayer, reckoning ourselves to be dead and at the same time alive through His mighty power, have discovered the secret and source of unusual strength. Paul could say in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He did not merely say, "I can do all things." Long before, he had come to the realization of his own limitations. But drawing on the life-giving power of Christ, there were no limits to his advance and conquests for Christ.

A delicate little lady who had obviously seen better days continued to go to work as a seamstress although past the traditional threescore-and-ten years. The daughter of one of the families for which she was employed, marveling at her quiet endurance, asked her one day how she managed to work so hard and so steadily.

"Well, my dear," she replied in a patient voice, "sometimes it seems hard. Often I get up in the morning feeling so weak and faint that it seems impossible to go through the day's work. But, you see, I am like the electric bulb before it is connected to its power. The first thing I do in the morning is to connect with the Power; looking to my living Lord in prayer, I place my hand afresh in His and all day long I can sense His mighty power surging within my soul."

This dear child of God knew what it was to die to self and

become alive to Christ. The question is, do you know what it is? Even more important, are you entering into this experience with Christ day by day? This is your privilege because Christ lives, He rose from the dead.

Paul offered another argument in favor of Christ's resurrection: "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die." Doubtless Paul was referring to his experience in Ephesus when scores of angry men, prompted by Demetrius the silversmith, wanted to tear Paul apart limb from limb. The apostle would have us understand that there would be no sense in facing such jeopardy had Christ not risen. Why not live as the ungodly, catering to selfish flesh, eating and drinking? After all, if one is nothing more than an animal living and dying, he might just as well live like an animal.

The Word of God declares in Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." It does matter as to how and for whom we live. To live for the flesh is condemnation, but to live for the Spirit is justification. For whom are you living? Are you busying yourself in those exploits that will soon prove worthless, nothing more than wood, hay, and stubble? Oh, believer in Jesus Christ, realize that you are "crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). Even more than that, you are alive with Christ, for Christ is living in you. But is He really living in you? Does He have control? Is He superior in all things? Do you yield constantly to His lordship? Doubtless some of the Corinthian Christians were being influenced by the Epicurean philosophy, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." This was based upon the conclusion that there is no resurrection, that when one dies it is the end. Paul was quick to respond to his statement of this philosophy: "Be not deceived: evil com-

munications corrupt good manners." In other words, the Epicurean philosophy is a deception. Have nothing to do with it, Paul warned; it will prove to be poisonous to spiritual life.

Paul urged the Corinthian believers to have no association with the false teachers who were denying the resurrection. He quoted a popular proverb—"Evil communications corrupt good manners." The word "communications" means more than mere conversation; it has to do with one's companions. Paul's statement might also be read, "Evil companions corrupt good manners." Indeed they do. Many of us could look back over the years and consider the deterring influence some of our friends have had upon us. Our faith has been weakened, our zeal has been abated, our love for Christ has grown cold because we chose the wrong companions.

Corporations desiring to employ young men of promise in positions of trust have used many and varied ways of testing applicants. However, one of the surest proofs of a person's potential is given by his choice of companions. Companions in turn determine our activities, and activities reveal tendencies. Usually it is possible to determine one's real interest in spiritual matters by the kind of companions he chooses. Rarely do those of a warm spiritual fervor choose to fellowship with those with cold hearts. "Birds of a feather flock together" applies very well to believers in Christ.

In writing his second Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul used even stronger language in dealing with the subject of companions, saying, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Of course, "unbelievers" applies to those who deny Christ as Redeemer and Lord. Paul exhorted them not to establish companionship with those who deny the faith.

It would seem that Paul's exhortation goes even deeper. Many professing Christians are guilty of unbelief. Their lives prove it in ever so many ways. We are not to fellowship with them. We are not to be yoked with unbelief in any form. We

are to pray for our unsaved friends and help them in every respect, but they are not the ones to be chosen for companionship, for "evil companions corrupt good manners." In time we might be influenced by their low plane of living and turn from the Spirit-directed paths God has chosen for us.

In the light of what had been said, the apostle called for immediate action: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." The word "awake" has reference to sobering up after a spree of drunkenness. Paul intimated that those within the Corinthian church who had embraced the idea of no resurrection were like people under the influence of alcohol who could not think properly. Thus he called on them to arouse from their drunken stupor and believe the truth, for it would be a sin to continue in unbelief.

The real problem was that these unbelieving Corinthians were deceived by the devil. One need not be very old in the faith to realize the subtle and destructive power of our worst enemy. We read in Revelation 20:10 about "the devil that deceived them." Ever since the creation of the first man, the devil has been busy in the occupation of deceiving not only unbelievers but believers also. Few of us are aware of his sly tactics. It may be that you have been deceived. You entered into what you thought was a "good deal," but you were virtually bankrupt materially and spiritually before you could dissolve the partnership.

A Christian man had a small business. He was not wealthy but he made a good living and was able to dwell comfortably with his wife and family. One day he was approached by two professing Christian men about selling the business and investing his money in a new business in which all of them would enter. This appealed to the Christian. The others were church men and he knew of no reason why he should not go into business with them. His two friends gave evidence of being Bible-believing Christians. But after about a year in his relationship

with them, he realized that he had made a terrible mistake. He concluded that if the other men were true Christians, they were certainly living on a low plane. The business did not prosper and soon it collapsed. Everything was lost.

There is only one way to do anything and that is God's way. There can be no compromise or lowering of the standards. If we are to receive God's blessing, regardless of what it is, it must be done according to the Lord's plan.

It may be that there was a time when you were walking with the Lord, but now you are in what Paul termed "a drunken stupor." To you God says afresh, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not." Break your ties with those who do not love the Lord with the entire heart. Lay aside those things that are hindering spiritual growth. God says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2). Perhaps, you have tried time and time again to lay these things aside, but have failed. God not only tells us what to do but how to do it. He says, "Looking unto Jesus." As we call upon Him and trust Him moment by moment, we receive miraculous power to do all things.

Paul made a strong accusation in this same verse as he said, "for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." Probably this was the chief reason why there was so much trouble in the church at Corinth. To "have not the knowledge of God" means that they had never been born again. They talked Christ but they had never experienced Christ. Natural minds cannot comprehend spiritual truth. Thus some of these professed believers were denying the resurrection. Paul said, "I speak this to your shame." What a tragedy. Many of the Corinthian believers had come out of the darkness of paganism into the glorious light of the gospel and now they had succumbed to this false doctrine of no resurrection. Paul said to them, "You should be ashamed of yourselves." And in-

deed, he was right; for one to know the truth and then turn from the truth is a shame.

Could it be that you have drifted from that way which you once knew to be the true way? I urge you to come back. Remember, God's grace is sufficient to receive you back. He says in Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Yes, God will abundantly pardon all your sins if you will humbly repent and turn to Christ, claiming His forgiveness.

## A NEW BODY

### *1 Corinthians 15:35-49*

THE APOSTLE PAUL then entered another phase of his treatment of the subject of the resurrection. The change was prompted by several questions that had been raised. "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" Thus having substantiated the fact of the resurrection, Paul continued by giving divine instruction as to the nature of the resurrection body. Whether the two questions were asked by an earnest seeker or an avowed skeptic, we are not certain. But Paul replied, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." Paul was not being unkind or disrespectful in his use of the word "fool." As used here it means one who has given little thought to the matter. The apostle was convinced that not only was the resurrection a truth of divine inspiration; it was also reasonable. He stressed this fact by the use of analogies familiar to all.

First he illustrated from the experience of the farmer who sows his grain. What happens to the grain after it is sown? The tiny seed decomposes, it rots away in the soil. But out of this comes a blade of green, then the stalk, then finally the wheat or other grain, according to whatever was sown. This Paul used as a type of the resurrection body. It is sown in one form but raised in another. Christ spoke of this in John 12:24 when He declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Everyone was familiar with this process; it could not possibly be questioned. On the other hand, one could not honestly question the resurrection. Even as the tiny grain of wheat is sown and after decomposition begins to grow, in like manner the bodies of believers, of whom Paul was speaking, after death will decompose and return to dust in the grave, but by a miracle of God they will be raised to meet Christ when He returns.

As the growth of a seed that is sown is under God's control, so is the resurrection of the human body. "But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." All things are under divine jurisdiction and power. They are "as it hath pleased Him." Also Paul emphasized that whatever is shown in the soil will come forth with a similar body. For example, one does not plant wheat and get rye. In like manner, a wicked man will not be buried and then raised a saint, nor will a saint be buried and raised a wicked man. Paul made this clear in Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The teaching is wide-spread that there is no such place as hell; that because God is a God of love, it matters not what man has done or how he has lived; after death he will go to Heaven. Certainly such error is refuted by what Paul said here, "to every seed his own body." That is why it is of supreme

importance that every living person come to Christ and get right with God. For one to delay in making his decision may result in his spending eternity in hell.

