



1st Corinthians

Devotional Commentary

Randal K. Young

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1 Corinthians 1:1-9

About the Text

(1) What did Paul mean by saying that he was “called”? He frequently uses this word (see v. 2 and 9) to mean that God designated him to be an apostle. This word does not refer to a voice from heaven which we can refuse or follow. Rather, it describes the effectual call of God that powerfully moves us in the direction of God’s prescribed destiny for us. Those of you who are believers came to faith not because you simply chose so, but primarily because God called you to it. See how the word is used also in Romans 8:30, Ephesians 1:18, and 4:1.

(1) What is an “apostle”? Literally, the Greek root (apostello) means “the sent ones.” In other words, an apostle is one who is sent out to communicate the message of Jesus Christ to the world. This is why Jesus’ twelve disciples were later called apostles - they travelled far to bring the gospel as far as Spain and India. There is also Biblical evidence that an apostle had to be one who personally and visibly saw Jesus. Paul implies this in 1 Cor. 9:1.

(1) Who is Sosthenes? A companion of Paul who assisted him in the writing of this letter to the church in Corinth.

(2) What and where is Corinth? In ancient times, it was a big, cosmopolitan city located in Greece, and rebuilt by Roman emperor Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. It was famous for its huge “shopping mall,” the ruins of which still stand today. It was most famous for its pagan temple prostitutes, a thousand of whom would work at the Temple of Aphrodite (the goddess of love and beauty). Through prostitution, the city won great prosperity. But it also won a reputation of great immorality. A “Corinthian girl” was the ancient term equivalent to the word “slut” today. To “Corinthianize” was to “practice immorality.” The Christian church in Corinth struggled to resist this immorality. There were those in the church who still openly practiced incest, fornication, and homosexuality. They also struggled with divorce, pop philosophy, fighting, selfish behavior, spiritual pride, and doubt. Paul wrote this letter to speak directly to these issues.

(2) What does “sanctified” mean? It means to have become holy; in other words, set apart from the rest of the world. When we become believers, God declares us “holy,” having been adopted as God’s very own special children. There is another meaning of this word, which appears in other parts of the Bible. Sanctified also refers to our process of growing to become more loving, patient, and kind like Jesus was. See my note for verse 8.

(2) Why does Paul add “all those everywhere” ? Because God intended this letter not just for the Corinthians, but for us and all other Christians too.

(3) What is “grace” ? Undeserved kindness. Salvation and eternal life is not earned, but rather a gift of God given out of His kindness to us who don’t deserve it.

(5) What did Paul mean by their being “enriched... in all your speaking” ? Paul explains himself further in 1 Cor. 12:8. God gave the Corinthian Christians a remarkable ability to speak in tongues (supernatural utterances), and words of knowledge and wisdom.

(5) What did he mean by “in all your knowledge” ? In 1 Cor. 12:8, 13:2, and 14:6, Paul describes the Corinthians as having received prophetic revelations from God. Although many Christians do not claim prophetic utterances today, we all have a special revelation from God - the Bible - which is a gift from Him.

(7) What is a “spiritual gift” ? The Corinthians prided themselves on their “spiritual gifts,” that is, their special God-given abilities to serve Him with, such as working miracles, healing, teaching, and leadership. Chapter 12 speaks more thorough about these gifts, which all Christians have.

(8-9) If the Corinthians were such a troubled church, then why does Paul say that they will be made “blameless” in the end? This concerns the extraordinary and wonderful work of God called sanctification. Every believer goes through various stages of spiritual maturity, or immaturity. But God is really the one in control of our growth (though we also consciously cooperate with Him), and He promises to make us perfect in the end when we die. This is the “keeping-power” of God, that “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6)

Insights

- Because of Jesus Christ, God gives all of us believers enormous blessings and promises more, even when we are troubled and backslidden.

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

About the Text

(10) Why does Paul “appeal” to the Corinthians about their problem, and not simply command them? Although he asserted his authority as an apostle in verse 1, he knew that problems in the church need to be handled gently, sensitively, and delicately. This is the way of Christ.

(10) What does Paul exactly mean by wanting the church to “agree with one another”? In the original Greek, the phrase literally means “that all speak the same thing.” In other words, godly unity comes not by simply being tolerant of any behavior or belief, but by discovering what we have in common. In Christ’s church, we have Jesus Christ, the articles of the Christian faith, and our purpose and mission in common. In the church today, there are many varieties of beliefs and practices. Some, for example, some believe in infant baptism, and some don’t. Although we should all affirm our unity in Christ, we must still deal with the issues that divide, talk openly about them, and lovingly search the Scriptures together, so that we might come to an agreement. Simply acknowledging our differences and doing nothing about them is far from God’s ideal for His people.

(10) What kind of “divisions” did Paul want to avoid? In the original language, the word “divisions” does not refer to separate Bible study groups or denominations. Rather, it literally means “tearing/rending,” where people fight and oppose each other. The Bible does not speak for or against denominations, or a church having one group for teens and one for couples. We need this kind of “separation” sometimes. What God speaks against, rather, is how we might use such groups to oppose one another.

(10) Why did Paul specify being united in “mind and thought”? Again, unity among Christians comes not by simply accepting our differences (though this is sometimes necessary), but by intelligently holding to the same essentials of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which Paul later explains after verse 18. Today, Christians tend to unite together based more on worship style, lifestyle, friendships, and even race, than anything else. However, in this passage, Paul reveals that godly unity starts with a group’s knowledge about Christ, not their style.

(11) What kind of quarrels did the Corinthians have? They fought by using the names of Christian leaders. Apollos was well-versed in the Scriptures and likely had loyal followers. Cephas (Peter) was one of the Twelve apostles. People in the church were using the names of the teachers they were loyal to, in order to fight against each other. Perhaps someone would say, “Look at those followers of Peter; and they say they’re Christians!” They even used the name of Christ in their arguments: “Well we’re true followers of Jesus Christ; apparently you aren’t!” Although Jesus raises up godly teachers to lead His church, God warns us never to elevate our loyalty to any human being to the point of breaking the bonds of loving fellowship between brothers and sisters in Christ. For example, Christians need to be careful about how they use the label “Calvinist” (followers of the 16th century

theologian John Calvin), or “Wesleyan” (followers of the 18th century preacher John Wesley).