Some years ago there was an air of fear and dread in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, when the engineers notified the people that the great dam which had stood for so many years was going to break in a few hours. Heavy rain had been falling for many days and the waters had backed up. When the engineers discovered a little crack in the dam they cried, "Flee for your lives! Rush to the hills, the flood is coming!" But there were hundreds of people who said, "Why, those young college students don't know what they are talking about. They are saying the dam is breaking and the flood is coming. That dam has held all these years." They stayed on in their places of business. Then suddenly there was a crash and a roar, and down the valley rushed millions of gallons of water to sweep some 300 people to their death because they had not heeded the warning.

What God has declared in His Word is truth. In 2 Corinthians 6:2, He says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Do not treat this lightly. Death for you may be nearer than you think. As you die, so will you be raised from the dead. If you die without Christ, you will be raised without Christ. Only as you die a believer will you be raised in the likeness of the Lord Jesus. Do not take a chance on the Word of God being wrong, for in all the years of civilization it has never been proved to be wrong.

One time while I was conducting meetings in Baltimore, Maryland, a friend asked me if there was anything in the city I would like to see.

"Yes," I said, "some years ago I read of the beautiful statue of Christ, entitled, 'The Divine Healer,' in the Johns Hopkins Hospital. I would like to see that statue."

The following Saturday morning we drove to Johns Hopkins Hospital. As we entered the lobby, there was the huge

statue. What a solemn sight this was. The great figure of Christ stood with arms outstretched. On the base of the statue were the words, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Doubtless hundreds of people who have entered that hospital have stopped to look at that impressive figure and then read the words. Surely the thoughts of many must have turned to the Great Physician, to find in Him peace and comfort.

Of course, even more important than the statue is the living Christ Himself. Wherever you are, there He is. If you have never received Him into your life and acknowledged Him as your Saviour and Lord, with arms outstretched He is saying to you at this moment, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

The apostle then discussed the second question raised in verse 35, "With what body do they come?" There are different kinds of bodies: "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." It is quite obvious that the resurrection body will be different from our bodies as they are in their present state. But though the body will be different, its identity will remain the same. As to how this will be, only God can answer that question; the adaptation of the body to its environment is within the power of God. He has given humans bodies with which to live upon the earth. He has endowed animals with bodies so that they might dwell in caves or under the ground. Fish have different kinds of bodies altogether, enabling them to inhabit the sea. Then, of course, there are the birds who have been prepared for their existence in the skies. When Christ returns, His people will be raised from the dead to meet Him, and at the same time God will provide them with glorified bodies for eternity. "There are also celestial

bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." The angels in Heaven possess celestial bodies; we on earth have terrestrial bodies. There is a distinct difference between them, even as there will be a difference between the present body and the resurrection body.

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory." Even as the sun, the moon, and the stars differ in glory, "So also is the resurrection of the dead." As the sun is more glorious in splendor than the moon, and as some stars are more beautiful in their brightness than others, so the resurrection body will far exceed our earthly body in every detail.

In clear and understandable language Paul distinguished between the body the believer now has and the one he will have following the resurrection: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." The human body will be "sown in corruption." That is, it will be buried in death. But it will not remain in the grave. At the appearance of Christ, the body of the believer will be changed miraculously, "raised in incorruption," and will no longer be subject to death. Sickness and disease will have no power over this incorruptible body. "It is sown in dishonour" because it is a body of sin; but when raised from the grave, it will be "raised in glory." The curse will have been removed and it will then resemble the glorified body of Jesus Christ.

The believer's body is "sown in weakness," subject to pain and illness; but "it is raised in power." This does not mean that it will possess miraculous powers necessarily, but it will be opposite from weakness in that it will be no longer subject to the ills of the flesh such as fatigue and hunger. "It is sown a nat-

ural body." That is, it is bound by all the confines placed upon human flesh; for life it is dependent upon food, air, water, and other essentials. But when raised from the dead, it will be raised "a spiritual body." This is not to say that it will be a spirit, for then it would no longer be a body. But it will be the opposite of the natural body. No longer will the spiritual body be governed by the limitations that surround us presently. It will be without sex. It will not need food, nor will it become weary. The mind will not be disturbed by perplexities or fear. We shall be in perfect relationship with Christ our Lord; for the spiritual body will be completely controlled by the Spirit.

Paul was quick to add, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Just as definitely as we know there is a natural body because of our present existence, there will also be a spiritual body for those who love the Lord. This statement seems also to be an admonition. Since there is a natural body and a spiritual body, everyone ought to make certain that he is prepared for the spiritual body. How does one prepare? By believing on Christ; by receiving Him as Saviour and Lord. There is no other way to prepare. How important it is that everyone give attention to the Word of God as it is found in Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." These natural bodies in which we live will soon go down into the dust in corruption. But then what? Will yours be raised in incorruption? Death for you may be nearer than you think. And then what? Without Christ, it could only be eternal hell.

A Christian was urging a careless sinner to make his decision for Christ before it would be too late.

"Don't trouble yourself about me," he said, "I'll slip into Heaven with the crowd some day."

"My friend," replied the Christian, "you have mistaken the place. The crowd is on the way to hell. Therefore, if you slip in with the crowd, you will slip into hell." Scripture says, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and

many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Continuing, Paul said, "And so it is written, The first man Adam created by God received his life from God and became a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Rebelling against God's plan of holiness, the first Adam yielded to sin and brought upon himself the penalty of the grave. Centuries later the last Adam appeared, last in the sense that there will be no other; for either humanity will continue in the way of the first Adam or follow the last Adam. The last Adam was distinctly different from the first in that He "was made a quickening spirit." This means that He had the power and authority to impart life by raising men from the dead. He declared in John 5:21, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." The first Adam is known by the mark of death, while the last Adam, Jesus Christ, is known as the Giver of life.

Paul recognized that God has a proper order in all things: "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." Even as the grain of wheat had to go down into the ground and die before it could produce new life, so the first step in man's existence is his natural life in the human body on this earth. If he trusts in Christ and claims Him as Saviour and Lord, he will be prepared for the spiritual, which shall follow the natural. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." Adam was created from the dust of the ground, as we are told in Genesis 2:7, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

In contrast, Jesus Christ had a heavenly origin. Those who are like the first Adam can expect no more than to go back to the dust. But those who are like the second Adam, having been born again, are assured of the wonderful prospect of

Heaven. "As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Adam was "earthly," created from the dust of the earth. Everyone born into this world is born with his nature, which is a sinful nature, corruptible and subject to death. But all those who have trusted in the living Christ will bear the marks of the heavenly. Upon being resurrected from the dead, they will be like Christ. Paul tells us in Philippians 3:21 of Christ, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

The apostle summed up what he had been saying about the resurrected body: "And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." All of us know what it is to bear the image of the earthly. We have experienced the many sorrows resultant from sin, such as pain, anguish, mental breakdown, poor health, war, bloodshed; but for those who know Jesus Christ, there is a better day coming. "We shall also bear the image of the heavenly," free from sickness, sorrow, and death. We may rest in this fact that, as certainly as we have experienced the limitations thrust upon us by our earthly existence, we shall in like manner enter into the liberties to be granted to us when we "bear the image of the heavenly." What a wonderful future believers in Christ will have. Think of all the saints of God who have suffered for years, the hundreds upon hundreds of shut-ins who are true believers in the Lord Jesus. Praise God, some day these bodies of dust will become spiritual bodies like unto Christ's glorious body.

A Sunday school teacher expressed her sympathy to one of her little pupils at the home-going of his grandfather. The little boy thanked her, then said, "Grandpa had a body that hurt. So God just took him out of that body and took him up to be with Him. We buried the old body with the pain in it, but some day God is going to send Christ and He is going to

fix that body all up, without any pain." How true! No wonder the Psalmist said, "Precious in the sight of the **LORD** is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15). Yes, death is a precious experience to those who know Christ, for the best is yet to come. In addition to this, consider the peace that floods the hearts of those in Christ who lay their loved ones in the grave. The grave is not the end. We are looking for the Lord to return, who will call forth these bodies from the grave. But while we wait we enjoy the peace that passeth all understanding.

It was about a month before Easter that the fourteen-year-old son of a lovely Christian mother had been buried. Two days later her little girl gave up the fight; and in less than a week her baby. Only her little three-year-old escaped the deadly diphtheria. When Easter came, she was at church with her husband and child. Her face was pale but she wore no other emblems of her sorrow. When the congregation rose to sing, she softly sang the words, "The powers of death have done their worst, But Christ their legions hath dispersed." Her husband could not sing, but when they recited the creed he was heard steadily saying the words, "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." The mother taught her class of girls that day and the father, who was the Sunday school superintendent, led in worship and read the resurrection story with only a break now and then.

A fifteen-year-old boy walking home with his father after the service said, "Dad, I guess Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence really believe it, don't they?"

"Believe what?"

"The whole thing, all of it, the resurrection, you know!"

"Yes, son, they really do believe it."

All round the world there are faithful children of God who believe this pinnacle truth of the Scriptures, the resurrection. But again I remind you that a man is prepared for the resurrection only if he has received Christ into his heart in this life.

Do you really know Him as your own? I am not asking if you have joined the church. I am not asking if you have been baptized. The question is, do you know Christ? If not, the resurrected Christ stands before you, desirous of entering your life to prepare you for the day when He will come back physically and bodily, to receive you from the grave unto Himself. Will you trust in Him as your very own?

## A GREAT MYSTERY

### *1 Corinthians 15:50-58*

WE COME NOW to Paul's concluding thoughts on the theme of the resurrection as set forth in this wonderful chapter. There appears to be one more question to be answered. Quite extensively God's servant had treated the subject of the saints who have died in relationship to their resurrection. The bodies of these saints will be raised from the dead when Christ returns. But what about those believers who are still living at the return of Christ? It is this question Paul answered in the ensuing verses.

In our present state we would not be prepared to live with our Lord and the resurrected saints. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Paul did not say why flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; he merely stated a fact. But, of course, the reason is that frail, weak, dying, sinful bodies were never prepared for eternity. At the same time, we could not possibly enjoy the blessedness of Christ's reign in our present state. A change of some kind is imperative. Paul's statement regarding flesh and blood not inheriting the kingdom of God does not mean that we shall be

mere spirits in the kingdom to come. In our present state in the flesh, sustained by blood in which is our life, we are not ready for Heaven. He did not say that flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God, for we shall be clothed with bodies of flesh.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” The word “mystery” here does not denote something mysterious; rather it was something hitherto concealed but now revealed. Paul was revealing a truth about which no previous communication had been given to the people of God, namely, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” “We” refers to those Christians who will be living when the Lord comes. “Sleep,” as we have said before, has to do with body sleep, not soul sleep, for the soul never sleeps. All believers will be changed at the return of Christ, both the saints in the graves and those who are alive. They will be given bodies which are no longer subject to the laws of this present life, but glorified bodies, like unto our Lord Jesus Christ.

The change will be instantaneous: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” The coming of our Lord, the raising of the dead, and the changing of the bodies of the living saints will not be a long drawn out process. It will all take place “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”

Paul further described the change: “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Keep in mind that the apostle was speaking of the body throughout this entire passage. The mortal putting on immortality has no reference whatsoever to the soul, for the soul of every man is immortal. The soul will never die. But think of it, child of God, these sickly, suffering bodies in which we live, one of these days will be perfect bodies. Whether we are dead or living, when Christ returns we shall be changed. As believers in the Lord Jesus, we shall enter into the fullest expression of life without all the natural and

sinful encumbrances that have hindered perfect enjoyment.

But, someone may ask, if believers are to experience this tremendous change in the future, why doesn't God permit us to enjoy something of this blessedness now? Why must we suffer such severe trials and testings? Simply because we are still in the body of sinful flesh, and sinful flesh needs testing. If we are to grow and mature in the faith, the trials of life are imperative. They reveal to us our own weaknesses and show us how insufficient we are without a moment-by-moment dependence upon the Lord. They are God's blasting process in God's work of spiritual excavation in preparation for the building of character.

Trials teach us to rely upon Christ and Christ only, delivering us from self-sufficiency and false security. How vividly we see in the Scriptures that trials brought Jacob to the end of himself. They stripped Job of his self-righteous confidence. They purged Peter of the self-life, driving him to lean wholly upon Christ. How we should praise God for the trials of life that teach us how to cry out unto the Lord with sincerity of heart, "Not I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20).

Trials bring us face to face with our greatest need—complete dependence upon the Lord. Until the trials strike, we feel as though we are getting along pretty well. Suddenly we are brought to the realization of the shallowness of our superficial cry of faith. Usually it is only in the darkness that we understand the full meaning of the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Trials teach us to pray and have faith. Never do we pray as well or as meaningfully as in the midst of some valley of the shadow. Distressed and distraught, we reach out to the Lord, from whence cometh our help. It is sad but true that most of us must be pressed to our knees by some soul-shaking calamity of life.

Trials teach us the essential lesson of patience. In our corruptible bodies, we become anxious and fearful. But God uses trials to teach us to wait on the Lord.

Greatest of all, trials make Christ real to us. We know He is the all-sufficient Saviour, but frequently it takes trials to prove this to us to the point of no doubting. Thus let us not overlook the advantages of the much-needed trials while we remain under the yoke of corruptible bodies. But, looking for a greater day when "this corruptible must put on incorruption," let us pray as did the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

At the return of Christ another important event will take place relative to the resurrection. An age-old prophecy recorded in Isaiah 25:8 will be fulfilled: "He will swallow up death in victory." With a tone of certainty, Paul, in writing to the Corinthians declared, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Try to imagine it, if you can: no more partings, no more funerals; death will be banished. What a comforting truth this is. There are few of us who do not know in a very practical way the awful pangs of death. Presently it is a reality. It is a ravaging enemy that conquers and destroys. But its conquest is only temporary, for one of these days it will be "swallowed up in victory." When Christ returns and His beloved dead are raised and living believers changed, death will be defeated forever.

Paul exclaimed, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." Here he emphasized the terribleness of sin, for there would be no death without sin. And can we not say, without sin there would be no sorrow of any kind? Had there been no sin, there would have been no sickness, suffering, or death. Let no one doubt the fact of sin, for death declares the certainty of sin. Thus sin is "the sting of death." At the same time, "the strength of sin is the law." The law is helpless when it comes to the banishment of sin. At no time in the history of civilization was it ever God's

purpose to free man from sin or its guilt by the law. The law reveals sin, but it can never cleanse from sin.

There is a victory, however, over sin and death. Thus God's servant ejaculated, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Did you notice, in speaking of this victory over sin and death the apostle did not say that God *will give* us the victory; it is present tense—"giveth." He "giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle would have us see that we need not wait until Christ returns for this victory; it is our present possession in Him. In Romans 8:37 Paul declared that "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Then he went on, with unshakable confidence, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). The victory all believers possess in Christ can never be lost.

Of course, a believer may choose to live in defeat; but this is not God's fault. Every essential provision has been made in Christ for a continuous victory over the power of sin. We may be tossed about by temptations, but there is no reason for the believer to yield. God assures us that "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). This truth could be illustrated by the buoy which is firmly anchored at the bottom of the sea. The waves splash around it, but it floats serenely in its appointed place. The tide rises and falls, but it stays there still. The mighty waves come racing against it, but it mounts them one by one and rides them as they roll past. The tempest descends. The billows rush upon the buoy, and occasionally it is submerged, but immediately it rises to the surface again, unmoved and unharmed. Indeed, this is a picture of the victorious life made possible for the believer by Jesus our Lord.

Perhaps you can say, I understand this about sin, but Paul

was speaking about sin and death; is there a present victory in death? Yes! What believer has not discovered victory in the hour of death? God has been very near to ease the pain and provide the strength. Even though there were tears, there was also peace within. We are assured that though our loved ones in Christ experience death, in reality they go to be with the Lord; only the body goes back to dust.

Consider too the comfort one receives from Christ when facing death. One time George C. Needham made a pastoral visit to an aged woman who had not long to live, and he wanted to comfort her.

"You are not afraid to die?" he queried.

"I do not expect to die," she replied.

"You mean you are trusting the Lord and He has taken away the fear?"

"No, I'm not going to die."

Thinking that her mental balance was disturbed and that he would humor her, he said, "Why should you be exempt?"

"I have died already," she replied.

Now he felt sure she was insane but said, "When?"

"Over 1,800 years ago." Seeing the puzzled look on his face she continued, "You do not seem to understand. When Jesus died, I died. When He was crucified, I was crucified. When He rose, I rose. I am a child of the resurrection. Death is far behind me. I shall only 'sleep in Jesus.' "

Indeed, this dear child of God knew the meaning of Paul's words, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you know the meaning of these wonderful words? Have you received Christ into your life? If not, there is no victory apart from the Saviour. He is the Victor who gives the victory. He arose triumphant over death. It is He who can give you an eternal victory over death.

In concluding this monumental chapter, Paul made a clear-cut, practical approach to the entire doctrine of the resurrection: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, un-

moveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." In the light of the certainties the apostle stated in this chapter, he challenged every true, born-again believer to be "stedfast," that is, remain firm and strong in the faith. Then he used an even stronger word, "unmoveable." This means, do not deviate in any way from God's chosen paths, do not permit yourself to be influenced by temptation or sin or the vain philosophies so common in our day.

How can one best remain firm and stable in the Lord and in His truth? Paul gave us the answer: Keep "abounding in the work of the Lord." Keep busy for God and you will not have time to follow the devil. Be assured, if one is not busy for God, he will be busy for the devil. Before our Lord left His disciples He admonished them, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). This was to say, "Stay busy, faithfully serving Me, until I return." This same message is for each of His chosen ones today.