(13) What did baptism have to do with causing divisions? In each local church, the pastors who lead others to Christ and baptize them often win their strong loyalty too. Sometimes followers become so attached to a pastor that they refuse to cooperate with other pastors.

(17) Why didn't Paul baptize? Because Jesus called Paul to exercise a greater power than baptism that would bring true unity to the church - preaching about the cross of Christ. According to this passage, there is great power for the church when all believers understand and agree on how Jesus Christ's death on a cross takes away our sin, and wins for us all the blessings of salvation. Romans 5:8 says, “For God demonstrates His love for us in this: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” And Romans 10:9 says, “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” When you believe, not only will you be assured of eternal life, but of another salvation blessing too: unity. In other words, you become part of a loving fellowship of like-minded believers. Unity comes when people put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Insights

- We have a natural tendency to divide, even in the church (10-11)
- We have a natural tendency to place our loyalty to a leader over Jesus Christ. (12-16)
- Jesus Christ brings unity starting with impressing the story of the cross on our minds. (10, 17)

1 Corinthians 1:18 - 2:5

About the Text

(18) Who are the ones Paul calls the “perishing”? Unbelievers, as opposed to believers “who are being saved.”

(18) What is the “message of the cross”? That the divine Jesus Christ became like the scum of the earth, and died a horrible death on a cross, that would result in cleansing the believer from all sin, regardless of what he’s done or will do, and with the result of supernaturally transforming his character and will. To many in this world, this truth is confusing, ludicrous, superstitious, unacceptable, or even weird.

(19) Does this mean that God is against the intellect? No. God made our intellect and designed it for us to use for His glory. Paul’s statement in this verse is referring to one’s use of his intellect alone to reach God or to answer the great divine mysteries of the world.

(20) Then whom was Paul speaking of when he refers to “the wise man,” “the philosopher,” and “the scholar”? He was speaking of the followers of popular Greek philosophies of the day, such as the teachings of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Epicurus (cf. Acts 17), and the Stoics. In such circles, it was customary to debate, listening to new ideas conjured up in the minds of creative men. The problem, Paul implies, is that this kind of *religion by human design* ends up with a view of God that is far from the truth.

(21) Why would the Christian message be considered “foolishness” to the philosophers and Greeks? Because it didn’t make sense, when compared to their own sensible religion that they dreamed up themselves. It lacked the polished rhetoric, persuasive argumentation, credible debate, and anti-supernaturalism that many Greeks required in order to accept the message and respect the messenger. For the Greeks, Reason was God. The God of the Bible didn’t fit the highly civilized man’s view of god. For example, see Acts 17:16-34 for the Greek philosophers’ reaction to Paul’s preaching of the resurrection of Christ.

(22) Why would Christ’s cross be a “stumbling block” to Jews? Because of their misinterpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures, they expected the Messiah to possess great political power, splendor, and triumph. A crucifixion, however, was equated with weakness, humiliation, defeat, and cursedness, according to their reading of Deut. 21:23 – “anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse.” So to the Jew, a crucified Christ appeared as a contradiction in terms, like “fried ice.” For many Jews, this was their reason for rejecting the gospel message, as well as closing their ears to the whole truth. In their search for more evidence that Jesus was the Messiah, they kept asking for additional miraculous signs as further proof of His divine power.

(24) Whom does the phrase “to those whom God has called” refer to? All present and future believers. Note that this verse implies that God’s call is effectual. That is, when God

calls a person to believe, he eventually believes. This implies that those who die as unbelievers were never called by God. See the use of the term “called” in verses 1, 2, and 9.

(24) In what way is Jesus Christ “the power of God”? Jesus Christ brings out the power of God mostly clearly when faltering speakers bring a strange message to a rag-tag audience, resulting in miraculous conversions, ended quarrels, healed relationships, a transformed character, and all the other blessings of salvation.

(4) What did Paul mean by his preaching “with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power”? Although it may include his miraculous “signs and wonders” (cf. 2 Cor. 12:10) that often accompanied his preaching, the context points more towards a reference to the dramatic conversions that resulted from Paul’s preaching.

Insights

- The world objects to the gospel, mainly because of three things: the content of His message, the weakness of the message-hearers, and the ordinariness of the messengers.
- Jesus Christ’s death on the cross has so much power, that it brings supernatural transformation to those who understand and accept it.

Key Memory Verse

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. (1 Cor. 2:2-5)

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

About the Text

What does this passage have to do with the quarreling that Paul was addressing in the previous passages? In this passage, Paul explains how their fighting won't be resolved through the latest philosophy, but rather through the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Today, it is easy to chase after the latest seminar, book, or psychologist to help our relationships, while ignoring the power of understanding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The truth is that those who genuinely understand their sin, and believe that Jesus' death on the cross takes away their sin, and be convinced of God's enormous love, will automatically begin to love others more. (See 1 John 4:7-21)

(6) Who are the "mature" whom the writer Paul is referring to? All Christians. Paul describes the "mature" further in the subsequent verses. They have received the Spirit (v. 12). They are called the "spiritual" (v. 15). They are referred to in v. 7, "...for our glory...;" verse 10, "...revealed it to us...:" and verse 12, "...we have received the Spirit..." In other words, Paul was speaking to the whole church, not just those who were spiritually more advanced than others.

(6) What does "wisdom of this age" mean? In the days that this letter was written, it meant non-Christian philosophies such as Epicurianism and Stoicism. It was the intellectual "in thing" to do, to sit around talking about the latest philosophies. See Acts 17:21. Today, we could apply this phrase to many of the latest self-help fads found in seminars, TV ads, and the back of magazines. Slick "gurus" claim to have the answer to financial freedom, happiness, success, and relationships. But if these teachings are not in harmony with the Scriptures, then they are "wisdom of this age" and not "God's wisdom." Inevitably, such "wisdom" comes to nothing.