The word "abound" used by Paul means to do more than enough. The believer never really finishes his service for the Lord. Regardless of what he has done, he must do more. His task is never completed. But how few of God's people seem to know the blessing of "abounding in the work of the Lord." Some do only what is necessary to get by. Others do practically nothing. Deterred from lives of usefulness by pleasure, comfort, and money, they miss God's best.

Some years ago I picked up a tract written by Evangelist Paul Levin, entitled, "The Tragedy of a Wasted Life." It tells of a sad old man dying of cancer, who told his pastor this tragic story: "Years ago in Sweden, God called me to preach. To this I agreed if He would enable me to sell my farm. The very next day a man made me an offer, but I hesitated, telling him to return the following day. After prayer, I promised God I would preach if the buyer would agree to take my job as Sunday school superintendent. The man said, 'That is the very chance I have wanted.' He paid me for the farm, but

rather than use the money to prepare for the ministry I went to America.

"The first year in America my wife died, leaving me with five children. Very soon after my oldest daughter died. Still I would not surrender to God's will. I preached a little on the side but did not obey God in giving my full time. I lost a good business, pleaded bankruptcy, and left town. Then I went into the hardware business and prospered for a time, but one of my sons, who assisted me in the work, began a systematic robbery of the till. Again, I was forced into bankruptcy. These things did not come upon me accidentally; they were the hand of God. Now I am dying of cancer. I have about three months to live." Weeping, he said, "I know I am saved, but oh, the loss. I will soon be ushered into God's presence to give account of a whole life of disobedience."

What a tragedy! Even more regrettable, this man's experience has been duplicated in a measure by thousands of others. Far too many of God's people have overlooked their responsibility to the Lord to keep abounding in His work. Wasting precious time and talent, they have no testimony for God. If this should describe you, hear His words, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Paul's concluding thought was that nothing done for the Lord is ever wasted: "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." There is coming a day of reckoning for believers, when "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Following Christ's return for His own, we shall stand before Him to be judged for our works. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). Many will be rewarded, but probably a greater number will be empty-handed before God.

Let us not think the only reward received in the service

of the Lord is that which will be granted at the judgment seat of Christ. Who of us abounding in His work has not discovered the multitudinous rewards received here and now? What greater reward could one receive in this life than the joy of leading a soul to Christ? We read in James 5:20, "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Think of it—the privilege of having a part in delivering a soul from eternal death! Is that not a thrilling joy, unmatched by anything this world has to offer?

Recall the best time you ever had. That is nothing to compare with the thrill of leading a soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. Can it not be that this is what Paul had in mind as he said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." He had been speaking of victory over sin and the grave to have its ultimate climax when Jesus comes again. What are believers to be doing? Living for self and the flesh? No! We are to be telling lost and dying men about One who lives and who is coming again, that they might enter into this eternal victory we have found in Him. Look into your own heart. Are you truly abounding in the work of the Lord? Is the most important business in your life that of witnessing to the saving grace of Christ? Are you actively engaged in the ministry of telling others of our victorious Saviour? If not, delay no longer. Claim the fullness of God's Spirit and go forth to abound for Him.

## THE BLESSING OF GENEROSITY

*1 Corinthians 16:1-4*

THE APOSTLE LIFTED US high into heavenly places in the previous chapter in presenting the glorious truth of the body of the believer changed to be like Christ, when our Lord returns. Following that wonderful chapter, look at the apostle's first four words in chapter 16: "Now concerning the collection." My, what a let down! From the thrilling truth of the return of Christ and the gathering of the saints to meet Him in the air, we condescend to the mundane subject of taking an offering.

But is this really a condescension? In the thinking of many, it is, but in the mind of God, it is not. There is no condescension here. For what the apostle spoke about in the opening words of this chapter can also be placed legitimately on the same high spiritual plane that we have been following in chapter 15. Many believers have looked upon the stewardship of giving as a burden rather than a blessing. Our Lord has declared, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Many of God's people have never discovered this blessing. Paul exhorted us to be "staunch, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." It is almost impossible to do this until one enters into the joy of giving to the work of God. The Lord's work costs not only time and effort but money. Some Christians realize this, but the majority have never come into a practical understanding of this fact.

How many churches there are suffering from a lack of spiritual growth simply because some "business-minded" board members feel that, if they can skimp along and keep down the bills, the church will be prosperous. Certainly, it does not pay

to skimp on some things. There are churches that skimp on literature. The unhappy consequence is that their people are uninformed and many of them are confused. Others skimp in their Sunday school, failing to make their accommodations attractive to children and youth, refusing to buy necessary materials properly to teach these maturing minds. Many try to skimp on youth work, considering it unnecessary and unimportant. There are churches that skimp on pulpit supplies when the pastor is away. "Get someone who will not cost very much," they say. Oftentimes, when a church is pastorless, these are the kind of supplies that are obtained; and not too infrequently they end up with one of these eager supplies as pastor. They are proud of the fact that they have saved money. There are churches trying to skimp in every possible way as they seek in their way to spread the gospel. Granted, they are saving money, but at the same time the church may be dying.

These churches remind me of the farmer who came in to see his wife one day, saying, "Feed costs are higher than ever. We'll have to do something and do it fast." He decided to mix a bit of sawdust with the grain he fed his cows, and a few wood chips in each serving of hay. This seemed to work so successfully that he gradually increased the amount of sawdust and wood chips until at last he was feeding mainly sawdust and wood chips. The amazing thing was, it worked. He was successful in achieving his purpose. He kept his feed bills down. But—he kept his cows down too: they died. There are some things you cannot skimp on and get by. If this is true any place, it is true in the church.

The Apostle Paul had a legitimate reason to follow this outstanding fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians with the words, "Now concerning the collection," for throughout the entire Word of God we find the subject of giving to be one of the predominant themes. The Bible refers to prayer about five hundred times, to faith less than five hundred times, and to material possessions about one thousand times. Sixteen of the

thirty-eight parables spoken by the Lord Jesus were clearly concerned with the stewardship of material possessions. When a theme is presented so predominantly in the Scriptures, we may conclude that it is important in the mind of God and it should be important in our thinking as well.

The apostle wanted an offering to be taken "for the saints." Paul's faith was extremely practical. The high and lofty doctrinal truths of chapter 15 found their outlet in the ministry of helping others in chapter 16. The offering to be received was for the poor saints at Jerusalem. These were believers who had taken an unflinching stand for Christ; the result was ostracism. Many of them, because of their faithful witnessing, could not obtain employment. Some were even banished from home and family life. They were looked upon with scorn and ridicule.

Paul had already told the Corinthians, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). Thus their faith was to be as practical as Paul's. What the apostle was telling the Corinthians, he had told other churches as well, in particular those of Galatia. "As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." Probably on his visits to those churches he had given them instructions as to God's plan for Christian stewardship. He urged the Corinthians to give in the same sacrificial manner.

The principle Paul laid down for the churches of his day is one that is much needed in ours. In this godless age when so many of us seem to be afflicted with covetousness, we need to pray that God will give us liberal hearts, that we may share with the needy. In writing to the believers at Galatia, Paul said, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). We have an obligation to alleviate the suffering of the unsaved as well as of the saved, but Paul added, "especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Our greatest obligation is to proclaim the gospel to those who have never heard. This demands an investment of our means, that we might send missionaries to every tribe and nation in the world. Millions have not yet heard because too many Christians are selfish. Oh, that God might open our hearts to the ministry of giving, that perishing souls might come to the light, and that broken and suffering bodies might find help through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Several important things are said in verse 2 as Paul instructed believers how to give. First, giving should be *punctual*, "On the first day of the week." In Paul's day, believers worshiped on Sunday, the Lord's day, in honor of Christ who rose on the first day of the week. When we attend the services of worship on this holy day, we are to honor the Lord with an offering. We should not give merely on emotional appeals but systematically and regularly as obedient children of God. Of course, some do not receive a pay check every week. It is not imperative that one give on a weekly basis. It is obvious that the issue in Paul's thinking is not so much weekly giving as a satisfactory systematic method of giving as opposed to the haphazard and spasmodic response on the part of some.

Next, it should be realized that the ministry of giving is not in particular for some believers but for all who have been born of the Spirit. Paul declared that this responsibility was for "every one of you." It is *personal*; no one is excluded, from children to adults. If we know Christ and belong to Him, we who receive the manifold blessings from His hand are to show our appreciation through our gifts. The poor as well as the rich, all who know the Lord, are to support the work of the Lord. It is amazing how many Christians have not entered into the personal aspect of giving. Even those who are faithful in other things, such as Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance, oftentimes overlook the privilege of glorifying God with their offerings.

One time a Negro preacher submitted this church notice to

a North Carolina newspaper: "Knox Memorial Baptist Church, the Rev. John Walker, Pastor, preaching morning and evening. In the propagation of the gospel, three books are necessary: the Bible, the hymnbook, and the pocketbook. Come tomorrow and bring all three." This brother certainly emphasized an important truth. While some might strongly emphasize the Bible and the hymnbook, they overlook the place of the pocketbook in their Christian experience.

Giving should be *provisional*. Paul declared that each believer was to "lay by him in store." This suggests giving deliberate forethought to a program of giving. For all too many of us, this blessed ministry is an afterthought. How many there are who give the excuse, "I can't give very much because my expenses are so great." Did you ever stop to realize that your first debt is to God? You owe Him more than you owe anyone else in the world, and you ought to begin to pay something on that debt.

A few years ago sports fans were amazed to learn that Alvin Dark sent one-tenth of his world series check to his home church in Louisiana. Later in a nationally syndicated article about his tithing experience, he remarked that some of his friends said they would like to tithe but with the payments on the car, TV set, rent, children's clothes, food, utilities, insurance, etc., there was not enough left. Dark reminded his readers that the practice of tithing involved taking God's share off the top, not the bottom, of personal income.

To take off the top and not the bottom is scriptural. Jacob declared to God, "Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee" (Genesis 28:22). He could not possibly have given God the tenth had he spent all his money and then thought of God. Jacob was provisional in his giving. The Lord's portion was his first obligation.

For a Christian to fail in his stewardship responsibility is to steal from God. We read in Malachi 3:8-10: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have

we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the **Lord** of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The children of Israel were to bring the first-fruits of their grain or flocks to God. The only time they failed to do this was during seasons of spiritual decline. They neglected their offerings, and as a result stole from God. Do not be guilty of this evil; if you do you will miss the promised blessing God has stated in the Malachi passage. Be faithful in putting the Lord first in your giving and He will open "the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Our offerings should be *proportional*, "as God hath prospered him." This same truth appears throughout the Bible. In Deuteronomy 16:17 God says, "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the **Lord** thy God which He hath given thee." The basis for our giving should be proportioned to the blessings we receive from God. Of course, none of us could give satisfactorily in this manner, nevertheless we should be striving for this goal.

Some years ago two men in New York were talking about the matter of giving.

"You give too much," one said to the other. "I will wait until I get a large pile of money and then I will give."

"No," said the other, "I will give as God prospers me."

Consider the sequel of the story. The former lives in New York today, dollarless. The latter is a prosperous businessman.

Doubtless some Christians are always having financial problems because they do not give enough. If a man gives to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the right spirit, he is insured for time and eternity. Any bank on this earth is a weak institution in comparison to the bank of Heaven. God's assets are

unlimited, even as He says, "For the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 50:12).

No believer could ever give too much. It is like the young man said when he replied to the skeptic who exclaimed, "I don't see how you get along. I should think you would be broke giving so much."

"No, no," said the boy, "it's as though God and I each had a shovel. Every time I shovel out, He shovels in. And He's got a bigger shovel." That is the way it works. Explain it, no one can! It is not necessary that we explain it, but it is necessary that we believe it and do it.

Our giving should also be *practical*. Paul urged the Corinthians to give before he made his next visit to them, "that there be no gatherings when I come." He wanted to utilize the time of his visit to preach and teach the gospel rather than be burdened with the responsibility of raising money for the poor saints at Jerusalem. This he wanted done completely before his arrival. Paul was always very practical. Here was another evidence of it. It is tragic that so much time must be spent in our churches seeking to raise money to carry on the work of the Lord. If all believers were to recognize their obligation to God in a practical way, and if they were to fulfill their responsibility through love to Him and give punctually, personally, provisionally, and proportionally, there would be no money problems in our churches. The world could be evangelized, the needy could be helped, God's work could be done. I hope that, if you are a child of God, you are doing your part in honoring the Lord in this respect.

Paul offered further suggestions regarding the offering to be received for the persecuted saints at Jerusalem: "And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." Paul hoped to make a visit to the Corinthians before very long. He had a true pastor's heart, overflowing with the love of God. But it was not easy to travel from city to city in those days.

Then, too, wherever he was, the responsibilities resting upon him were unusually heavy, so that it was always a sacrifice to leave his immediate work to go elsewhere.

Paul had a sincere concern for men's souls. The many problems that plagued the Corinthian believers were a heavy burden on his heart, so that even though he had been criticized severely by many in the congregation, he loved them so that he had to go to them. There is no doubt about it, Paul practiced what he had written to the Corinthians, "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" (1 Corinthians 13:4). Not only did he *write* to them about love, he desired to go to them to *show* them love.

How essential that our hearts be sensitive to the love of God, for it is only in such an atmosphere that the Holy Spirit works. We can overlook and ignore divisions among the people of God, but we shall never experience God's blessing until they are banished.

One night during the Welsh revival Evan Roberts did not rise from his seat. For nearly half an hour the congregation waited for Roberts to begin. Finally he rose.

"There is a man here who is carrying a deep grudge against someone in this room," he said. "There is no use in my proceeding. Let us pray." They continued to pray.

Finally a man arose in the gallery and said, "I am the man, and there is the man I want to talk to." They were both officers in the church. They met and were reconciled. Then Roberts preached and the church was visited with great revival.

We could see revival in our day if Christians would let the Holy Spirit melt their cold hearts. Petty jealousy and unkindness would soon be overcome with God's love.

Paul possessed this love. There were some in the church of Corinth who had little regard for God's servant, but he wanted to visit them anyway and do his best to enable this crippled

church to begin once again to be fruitful for God.

Paul was a strong advocate of the importance of doing all things decently and in order. He urged the Corinthians to appoint certain well-approved men from the congregation to handle the special offering. There had been numerous cases of reproach because of the church's poor handling of funds. Thus the apostle was concerned that there would be great care in their selection of the proper men. Those, he said, "ye shall approve."

Paul would send these chosen servants to Jerusalem to carry the gift, and at the same time he would give them a letter to the saints at Jerusalem. Paul was quite concerned that the offering they were to receive would be a worthy one: "Them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." The word "liberality" has the meaning of grace and kindness. Paul was speaking about a genuine offering of love. All offerings should be of this nature so that they will not only help those in need but bring glory to God. Not all offerings are like this; often they are far less than what they might be, bringing shame upon the church and its officers. We are to give liberally to the work of the Lord.

Let me ask those of you who have been liberal givers: Have you ever been impoverished by your generosity to God and His work? Do you have any less of anything that you need because you have been liberal toward others? You know the answers to these questions. Time and time again you have reaped the blessing promised only to the liberal souls. You realized that every gift you made produced another miracle before your eyes, that as you gave out of your limited resources, God gave to you out of His limitless resources.

In writing his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul said, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Here again he was speaking about liberality. True, born-again believers are to be

conservatives in every respect concerning the truth of God, but with one exception: when it comes to giving, we should be liberals. If we are, we shall not live for ourselves and this world; we shall invest in the bank of Heaven. Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Where is your treasure? If your home or business burned to the ground, along with your bank, would you lose everything? Some of God's people would lose very little, for they have not made their investments in this world; they have made them in the souls of men who shall live for eternity.

A four-year-old son of a missionary in the United States on furlough was given a leather coin purse with thirty-five pennies. He was delighted and played with them by the hour. But when Sunday came, he gathered up his little hoard and put it in the offering. Some time later, overhearing some conversation about Heaven, he volunteered, "Oh, yes, I have thirty-five pennies there."

We smile at the little boy's interpretation of Scripture. But what do those passages that speak of treasure in Heaven mean, if not that? What do you have up there? Would you like to have more? Try this method: when money comes to your hands, much or little, earned or given, make it your habit to turn its use over to the Lord. The result will be something like this: first of all, this portion for God; then this for obligations, running expenses, etc.; and possibly a portion toward savings. There may be some left over; God will guide in that, too. Learn to be liberal in your giving. An extra \$10 you slip into the hand of that needy one, or the \$25 you give toward the hospital expense of a missionary, or the \$50 you provide for a new project on the field to spread the gospel, will bring

a joy and consolation to your heart that can be experienced in no other way. Yes, God does love a cheerful giver. The cheerfulness is an end product of a motive. The motive is generosity, liberality, and the result is joy.

Quietly evidencing his heart of love, Paul promised, "And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me." Paul longed to go to the suffering saints at Jerusalem. Here he revealed this inner ambition to go along with the church officers to share the joy of carrying a liberal gift to them. But he was anxious that the gift be one worthy of this long trip to Jerusalem, one that would really magnify the Christ he loved.

It might be well for all of us to consider our own giving and ask what is the true motive. Have we come into the inexplicable joy evolving from liberal giving? Who of us could not do more than we are now doing? Will you pray about this matter? You may be missing much of the blessing God has intended for you, because though diligent in many spiritual practices, you have overlooked one of the most important. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 8:7, "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." Yes, let us abound in the grace of giving, that the work of God may not be hindered, that in these days of tremendous need, the gospel of the grace of God will go forth in mighty power.