(7) What is God's "secret" wisdom? It is the gospel story of Jesus Christ, who came to save the world. It is called "secret" because before Jesus rose from the dead, no one really understood why He came and how He would save believers. Not even His disciples understood why He had to die on a cross until He was finally resurrected. And to the world, Jesus was just another radical troublemaker. So why didn't the whole world run right away to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Why don't they understand the joy of becoming a Christian? Because Paul explains that God purposely keeps the truth hidden from some and reveals it to others.

(8) Who are the "rulers of this age"? Paul is referring to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, King Herod, and the high priest Caiaphas who put Jesus to death. Today, this term can also refer to any unbelieving political figure of authority.

(8) What is it about Jesus Christ that the world fails to understand? It is hard for us to fully understand how Jesus Christ is the way of salvation to those who believe. People, especially today, still think that we have to work our way up to God, either by chalking up

more religious “brownie points,” or by praying more, giving more, reading more, or serving harder. Even though preachers drill into us that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life,” it still doesn’t sink in. If it did, our lives would show it. It is difficult for us fully understand how grand is God’s plan, how evil is our sin, how total our depravity, how perfect is God’s love, how humiliating was Jesus’ death, how scandalous was the cross, how powerful was His resurrection, how complete is His forgiveness, how amazing is His grace, how rich is his spirit, and how great is our salvation. It is so hard to understand these things on our own, that we need God’s help.

(13) What are “words taught by the Spirit”? When we explain the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, God’s Holy Spirit gives us not only the thoughts and concepts for us to explain, but also the words we are to explain with. Telling someone about Jesus is sometimes scary, but the Spirit guides us. See John 16:12-15 and Luke 12:11-12.

(14) What does it mean that the things from God are “spiritually discerned?” It means that one can recognize, or discern, a teaching as being of God only if he has the Spirit to enable him.

(15) What does it mean that the spiritual man is “not subject to any man’s judgment?” It means that an unbeliever’s criticism of a believer is invalid, or “doesn’t count,” because the unbeliever has no capability of understanding the believer’s actions and beliefs. The world, for example, might call some Christians “holy rollers” or “fanatics” because they don’t understand the Christian’s faith.

(16) What is the meaning of the phrase “for who has known the mind of the Lord”? In other words, Paul is saying, “Unbelievers who mock and judge you - how would they know what God thinks?”

Insights

- We are naturally unable to understand the things of God.
- God gives believers the Holy Spirit in order to understand the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- God blesses relationships in the church when people understand Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:1-23

About the Text

(1) What is the “milk” Paul speaks of? The basic gospel story of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection as given in chapter 2. The members of the church at Corinth thought they were “mature,” having pursued all sorts of non-Christian philosophies that stimulated the intellect. The fact is, they were really “infants,” with their quarreling as proof. To bring peace into the church, Paul needed to speak again about the basics of the Christian faith: how they were all sinners, how Christ’s death took away those sins, how Christ’s resurrection proves all His claims, how the Holy Spirit enables us to understand, believe and be saved, and how all this will eventually stop their quarreling.

(4) What is so wrong about saying “I follow Paul...”? Translated literally from the original language, it would read, “I am of Paul, I am of Apollos...” In other words, these Corinthians actually labeled themselves after these leaders. The labeling was the problem. Even today, labeling is a sign of quarreling and division. People today say, “those Blacks” or “those Whites,” or “those hicks” or “those snobs.” Even among Christians, we sometimes say, “those Pentecostals,” or “those Catholics.” Such division also exists among “Calvinists” vs. “Arminians,” hymn-singers vs. chorus-singers, traditionalists vs. progressives. Labeling is a sin when it is done either to boost one’s own ego, or to denounce someone else.

(4) Who is “Apollos”? One of the gifted teachers in the early church. Acts 18:24-28 mentions that he was a Jew who possessed an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures. He was converted to Christianity through the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila. He was particularly active in public debate.

(10) What is the “foundation” Paul speaks of laying? The preaching of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Although people often try to build a church through managerial techniques and organized programs, a lasting church always begins with preaching - that is, the clear communication of the claims and teaching of Jesus Christ. This is why Paul writes in 1 Cor. 1:18, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

(10) How does “someone else” build on this foundation? Paul is speaking of everything else that goes into building a church, e.g. worship, group meetings, teaching, love, care, prayer, everything that builds up people’s faith and love for Christ, and their love for each other.

(14) Doesn’t this passage go contrary to what the Bible says, that blessings are given by God not earned? No. God gives rewards out of His grace (i.e. undeserved kindness), not out of obligation. When a Christian diligently performs God’s work, God will give him a extra gift, on top of the eternal blessings of salvation. Such a Christian still does not deserve such a gift, but God gives it anyway as a gift. Such extra gifts give us hope when we work tirelessly for the Lord. Eternal life and salvation, on the other hand, have nothing to do with

our hard work. All those who truly believe (which eventually leads to our doing good works) will be saved. This is why Paul still mentions that an immature Christian “will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”

(16) What does the “temple” refer to - the Christian, or the church? The church. Here, Paul says that the church (i.e. the gathering of believers) is the place where God’s Holy Spirit dwells. Then in 1 Cor. 6:19, Paul mentions that also our individual bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

(21) What is meant by “all things are yours”? When Christ comes back, we will together possess all that belongs to Christ now. In other words, the universe will be ours to rule over, as Christ continues to rule over us. See Romans 8:17, 32.

Insights

- Quarreling betrays one’s spiritual immaturity, no matter how religious one thinks he is.
- Quarrel-quencher #1: People who seem major at the moment are really only minor to the whole work of God.
- Quarrel-quencher #2: God rewards those who carefully build up the church His way.
- Quarrel-quencher #3: God judges those who don’t take the welfare of the church seriously
- Quarrel-quencher #4: All those who belong to Christ will inherit everything anyway.

Key Memory Verse

“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16)

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

About the Text

(1) What are the “secret things” that Paul mentions here? They are God’s truths as found in the Scriptures. They are “secret” in the sense that people would not fully understand these truths, even though they could be found in the Old Testament, until Jesus Christ came, the apostles explained it, and the Holy Spirit was given.

(3) Why does Paul seem to be defending himself in these verses? Because the Corinthians were critical of him. He was their most despised apostle, and they rejected his authority. In 2 Cor. 10:10, he was “unimpressive” to them. They were offended by him, because he spoke out against their immorality, and because he was simple, plain, and ordinary. He was neither eloquent nor wealthy. In this verse, Paul meant that he is not concerned with what others think of him, but with what God thinks of him.

(6) What did Paul mean by “Do not go beyond what is written”? It was a popular saying that Paul used to make a point: Do not brag about one leader in order to bring down another (which is what they were doing). This was the purpose of Paul’s saying. But the precise meaning of the saying itself is uncertain. I tend towards the meaning, “do not go beyond the Scriptures I’ve just cited,” in chapters 1 and 2. However, it is possible that “what is written” refers to Old Testament Scripture in general, or that the entire saying was a proverb meaning “don’t go beyond the rules.”

(7) What did Paul mean by these questions? Perhaps a paraphrase would make it clearer: “Who do you think you are? Don’t you realize that God, not your hard work, made you what you are today? Then why you act so snooty, as if you worked your way up yourselves?”

(8) How were the Corinthians “rich”? Not that they were all materially wealthy, but rather they were remarkably gifted in their God-given abilities. Chapter 12, 13, and 14 confirms the fact that they were spiritually gifted. They prided themselves in their ability to speak in “tongues,” make prophecies, and work miracles.

(8) How were they “kings”? Paul was sarcastically saying that they had reached the state of “glory,” which all Christians hope to become during Christ’s second coming (cf. Romans 8:17). The Corinthians were so prideful, however, that they acted as if they had reached the finish line before everyone else. Thus the remark, “You have become kings-and that without us!”

(13) Why did Paul go on telling them about the apostles’ troubles? To show them an example of the life of a humble servant of God. They, instead, were acting like pompous kings.

(15) Why did Paul say that he was their “father”? Because they became believers as a result of his preaching.

(16) Isn't Paul being a bit cocky by telling others to “imitate” him? No. He rightly recognized, as did others, that he lived a harsh and persecuted lifestyle. He is not at all claiming to be perfect. Rather, he was well aware of his authority as an apostle. In 1 Cor. 11:1, the point becomes even clearer -- he wanted others to imitate him insofar as he imitated Christ.

(21) Why does Paul ask them the question “What do you prefer?” It was Paul's way of referring to himself as a loving father (cf. v. 15) again. His harshness comes from his love for them, not his callousness.

Insights

- Christ's approval is more important than other people's opinions. (1-5)
- To Christ, a humble attitude is more important than riches, talent, intellect, or power. (6-17)
- Christ works most powerfully through those who are humble. (18-21)

The Bottom Line

Be humble. Jesus requires it of those who follow Him. Humility is grown by God. It is not simply an act of your own will-power. For once you think you're humble, you're no longer humble! Humility, rather, comes when God opens our eyes to (1) the gravity of our sin and weakness, and (2) the enormous power and love of God. The first comes when the law and commandments of God (e.g. do not lust) exposes our natural wickedness. The second comes when we believe and appreciate the full power of Christ's death on the cross to take away our sins, give us eternal life, give us the Holy Spirit, etc. Having our eyes opened to these truths is the key.

Paul's Ticked!

A paraphrase of 1 Cor. 4... *Even though we're only Jesus Christ's servants (just like the rest of you), we have been specially chosen to teach the mysteries of God. This is why I don't care if you or any others criticize me. God doesn't even care whether I criticize myself or give myself a pat on the back. I'm here to please God, not you. You still think you're right? Let's see who's still standing after Judgment Day. I'm saying this for your good, so you'll stick to the Bible, instead of chasing after all these fancy-shmancy ideas of yours. You really got messed up. You think you're too cool to listen to me anymore. Who do you think you are, anyway? Some kind of self-made gurus? Why do you brag as if you done it all by yourself? Don't you know that you are what you are because of God? You guys act like religious superstars. And you say you did it all by yourselves. Okay, superstars, maybe you could share your secrets with the rest of us, so we little peons can be big like you! I guess we're only “little” apostles who get beat up and can't defend ourselves. Oh, wise ones; oh strong ones; oh honorable ones, let us learn from you!*

We're just homeless people who get pushed around, and have to work hard for a living. We're just scum of the earth. Seriously now, I'm not trying to make you feel bad. I just want you be humble. I led you to Jesus Christ, and I've seen you grow up - I'm like your father and you're like my children. I've tried hard to be an example of living a humble, simple life for you. Now I'm going to send you another example of humility, Timothy. He's a dear brother in the Lord who will teach you. You've really become too big for your britches, and I'm going to visit you to find out who's responsible for this. Someone's been messing you up. They talk big, but I intend to find how tough they really are. I may not talk big, yet I'm going to confront them with the REAL supernatural power of God. I want to do this, not because I love to kick butt, but because I really care for you like a father.

1 Corinthians 5

About the Text

(1) What was the actual sin involved? A certain man, even though he was a believer, had an ongoing sexual relationship with one of his father's wives (not his mother). The church in Corinth frequently struggled with sexuality because most of the converts came from a Gentile (non-Jewish) background. They came from pagan Roman and Greek cultures of the day where homosexuality, prostitution, and polygamy were in style. This man, however, went a step further. He engaged in incest, an act that even the pagan world would have deplored. Christians today also struggle with sexual sin. In a world full of strip bars for men, male strippers for women, pornography, "gay" churches, sex acts on TV, movies, billboards, and now even the Internet, it's hard to resist sexual temptation. Paul "picked" on this man, not because he sinned (we all do), but because the Corinthians were proud of it and did nothing to correct him.

(2) How could the Corinthians be "proud" of incest? They misunderstood the gospel of Jesus Christ. They in a sense said, "Since we're saved through faith (believing in Christ) and not by works (trying hard to be good), then we can do anything we feel like doing." See 6:12 and 10:23. This, by the way, is called antinomianism. What they misunderstood is that Christians are still bound to follow God's law, not to earn salvation of course, but to express their gratitude for having already been given salvation. As a result, they were proud that this man threw away God's law, asserted his freedom, and committed incest. For this, Paul scolded them.