## SPIRIT-DIRECTED SERVICE

### *1 Corinthians 16:5-12*

HAVING SEEN THE IMPORTANCE of honoring God with tithes and offerings, in the opening verses of chapter 16, we notice another theme embodied in the next several verses. Though it is not directly stated, it is clearly evidenced.

The Apostle Paul was very careful that his service for God be directed by the Spirit. Because there is so much flesh service in the Lord's work, there is a vast waste of money and effort. Paul waited patiently for the mind of the Lord in everything. He longed to visit the Corinthians, but he moved cautiously, making sure that he had the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He said, "Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia." We are not told why the apostle chose to pass through Macedonia rather than go directly to Corinth. However, reading between the lines we surmise that there were souls to be reached for Christ and that the Spirit of God had spoken to Paul's heart, giving directions for this special mission.

In John 4:4 we read concerning the Lord Jesus that "He must needs go through Samaria." Such a route was not the regular path. The usual route in making this journey would be to cross Jordan and go north on the east side of the Jordan River. It was practically unknown for Jews to travel through Samaria. Why then did our Lord lead His disciples in this particular manner, which was against human reason? Simply because there were souls that needed to hear the truth. Thus, "He must needs go through Samaria." It can just as well be said that Paul must needs go through Macedonia. Though he gives no explanation for his action, we can certainly conclude

that God was directing him, that he might reach needy hearts for the Saviour.

It is wonderful to be in such close communion with our Father in Heaven that we hear Him speak regarding the steps to be taken. There appears to be a great host of believers who have little concern about divine guidance. Hastily they rise from their beds in the morning, rush around, and get ready for work, then head off for their employment without any time to wait on God. How many blunders they experience through the day! How much misery they suffer, all because they do not seek the leading of the Lord. Consider David's words as they are recorded in Psalm 143:8: "Cause me to hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in Thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee." How important that all of us take time to wait on the Lord in this respect, to seek His will for everything throughout the day. Be assured, His plan is the best plan. He knows all about the pitfalls ahead; only His divine guidance can enable us to avert tragedy.

Do not be guilty of the sad error of neglecting to listen to the voice of God. Take time to incline your ear toward Him, then follow closely by His side. How those of us who are in Christ need to realize the joyful privilege that is ours to be directed by the Holy Spirit in everything. Keep in mind that the Comforter was not sent into the world to lead everyone, but only the children of God. An unbelieving world has no promise of a comforter under any circumstances. Only God's blood-bought children have the promise of guidance by the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:14 we read, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." It would not be out of order to invert this by saying, "For as many as are the sons of God, they are led by the Spirit of God."

Even though Martin Luther was hidden in a convent as a monk in the Roman Catholic church, he was moved by the Holy Spirit while reading his Bible. He was convinced in his heart that "the just shall live by faith," not by works. He

wrote his theses, nailed them on the door of the Roman church, and a great revival started.

Down through the centuries God has always had those who have listened to His voice and responded with obedience. These believers were not necessarily "smart" or "shrewd." They were Spirit-led and Spirit-directed. The Apostle Paul was this kind of man. Above all else he was concerned about the will of God in his life. Thus it was that he must "pass through Macedonia."

"And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit." Paul's last phrase strongly emphasizes what we have already said. He was very careful that the plans for his future be according to God's plan. Thus he informed them that he would spend time with them if the Lord permitted.

This essential truth cannot be overemphasized. In these days of quick thinking and quick acting, God's people need to learn the secret of waiting on the Lord. In everything our attitude should be, "If the Lord permit."

Fundamental in seeking the will of God is our relationship to Jesus Christ. Those who are walking afar off will have little concern about God's plan. The secret of guidance is not so much the rules for guidance as the Guide. David said in the twenty-third Psalm, "*He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.*"

Suppose you were lost in the forest, and after a night of cold and exposure you were finally located by the forest rangers. You say, "Sirs, I am lost. Please give me the rules for guidance." Such a thought is absurd. Probably the first thing you would do would be to thank your rescuers for coming after you, then with perfect submission you would follow them to safety.

Without the leading of the Lord, all of us grope about as lost men. As we surrender daily to Christ's lordship, and

pledge our obedience to His will, we shall know the equanimity and blessing found only in the perfect will of God. I wonder if the Lord is having His way in your life, or have you been resisting His plan? On the other hand, have you failed to give thought to His plan? Do not miss out on God's best. Let God guard and guide you in every step you take.

The apostle declared, "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Obviously Ephesus was Paul's stopping place during the writing of this Epistle. He felt constrained of the Lord to continue there until Pentecost. Pentecost had a most significant meaning to all Christians in Paul's day because that was the occasion on which the Holy Spirit descended with mighty power on the waiting band of believers at Jerusalem. The Lord was giving great success in Paul's ministry at Ephesus, so much so that it was an inopportune time to leave. But notice the other side of this: even though there were revival blessings, at the same time there was discouraging opposition. But is this not always true? Wherever there is a mighty working of the Spirit, you may be sure there will be strong opposition from the devil. If the Spirit of God is moving upon the hearts of men and women, resulting in conversions, the devil will launch a concentrated attack at the same time. This is to be expected. In fact, if there is no opposition, one wonders if the work we are doing is really being blessed by the Spirit.

It is clear from this passage that the Apostle Paul was a brave and courageous soldier of the cross. Many of us have been guilty of fleeing from opposition. In Ephesians 6:10-11 God says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." But so often, rather than trust the Lord for His power, we have retreated from the presence of the enemy, failing to realize that opposition is frequently a sign of a real working of the Spirit. We read in 1 Peter 4:14, "If ye be reproached for the

name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." The Lord's work is not easy, for there is a personal devil who hates not only God but all who have anything to do with His work. We must expect reproach and persecution, but remember the words of our Lord Jesus: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12).

Some years ago when Japan was taking over Korea and was bitterly persecuting many of the leading Christians, carrying them off to Japanese jails, believers who were not arrested felt that by this very fact they were somehow lacking in their Christianity. A native Methodist pastor went to a missionary with the complaint, "Sir, there must be something wrong with our Methodist church. I fear we are lacking in faith. There are thirty-seven Presbyterians who have been put in jail and only one Methodist."

Recall how God was performing a great and mighty work in Jerusalem in the days of the early Church: "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). But what happened in the midst of this significant outpouring of the Spirit? A band of ungodly men, inspired by the high priest, arrested the apostles and put them in prison. By a miracle of God, the prison doors were opened and the Word of God came to His faithful saints instructing them to "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). Responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit, they went to the Temple in the morning and taught the Word of God. The high priest and his council had assembled to try the apostles. But when the guards went to the prison, they were startled to discover that the apostles were gone.

Later, the apostles were again apprehended and brought before the high priest who asked, "Did not we straitly com-

mand you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28). What was the reaction? Peter and the other apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Following this, they gave a clear-cut witness to Jesus Christ, only to be followed by more persecution.

The apostles were beaten and commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus any more. What was their attitude to all of this? Did they complain? Were they discouraged? There was no sign of either as "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). Not only that, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). Think of it! After all they had suffered, they rejoiced.

Paul's attitude in the midst of the violent opposition at Ephesus was identical to that of Peter and the other apostles. Notice he did not say, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, *but* there are many adversaries"; he said, "*and* there are many adversaries." He expected opposition to the message of truth. Had he said "but," he would have intimated that even though they were having great success, it was not too enjoyable because of the opposition. But Paul did not even suggest such a thought. His use of "and" indicated that the opposition was a matter of course. It was to be expected.

What a lesson there is here for you and me. We must not grumble and complain because of the workings of our adversaries. Our eyes must be fixed on Christ and kept on Him. Is it not true that all of us have on occasion fixed our eyes on our many adversaries rather than "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"? (Hebrews 12:2) It may be that even now you are so encompassed by your "many adversaries" that you have turned your gaze from the Lord Jesus, the Son of the living God. Look up, child of God! Remem-

ber, we have an all-conquering Christ. There are no limits to His power. Heed the words of that marvelous old hymn:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face;  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace.

"Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do." Paul had sent Timothy to the Corinthian church to perform certain duties which are not enumerated here. The apostle was concerned that the young preacher be received with love and cared for with Christian kindness. Timothy was a young man with little experience in the ministry. Sending such a one to a church like Corinth, with its manifold problems, might create real difficulties.

It is believed, too, that Timothy was very retiring and not outspoken. In an atmosphere such as prevailed in the Corinthian church, such a man might be abused. Thus came this warning from the pen of the apostle, "that he may be with you without fear." Actually this is an appeal for Christian kindness. How greatly this virtue is needed. So often Christians are well-versed in the Scriptures, they know doctrine, they are willing to take a stand for the faith; but where is the kindness that should be so prevalent in the lives of believers? God says in Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

During one of President McKinley's congressional campaigns, a shrewd, persistent, skilled reporter for a paper of opposite political beliefs followed him from place to place, misrepresenting him. While this annoyed Mr. McKinley, he saw that the reporter was poor, ill-fed, and thinly clad, and admired his skill and persistence. One wretchedly cold, raw night as Mr. McKinley was riding in a closed carriage to an

appointment, he heard a familiar cough and knew the reporter was outside on the driver's seat. Calling to the driver to stop, he alighted and said, "Get down off that seat, young man." The reporter obeyed, thinking the time for Mr. McKinley's vengeance had come.