(4) What did Paul mean by "and I am with you in spirit"? The exact meaning is uncertain among Bible scholars. At least we know that somehow, Paul considered himself spiritually present at the Corinthian church's meeting even though he was not physically present.

(5) What did Paul mean by "hand this man over to Satan"? It means to expel him from the group and cast him back into the world, which is influenced by Satan, the "prince of this world" (John 12:31).

(5) What did Paul mean by "so that the sinful nature may be destroyed"? The hardships of being "on your own" again, apart from the help and love of a Christian group, would have caused the man to recognize the sinfulness of his incest. Paul's goal was that this man repent of his sinfulness.

(5) What did Paul mean by "his spirit saved on the day of the Lord"? Paul hopes for the happy day when this man repents of his sin, is restored back into the group of believers, and awaits with the other believers the complete blessings of their salvation when Christ comes back.

(7) What is the “old yeast”? In ancient times, people made a new batch of dough rise but putting some of the leftovers of an old loaf into the new loaf. After doing this batch after batch, the last batch of bread acquires a sour taste, because the yeast originated from a loaf made many batches ago. Hence, “sourdough” bread. When the bread gets too sour, a new batch must be made, using no leftovers from any old loaves. In the same way, the Corinthians were becoming “sour” because of the influence of the incestuous man. They became prideful (v. 6), complacent about sin, quarrelsome (1:11), and immature (3:1). This was another reason for casting the incestuous man out of the fellowship - to keep from ruining the rest of the group.

(6) What is the “Festival”? The Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread, which Paul mentions to make an analogy.

(11) Doesn’t Paul’s advice lead the church into a self-righteous “witch-hunt”? No. Not if it’s done with humility, and out of love and concern for all.

(11) Doesn’t this verse point to nearly everyone in the church, since we all have committed some form of sexual immorality, greed, and slander? No. Paul was not referring to those who struggle with sin, for he even had such a struggle (cf. Rom. 7:14-25). Rather, Paul was pointing out those Christians who are proud of their sin (cf. v. 2,6).

(11) Was Paul really serious about not even “eating” with the incestuous man? Yes.

(12) Why did Paul tell us to “judge” those in the church, when Jesus said, “Do not judge, lest you be judged” in Matt. 7:1? There are two different kinds of judging here. Examining the context of Matthew 7 further, we see that Jesus condemns the kind of judging that is hypocritical and motivated by pride. It is the kind of judging where we would look down on another and say, “You backslider, you sinner.” In 1st Corinthians, however, Paul is speaking of the good kind of judging - the kind that lovingly corrects our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is the kind of judging where we would put our hand on his shoulder, embrace him, and say, “Brother, your extra-marital affair is displeasing to God.” And if he insists that he has done no wrong, then, as a last resort, Christians are to avoid him, all having tears in their eyes. It is the “tough-love” approach to dealing with sin.

(13) Does Paul’s advice really work today? In the early church, yes. Today, not so well. That’s because Christ’s church is so fragmented today, that those who are “cast out” simply go down the street to another church that will tolerate their sin. These verses challenge the churches today to stick together, communicate, and support each other in dealing with sin.

Insights

- Why God urges Christians to correct one another:
 1. To lovingly restore the believer in his/her walk with Christ. (v. 5)
 2. To protect the other believers in the group. (v. 6)
 3. To preserve the sincerity and integrity of Christ’s church. (v. 8)

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

About the Text

(1) What was the “dispute” about? In light of the triviality of the matter (cf. v. 2), and that there was cheating involved (v. 7), one Christian probably cheated another Christian out of some property in a business transaction.

(2) What does Paul mean that the “saints will judge the world”? In some mysterious way, we who are believers will pronounce judgment on unbelievers on the final Judgment Day of Christ. See Daniel 7:22, Matt. 19:28)

(3) Come on, will we believers actually judge angels someday? Yes, according to this verse. There is ample Biblical evidence that angels will be judged (Gal. 1:8, 2 Peter 2:4,9, Jude 6), but little evidence other than this verse that we will actually be doing the judging.

(4) What does this verse mean? I opt for the alternative translation, given in the footnote of the NIV Bible: “Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you appoint as judges men of little account in the church?” In other words, Paul is rhetorically asking, “Don’t you realize that you are actually giving ungodly pagans authority in the church?” This interpretation fits better with the overall context and Paul’s line of argument, especially in the next verse.

(7) In what way have those Christians been “defeated”? Paul means that they have failed in doing what’s right.

(7) Does this mean that Christians are never to go to court? No. This passage is speaking only about disputes between Christians that are best solved through the church. This passage does not forbid other situations such as (1) one of the two parties is an unbeliever, (2) all attempts by the church have been exhausted, so that according to Matthew 18:15-18, the offending party may be considered a “pagan” and may therefore be brought to court.

(10) Is Paul saying that if I charge a lawsuit, or commit adultery, then I will lose my salvation? No. He is simply stating that the unsaved are prone to evil. Therefore, we who are saved (through faith in Jesus Christ) should be so thankful for God’s free gift of salvation that we cheerfully resist the evil we used to indulge in.

Insights

- God gives Christians more capability of resolving their disputes than they think. (1-3)
- God is disgraced when believers can’t settle disputes out of brotherly love. (4-6)
- When brotherly disputes end up in court, both the victim and the offender fall to ungodliness. (7-10)

- Our motive for peaceful living is this: Christ died to forgive our sin. Therefore, the victim must forgive his brother, and the offender must stop his evil. (11)

The Bottom Line

Don't get lawsuit-happy. Give Christ's way a chance. Once again, understanding the way to salvation is the key. God so loved us that He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross to take the punishment for our sins, that if you believe, you can be sure of your salvation and all the blessings that come with it, including eternal life. Well, one of those blessings of salvation is a new ability to resolve conflicts, such as those involving money or property. In the old life, you might have lost friends over money matters. But the new life, we are to forgive our brother as Christ forgave us. We can avoid those thoughts of revenge and injury if we seek to put on the character of Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

About the Text

Usually I explain the difficult details of a Bible passage here. But I think it would be better for me to paraphrase the entire passage, in order for modern readers to better understand not only the details, but to also grasp the entire flow of Paul's argument. This passage has an important message for today, and I don't want to get too caught up in the difficulties of the text.

(12) You keep saying "Everything is permissible for me," but the truth is that not everything is beneficial for you. "Everything is permissible for me," you say again, but the truth is that you can be enslaved by the things you crave.

(13) Some of you even say, "Well, God doesn't care about my body. In the end, all physical things like food and my stomach, will be destroyed before I get to heaven. It's my soul He wants, not my body." But the truth is that your body was designed for serving the Lord, and not for prostitutes. See, the Lord does care about your body.

(14) In fact, He cares so much for it that He will raise our bodies from the dead, just as He raised Jesus.

(15) Also, don't you know that your bodies are actually a part of Christ? Shall I then take a part of Christ and unite it with a prostitute? Never!

(16) And didn't you know that when you have sex with a prostitute, God considers you one with her? That's why it says in the Old Testament, "the two will become one flesh."

(17) Instead of becoming one with a prostitute, we should become one with Christ.

(18) Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are different from sexual sin. Sexual sin is the only sin that destroys the dignity of the body that God gave you.

(19) Also, don't you know that your body is really a temple - it's where the Holy Spirit actually lives. Remember, when you became a Christian, your body no longer belonged to you but to the Lord.

(20) Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross for you, to take the punishment you deserved, winning your release from Satan's control, and giving you a new life. Therefore, be thankful, by honoring God with your body.

Insights

Why believers must use also their physical bodies to glorify God:

- God cares for your body, not just your soul. (12-14)
- God designed your body to serve Him. (13)
- Somehow, a Christian's physical body becomes a part of Christ. (15)
- Contrary to popular opinion, God considers sexual immorality as uniquely destructive to your own body. (18)
- God's Holy Spirit mysteriously lives in your physical body. (19)
- Christ suffered and died to rescue you from Satan's control. Therefore, you have an obligation to submit your body to God. (20)

The Bottom Line

Believers, your body belongs to Christ. Christ died on the cross to save not only your souls, but also your physical body. Now, how can you honor God with your body? Next time you get out of the shower, stand in front of the mirror and ask, "Lord, tell me how I can glorify You with this body."

Key Memory Verses

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body." 1 Cor. 6:19-20

1 Corinthians 7:1-7

About the Text

(1) Why does Paul say, “It is good for a man not to marry,” when he seems to advocate marriage elsewhere in the Bible? There are two interpretations Bible scholars hold to concerning this verse. One possible interpretation is that Paul was quoting a Corinthian saying, which was contrary to his belief in marriage. Another interpretation is that Paul generally advocates marriage, but encourages singleness for those who have the genuine gift of celibacy, i.e. the absence of sexual desire or the remarkable ability to control it. I support the latter interpretation, because of verses 7, 8, 9, 25, and 32-35. Celibacy should not be seen as a higher ideal than marriage. Rather, it should be seen as a special calling for a few. For most people, God intends them for marriage, in order to avoid sexual immorality (v. 2), for a man and woman to mutually fulfill each other’s needs (v. 3-4), to procreate (Gen. 1:28), and to develop the family and the Christian community in an orderly way (Eph. 5:22-33). In short, God designed man for marriage. Celibacy is the exception.

(2) In this verse, is Paul telling everyone to get married? No. What Paul means is that man should have sexual relations with his wife and no one else, and a woman should have sexual relations with her husband. The meaning of “to have” in this verse is “to have sexual relations with.”

(3) Why does Paul call sex a “duty”? He is not advocating a mechanical, lifeless sex! Rather, he is simply calling husbands and wives to stop withholding sex from each other.

(4) What does Paul mean by “the wife/husband’s body does not belong to her alone”? He means that the purpose of sex is not only for one’s own pleasure, but also for the spouse’s. While the world seeks sex because “it makes me feel good,” the Christian seeks sex because “it makes my spouse feel good.” One is “selfish sex,” the other is “servant sex.” If Christian partners would serve each other in this way, there would be great satisfaction, fulfillment, harmony, and peace in the marriage. God’s principle of servanthood is essential to a happy marriage.

(6) What “concession” is Paul referring to? His statement in verse 5. In other words, he is not commanding spouses to take a sexual “leave of absence,” but rather is allowing them to only for the purpose of prayer. This statement shows how strongly Paul stressed the importance of mutually fulfilling sexual relations in a marriage, that he gave only one, very limited exception to it.

Insights

- Why God promotes more fulfilling sexual relations in a marriage:
- It helps one resist sexual immorality. (1-2)
- It is part of God’s design for marriage. (3)
- It promotes genuine Christian fellowship between spouses. (4)

- God gave the gift of celibacy only to a few. (7)

The Bottom Line

Sex is good. God created it. He created us to have it. He created marriage to be full of it. Why should sex be more fulfilling for the Christian than for the non-Christian? Because, believe it or not, the Christian has a greater motive to pursue more fulfilling sexual relations than the non-Christian. See, the Christian believes that he is full of sin. In his natural state, his sex life was full of lust, perversion, and immorality. But when you, a Christian, accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you believed that He took your sin away by dying on a cross, taking the punishment for your sin. You believe He earned eternal life and all the blessings of salvation for you in spite of your sin. When you become sure of your salvation, you become so thankful to Jesus Christ for what He did on the cross, that you automatically want to live more in line with God's design, even in your sex life. That means that you will have a desire to marry, with each spouse wanting to do their all to please the other physically, sexually, romantically, socially, as well as spiritually. We want to become servants, not selfish.

1 Corinthians 7:8-24

About the Text

(8) Who are the “unmarried” referred to in this verse? Those who were already divorced before they became Christians. Verse 11 uses the same word to refer to a divorced person. But because verse 11 forbids divorce, we can assume that verse 8 refers to those who were already divorced before they became Christians. Paul encourages such singles to remain unmarried, if they can, but allows remarriage in the next verse.