"Here," said McKinley, taking off his overcoat, "put on this coat and get into the carriage."

"But Major McKinley," said the reporter, "I guess you don't know who I am. I have been with you the whole campaign, giving it to you every time you spoke. And I am going to rip you to pieces tonight if I can."

"I know," said Mr. McKinley, "but put on this coat and get inside and get warm so you can do a good job."

Indeed, it is that kind of spirit that should pervade the Church of Christ. God's people should be helping one another, not tearing each other apart and gossiping about each other. We read in Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." It was this spirit of loving-kindness that Paul desired for young Timothy in his mission to the Corinthian church.

Paul made a most worth-while statement about Timothy: "He worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do." This really means that he did God's work devotedly, the work of the Lord was that for which he lived. He sought to do everything in a manner that would please and honor Christ. Suppose all Christians were working for God in this way? How many we know who have refused to do anything really constructive in God's program. There are others who take a job but do it in a careless, slipshod sort of way. In Jeremiah 48:10 we read, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the **Lord** deceitfully." This means that a curse rests upon those of God's people who do not pour themselves into God's work heart and soul. No wonder there are so many miserable Christians. God says in 1 Samuel 12:24, "Only fear the **Lord**, and serve Him

in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you." This is the way God would have each Christian serve Him, "with all your heart."

On a Friday morning, an eager young man from Stanford University stood before Lewis Janin. He, too, wanted to become a mining engineer, the young man explained, and thought the best place to perfect himself was in Janin's office.

"All I need right now," said Janin regretfully, "is a stenographer."

"A stenographer?" said the eager applicant. "I'll take the job. I can't come for a few days but I will be here on Tuesday."

When the new employee reported for work, Janin asked him why it was that he could not come until Tuesday.

"Because I had to rent a typewriter and learn to use it," he explained.

"I think you will do," Janin smiled. "What did you say your name was?"

"Herbert Hoover," was the reply.

Small wonder that this zealous young man became the president of the United States. It is this kind of zeal we need for God, determination to do the work of the Lord. This was the kind of drive evidenced by young Timothy and the Apostle Paul. We do not see much of it in the Church of Christ today, but, thank God, there are some offering themselves as living sacrifices for their Saviour. Were it not for them, the Church of Christ would have long ago lost its effectiveness.

Thus because of what Timothy was, Paul appealed to the Corinthians, "Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren." When the time should come for Timothy to make his return trip to Paul, it was desired that the Corinthians help the young preacher along his way. Erasmus accompanied Timothy on this journey to Paul and doubtless there were others who went with him.

The apostle's desire was that Apollos come to the Corinthians, but this was not possible. "As touching our brother

Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time." It is believed that Apollos did make the trip to Corinth at a later date. Obviously he did not feel constrained to go at this time because of the prevailing dissension among the believers. Since there were some who tried to stir up enmity between Paul and Apollos, it would have been embarrassing for God's servant to appear just then. Paul and Apollos were totally innocent of any personal dissension. By their gossiping and unkindness, some of the Corinthian believers were stirring up trouble that reflected on these two men of God.

Criticism can do much damage to the cause of Christ, as was the case at Corinth. Much sorrow is being caused among believers today because of this evil. Christians are often thoughtless in their remarks about others. Paul wrote to the Romans, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest" (Romans 2:1). This is a strong condemnation for criticizing. There is no excuse, Paul said. We who have been born of love should exemplify love. Indeed, there is no love in criticism. Many Christians give the impression by their speech that their attitude is the same as that of the Pharisees of whom Jesus said, in Mark 7:2, "they found fault." But notice further what our Lord said of these Pharisees: "He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Mark 7:6).

If you are guilty of this evil of criticism, in all probability your heart is far from Christ, too; you need a fresh experience with Him. As one surrenders his heart and life to God, there will come upon him a spirit of love that will overlook many things. He will then find it easier to show forth kindness rather than bitterness. Let us ask God to remove every trace of intolerance and maliciousness from our hearts, that we might truly reveal His grace and love.

## THE CLOSING APPEAL

### *1 Corinthians 16:13-24*

PAUL STARTED his concluding remarks with a stirring admonition: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." The Corinthians needed this warning; considering their many problems, it was obvious that they had failed to "watch." Had they kept alert, they would not have been deluded by our common enemy, the devil. Dissensions, disharmony, and defeat were the end results of their neglect to keep on guard. In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul wrote, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." This seems to be the perpetual ambition of the evil one, to take advantage of God's people. It is for this reason that all of us need to stay on guard and be watchful, ever ready for an attack, knowing that our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Few of us realize how treacherous our enemy really is. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Our Lord stated several important facts regarding the devil. First, Satan is the great thief. He has stolen man's purity, his power over creation, and robbed him of the possession of God's blessing. He tried to steal all of these from Christ, but he met One who was more than a match for him. Secondly, Satan attempts to kill by murder, drunkenness, and crime. It is not only the body that he seeks to kill, for he has led myriads of souls to the second death. Thirdly, he comes to

destroy both body and soul. His name is "Apollyon" (Revelation 9:11), which means "the destroying one." "To destroy" is "to cause to perish," and "perish" as used in John 3:16 is from the same Greek word meaning "destroy." Satan loves to see the unsaved perish in their sins and be lost forever in hell. Thus he does all in his power to entice the unsaved to turn a deaf ear to the gospel. For this reason it is important that we "watch."

But watching is not enough. Paul urged, "Stand fast in the faith." We are no match for Satan. He is far too strong for any human. Even though he is an angel, Michael the archangel refused to confront the devil apart from God's help and intervention. We read in Jude 9, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." We are to use this same procedure when we are confronted by the enemy: "Stand fast *in the faith*." Face temptation in the power of Christ, for Satan is no match for our Lord. Christ proved this during His temptation in the wilderness. Do not forget—when the devil is near, flee to Christ. He is the Saviour our tempted souls demand. Be fervent in prayer. There is victory in the Victor, but you must call upon Him for help. This is what David did when he needed help: "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6). We must do the same. Our Lord's ear is ever ready to hear and His heart is ever ready to feel. Only as we trust Him fully and lean on Him completely can we stand fast in the faith.

Next Paul admonished the Corinthians to "quit you like men." This means *to act like men*. Earlier in his Epistle Paul rebuked the saints at Corinth for acting like babies because of their factions and divisions. Here he pled with them to grow up and become full-grown men in Christ.

Realizing that no Christian reaches full maturity in his spiritual life while on this side of Heaven, Paul urged, "Be

strong." The thought conveyed here is to keep growing in strength. Salvation is instantaneous but growth should be continuous. The child of God should never stop growing in his spiritual life. Jude wrote, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith" (Jude 20). The "building up" process must not end until Christ is seen face to face. How does one keep growing? Be sure of this, you can never grow and become strong in the Lord by drawing on the things of the world for your nourishment.

The street where I live is lined by tall, stately trees, scores of years old. How did they get so big? Underneath the ground there are large roots reaching far out for life-giving and sustaining elements. They grew because the roots drew upon that which was essential to the growth of trees. How do believers grow? Paul gives us the answer in Colossians 2:7, "Rooted and built up in Him." Daily we must draw upon Christ through His Word and prayer. We must walk with Him and talk with Him. Never must there be a moment when we fail to lean upon Him.

"Let all your things be done with charity." Probably the greatest need in the Corinthian church was for love and kindness among the brethren. Repeatedly Paul reminded the Corinthians of this throughout his Epistle. Is it not true that all of us need to be reminded constantly of this foundational quality of the Christian experience?

During one of the battles of the Civil War, a Confederate drummer boy, with a canteen filled with water, picked his way back and forth over the silent battlefield. Around lay the dead and dying of both armies. He came to a man who had fallen from the loss of blood and excessive pain. Lifting his head, he poured into his lips a few drops of cooling water, bathed his face, and changed his position. In the midst of his ministering, the wounded Federal soldier opened his eyes, looked upon the other and whispered, "The uniform of an enemy, but the heart of a Christian."

Do you have the heart of a Christian? If so, your life should be manifesting the love of God experienced through Jesus His Son. If you are not a Christian, your greatest need is to turn to the Saviour. Only Christ can give love for God and love for man. At the same time, it is Christ who gives peace and satisfaction in life. Perhaps you have searched in many directions, but to no avail. You have tried sin; you discovered very soon that it did not bring the peace your soul needed. Possibly you tried deceit or dishonesty; these were not the answers. Christ is the answer.