(9) Does “cannot control” in this verse mean that the single should marry just anybody to avoid lust? No. This verse is simply stating that those who don’t have the gift of celibacy should be open to marriage. It was common in the early church, as it is even today, for some Christians to view celibacy as a more “godly” existence. Those who try to be celibate, without having the genuine gift to do so, frequently lapse into sexual sin (e.g. child molestation, homosexuality), and bring dishonor to Jesus Christ. This is why this verse commands such persons to marry.

(10) Why does Paul add the words, “not I, but the Lord”? It meant that the following verses were spoken by Jesus in His earthly life. See Matt. 5:32, 19:3-9, Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18.

(12) Why does Paul add the words, “I, not the Lord”? It meant that the following verses were not spoken by Jesus in His earthly life, but were given to Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus, these words are still from God. Beginning readers of the Bible sometimes take this verse to mean that some parts of the Bible are written by God, and other parts not. This is not so. Paul’s words were trustworthy (v. 25), spoken from the Spirit of God (v. 40), and viewed by Peter as Holy Scripture (2 Peter 3:16).

(14) How is an unbelieving spouse “sanctified” by a believer? “Sanctified” simply means to be “set apart” or special. While the unbelieving spouse is certainly not saved, the unbeliever is somehow blessed by being married to a believer. Even today, many spouses become believers through their Christian spouses. See 1 Peter 3:1-2. The blessings of God are so abundant, that they often spill over from Christians to non-Christians.

(17-24) These verses will be explained in greater detail next week, but need to be included in today’s message because they contain the key to understanding verses 8 to 16. That key is in verse 23: “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”

Insights

- Christ gives us the strength to be content in God’s most difficult marital situations:
- Those who were divorced or widowed before they became Christians can be content while they are single. (8)

- Those who were divorced or widowed before they became Christians can be content being married again. (9)
- Those Christians who divorce can be content remaining single. (10-11)
- Those Christians who have unbelieving spouse can be content remaining married. (12-14)
- Those Christians who have unbelieving spouses who want to leave, can be content letting them leave. (15-16)
- The secret of contentment: Belonging to Christ. (17-24)

The Bottom Line

Trust Christ, and you can be content whether single or married. Jesus Christ paid an enormous price to free you from darkness. He paid it with His life, suffering the punishment you deserved because of sin. The more you put your faith in Christ and what He did on the cross, and the less you put your trust in worldly solutions (e.g. “If only I were married again”), the more you will be sure of God’s love for you, His providence for you, His care for you, His forgiveness for you, His protection for you, His supernatural strength for you, and His joy and peace for you... no matter how difficult your marital circumstances.

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

About the Text

(26) What is the “present crisis” mentioned in this verse? It refers to the many tribulations that God allows us to endure as a result of being in the end times. In these letters of Paul, the end times are viewed as the time between Christ’s first and second coming, which is pushing 2,000 years. In the days of the early church, Christians endured ferocious persecution and torture, eventually ending with the fall of the Roman Empire. Today, we still hear of wars, famine, and economic hardship as we come even closer to Christ’s second coming.

(27) Who is the “unmarried” in this verse? Those who are divorced. In the original Greek language, this word has the same root as the word for “divorced” in the previous sentence.

(28) Is Paul down on marriage? No. In fact, he says it is not a sin. But because there was so much persecution, he said it would be wiser to stay single if a Christian had the gift to do so.

(29) These are strange verses. Is the Bible commanding that we should separate from our wives, and stop being “happy”? No, certainly not. Remember that in 1 Cor. 7:1-4, Paul commanded us not to separate from our spouses. What Paul meant in these verses, rather, is that the world will be turned upside down someday. We should not get too obsessed with earthly things (and singles should not get too obsessed with marriage), because these things are only temporary. In Matt. 22:30, Jesus even mentions that there will be no marriage in the afterlife.

(38) Is Paul promoting singleness as a “holier” state of life? No. He was promoting singleness out of his concern for the welfare and happiness of the Corinthian Christians during times of persecution and distress. This is why he mentions “she is happier” (v. 40), “does even better” (v. 28), “I would like you to be free from concern [i.e. anxiety]” (v. 32), and “I want to spare you this.” (v. 28)

Insights

- Why God wants us to pursue the simple life (or for a few, the single life)?
- You will better endure unexpected crisis. (25-28)
- You’ll avoid getting too obsessed with worldly things. (29-31)
- You will be more devoted to the Lord. (32-35)

The Bottom Line

Keep life simple. We have a strong motive for leading such a life - Jesus Christ rescued us from our sinful condition by taking upon Himself the punishment that we deserved. Those who believe have a new life in Jesus Christ, and can't help but want to live in obedience to Him. If you are a Christian, then keeping your life simple will give you more freedom to follow Christ. Cars, boats, and vacation homes are by no means wrong to have. But when we get obsessed with them, they hinder our ability to help our brother in need, and to worship our Lord. The same with marriage. Singles who worry too much about getting married (e.g. thinking it's the only way to be happy) will find it difficult to do be fully devoted to the Lord and do His work.

1 Corinthians 8

About the Text

(1) Why was Paul so concerned about “food sacrificed to idols”? It was popular in the days of ancient history to kill and sacrifice animals to pagan gods. Many ruins of ancient temples still have the altars and eating areas where pagan priests performed their rituals. The Corinthian Christians, being formerly pagan, were used to these pagan festivals, sacrificing, and feasting throughout their lives. It was the “party” of the year that the whole Roman world attended and which these Christians still looked forward to also. For these Christians in Corinth, it was hard to stop. They were used to consuming the meat at feasts and festivities, and the meat was of high quality and of relatively low cost. So these Christians had decided to go ahead and eat such meat, as long as they didn’t actually participate in and believe in the pagan rituals themselves. The apostle Paul, in this chapter, agreed with their reason for eating such meat, but now introduces new reasons for stopping the practice. The rest of the chapter indicates that there were new Christians who were actually participating in the pagan sacrifices because they saw other Christians eating the meat. These new Christians thought, “If my leader eats this meat sacrificed to idols, then it must be okay for me to practice this pagan religion too.” Because new Christians were thinking this way, and falling back into idolatry, Paul told the older Christians to stop the practice.