Paul wrote, "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth." The first home opened to the gospel in Corinth was that of Stephanas. Evidently the entire family came to Christ, and from the time of their conversion they "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." Was not that wonderful? From the day they received Christ, they gave themselves to live sacrificially, so they might help fellow believers. Doubtless they opened their home on many occasions to provide hospitality for traveling missionaries. They gave money and offered consolation to those in need. They did everything possible to alleviate the burdens of suffering saints. What an unusual family! But should it be unusual? Should not this be the normal reaction of anyone whose life has been transformed by the power of Christ? God says in Isaiah 40:1, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." Stephanas and his family sought to do this. How greatly such a spirit of kindness and generosity is needed among the Lord's people today.

One time a little ragged, dirty-faced boy stood in front of a baker's shop, looking in the window. A lady passing by took pity on the child. She bought a bag of cookies and handed them to the little boy with a smile. His eyes brightened and,

looking at his benefactor, he asked seriously, "Are you God's wife?" This hungry lad was convinced that such kindness could only be shown by God.

Those of us who have been born again are God's children. We are related to our Father in Heaven, the God of all grace. He tells us, through the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The grace, mercy, and peace you and I receive moment by moment from our living Lord is not only for us but for others. We are to be channels of blessing, even as Stephanas and his household, who "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints."

Because of their willing service for others, Paul was concerned that the Corinthians show utmost deference for the household of Stephanas. Not only to them, but to all believers who possess this heart concern to help others: "Submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth."

Stephanas with his two friends, Fortunatus and Achaicus, had made a journey to see Paul at Ephesus. Doubtless it was Stephanas who bore the letter to Paul from the Corinthian saints. "I am glad," the apostle wrote, "of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied." We can only conjecture as to what it was they supplied. It might have been a special offering from some of the Christians at Corinth, but I am prone to think it was simply a spirit of love and kindness that had been shown to so many by Stephanas. For Paul went on to say, "They have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such." Paul was refreshed by the presence of these three brethren.

David wrote in Psalm 90:17, "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us." Stephanas must have prayed this

prayer constantly. By his radiant life it was obvious that God had heard and answered. How we need in our generation men like Stephanas who will refresh the spirit of other believers! This can be accomplished only as we are yielded to the control of Christ. A refreshing spirit is not the result of practicing the presence of God; it is the complete surrender to the person of God. It is to enter into the fullest realization of Colossians 1:18, "That in all things He might have the preeminence." It is only when the flesh has pre-eminence that friction and factions are created among the people of God. There is a decided difference between having Christ, and Christ having pre-eminence. All Christians have Christ, but it cannot be said that Christ has the pre-eminence in all Christians. If Christ does not have the pre-eminence, however, there will be much fruitless toil and many wasted efforts. Only when Christ has the pre-eminence can we know the blessedness of the life empowered by God.

Dr. C. I. Scofield used to tell of the forcefulness with which the passage in Joshua, concerning the captain of the Lord's host, came home to him. He had begun to take a certain pleasure or pride, far more than he suspected, in being the pastor of a growing and working church. He was not too conscious of it, but there was a kind of complacency on his part and he was beginning to be talked about a little. Then he came across the passage in Joshua. He resigned his pastorate immediately—but not to the church. He said not a word about it for two years; but he said to the Lord, "I have been figuring around before these people as the captain of the Lord's host. Now I resign. Be Thou Captain." From that day until the day he regretfully laid that pastorate down, he never felt an hour's burden of it.

What happened to C. I. Scofield in order to make this change? The transaction was very simple. He stepped aside and gave Christ the pre-eminence. Perhaps you need to resign from something, that is, before God, that you might let Him have the pre-eminence in your life so that whatever you do,

others will realize that it is God at work in you. Yours will be a refreshing spirit. Your friends will readily realize that when they are in your presence they are also in the presence of God.

As the Epistle draws to a close, Paul conveyed greetings to the Corinthians, first of all from "the churches of Asia." This could refer to those churches within the immediate vicinity of Ephesus or all the assemblies throughout the entire province. It would seem that the latter applies here.

"Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." You will remember that Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla during his visits at Corinth. It would seem that later they moved from Corinth to reside in Ephesus. Paul conveyed their greetings along with the greetings of other saints who had been meeting with them for worship in their home.

"All the brethren greet you." All the Christian assemblies throughout the city of Ephesus had sent their greetings to Corinth through Paul. Doubtless the members of these assemblies had been praying much for the Corinthian church, having heard of its many problems. The believers were deeply concerned about their brothers and sisters in Christ at Corinth.

"Greet ye one another with an holy kiss." As was the custom then, women kissed women and men kissed men as an expression of their Christian love. If Paul were writing to us today, he would probably say, "Greet ye one another with an enthusiastic handshake."

The apostle proceeded to attach his own personally handwritten salutation to the Epistle. The salutation consists of several important truths that the apostle wanted to emphasize: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Here is a solemn warning to the mere professors of Christianity. It would seem that the Corinthian church had a goodly number of such. "Anathema" is a Greek word meaning "accursed" or "devoted to destruction." "Maranatha"

is composed of two Syriac words meaning "the Lord comes" or "the Lord will come." Thus we may read the verse, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be brought to judgment when the Lord returns." This, of course, refers to the Great White Throne judgment when all the wicked shall stand before God and be judged for their sins. This will follow immediately after "the resurrection of damnation" (condemnation) spoken of by our Lord in John 5:28-29: Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

May I urge you to ponder this question, "Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?" Maybe you answer, "I go to church; I belong to a church; I read my Bible; I pray; I try to live a good life." You have not answered the question. The question is, "Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?" To love Christ is to acknowledge Him as your Saviour and Lord. It is to claim Him as the One who died for your sins and rose again that you might have everlasting life. It is to be converted, transformed from a life of sin to one of holiness. If you sincerely love Christ, you will not follow the old paths of evil, but you will walk along the narrow road that leads to life everlasting because you have experienced a mighty transformation in your life as the result of receiving Christ.

One night a well-known physician, head of the psychiatric department of one of New York's hospitals, attended a service in a New York rescue mission. He listened to the testimony of one converted man after another. Knowing him well, the superintendent of the mission asked the physician if he would like to say anything.

"Tonight I have been given the opportunity to observe something I did not know existed anywhere," he said. "It has been my privilege to listen to the testimonies of men who were glad to witness to what Christ had done for them. I know

nothing about that, but I confess I cannot otherwise explain what has taken place in their lives. A few of these men I recognize as drunkards and even as dope fiends. Some of them have come under my observation at the hospital. Had I been asked about and given a thought to their probable fate, I should have said that very likely they were in the potter's field. Here they are alive, well-dressed, delivered, and in their right mind. I do not know how the miracle was wrought, but of one thing I am confident. Nothing in science can account for this change in these men. Your kind of gospel is worth preaching to anyone, anywhere."

The transformation these men experienced is the transformation all true believers should experience. Of course, not everyone has descended to the lowest depths of sin, but in God's sight, the heart of everyone is black with sin, irrespective of the limits to which he has gone. For one to love Jesus Christ is to have a conversion experience whereby the heart, black with sin, is made white, having been washed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Have you experienced this transformation? Have you entered into this new life through the power of Christ? If not, as we come to the end of this Epistle, I trust that it will be the beginning of the Christian life for you as you humbly bow at the feet of the Saviour and acknowledge Him as your Lord.

Paul ended his Epistle with his favorite benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." But here, as in no other Epistle, he added a further thought, "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen." The Corinthians needed not only grace; they needed love. Of course, it is impossible to have love until there is a work of God's grace in the heart. Thus, God's servant made this closing appeal that grace and love might be realized in the divided congregation at Corinth. What a keynote upon which to finish this letter—grace and love!

If you are a child of God, may I urge you to rededicate yourself to our wonderful Lord, that His grace might flood

your soul. As God's grace does its work in you, His love will flow forth from you. But remember, as the apostle sought to stress throughout this Epistle, Christ must be everything to the believer or his life will be ineffective.

In the light of what we have studied in this Epistle, will you present yourself to God in a fresh dedication? Offer yourself to Him in the words of William Atherton, as they are found in his challenging poem, "Dedication":

Lord, can I dare sit idly by  
And watch the millions Christless die;  
Doing nothing to save the lost,  
Afraid of what might be the cost;  
Like Peter, warming at the fire—  
Sheltering under the church's spire?  
Dare I sit and waste the years,  
Sharing Thy joys, but not Thy tears;  
Unheeding Thy low, tender plea,  
"Take up thy cross and follow Me";  
While Thy footprints leave crimson stains  
In city streets and country lanes.  
As Thou dost carry Thy cross anew,  
Seeking the lost as I should do?  
O Lord, forgive. I weep in shame,  
I love Thee truly; in Thy Name,  
I turn my back upon the past  
To wholly follow Thee at last!









# 1 CORINTHIANS

## ... LIVING WISELY

*Living Wisely* is not easy  
in a sinful and materialistic generation,  
plagued by many problems similar to those  
confronting first-century Christians.

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and corrupt. And conditions haven't changed  
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so essential for our walk with the Lord.



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