(2) What did Paul mean by “knowledge puffs up”? He meant that the Christian life must not consist of knowledge alone. Rather, it must serve to produce more love in the Christian’s heart. Theological knowledge must strengthen one’s love for God, otherwise it is useless. A Christian may have read thousands of Christian books, and have memorized whole books of the Bible, but if he has not love toward God nor his neighbor, that knowledge is worthless. Knowledge, when not accompanied by love, makes one arrogant, boastful, and self-centered. But when your knowledge about God and the Bible is used with love, it serves to build up your brothers and sisters in Christ.

(9) Who are the “weak” referred to here? It is referring to those Christians, who, after years of conditioning prior to their conversion, associate such meat with the practice of idolatry, even though it’s just a piece of meat. As a result, when they see other Christians eating such meat, they assume then that it’s permissible to practice idolatry. Today, many Christians rightfully recognize their right to drink alcohol (as long as they don’t get drunk), dance at nightclubs, listen to secular rock music, use certain four letter words, and drive an expensive sports car. But if these practices cause another Christian to sin, then the man who practices it should stop. For example, I know a missionary who enjoyed making and drinking his own wine. But when working among Native Americans who were prone to alcoholism, he voluntarily stopped drinking wine. In this way, he would not cause a brother to stumble. His brother in Christ was much more important to him than drinking. This describes the “stumbling block” principle that governs a Christian’s freedom. God’s law allows much freedom in the Christian life, but we must curb that freedom if what we do causes another to sin. See also Romans 14 for Paul’s further explanation of this principle.

The Bottom Line

Sometimes, set aside your rights for the sake of another. The love that Christ wants us to have for one another sometimes demands that we curb our freedom to do what we want to do. Christ did that. He had the divine right and the authority to call down angels to rescue Him from being hung on a cross. Though He was God, He didn't exercise that right. Instead, He made Himself a lowly man, and took upon Himself the punishment that we deserved for our sins by dying on a cross. Then He promised that those who believe will not perish but have eternal life. His dying for our sins was done out of His extreme love for us, that He would set aside His divine rights, so that we could have salvation. If you are a believer and know you're saved, then live for Him by sometimes setting aside your rights out of love for one another.

1 Corinthians 9:1-18

About the Text

(1) Why was it so important for Paul to defend his apostleship and his having seen Jesus? In order to make his point - that he willingly gave up much of his freedom for the sake of reaching others for Christ. By proving that he was as much an apostle as any other, he was also proving that he possessed all the authority and rights that came with being an apostle of Jesus Christ. Then, towards the end of the chapter, Paul mentioned that he gave up this freedom in order to reach more people for Jesus Christ. In other words, Paul didn't have to give up marriage - he voluntarily gave it up for the sake of reaching more people for Christ. An apostle is one who has actually seen Jesus Christ (v. 1), wins others to follow Jesus Christ, and also has been specially commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself to communicate the gospel to the world (Gal. 1:16). Because Paul identifies an apostle by these marks, many Christians, including myself, do not believe that apostles exist today. However, the work of the apostle, namely winning others to Christ, most definitely continues in the church today.

(5) Who is Cephas? Cephas was the apostle Peter's Aramaic name. Peter was married. See Mark 1:30.

(11) What "material harvest" is Paul talking about? Material things such as food, shelter, clothing, and money. Those who preach the gospel have a right, says Paul, to be paid by the church and make their living from it. But in the next several verses, Paul explains why he gave up this right.

(17) What did Paul mean by "if I preach voluntarily"? Preaching without having to. Those who preach as a result of their own career choice will be compelled to seek monetary compensation for it. Those who see preaching and missionary work as just another career choice will be prone to compare the dollar figures. This is not wrong, for even preachers need something to live on, but it tends to limit the flexibility and effectiveness of the preacher.

(17) What did Paul mean by "if not voluntarily"? Preaching because God called him to. Those who are called by God, and serve out of simple obedience to Him, will end up doing all they can to do their job well, regardless of how much money they get in return. These are the best servants in the church, whether preachers, Sunday School teachers, lay workers, etc.

Insights

- God has blessed Christians with enormous freedom of choice, even more than the apostle Paul had. (1-12)
- Yet the message of Jesus Christ is so wonderful that some give up their very freedom to avoid imposing barriers that keep people from hearing the gospel. (12-18)

The Bottom Line

Sometimes, you must set aside your freedom to reach others for Christ. This is the second of four criteria by which we should judge our involvement in “questionable” activities like smoking or drinking. Paul urges believers to curb their freedom by testing each activity with these tests: 1. It must not cause a new Christian to sin. (1 Cor. 8, which we studied last week) 2. It must not impose barriers that keep some people from hearing the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:1-18, today’s lesson) 3. It must not hinder your ability to relate to the people you’re trying to reach for Christ. (1 Cor. 9:19-23) 4. It must not hinder the church’s ability to communicate the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:24-27) Why make such a big deal about limiting one’s freedom? Because the gospel is too wonderful to keep covered-up. The gospel is this: that Jesus was God who came to earth as a man 2,000 years ago, to take upon Himself the moral punishment that we deserved. By doing that, He won our release from condemnation to hell, and He earned God’s forgiveness for us. All those who believe will receive a new, abundant, eternal life - a life that increases in love, joy, peace, and hope. Christ promised this new life to all who admit they are sinners and believe in Him, regardless of how bad your sins are. This message of Jesus Christ is so wonderful that we must be careful not to do anything to hinder anyone from hearing it.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

About the Text

(24) What kind of “prize” did Paul have in mind? It was not eternal life, which the casual reader would initially think. Rather, it is the reward that comes from preaching the gospel. The Christian worker’s reward consists of (1) pleasing God (1 Cor. 9:18), (2) seeing people saved (1 Cor. 9:22), and (3) receiving certain extra gifts from God in heaven for hard work (1 Cor. 3:12-14, Matt. 5:12, 16:27, Eph. 6:8, Rev. 22:12). Paul compares the Christian life to an athletic competition. In 2 Tim. 3:7 he says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race.” In Phil. 3:14 he says, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Every Christian has a calling from God. We are all called to live as Christians, i.e. to be loving, peaceful, joyful, patient, and kind, etc. Also, each of us has a specific calling, a station in life, such as being a father, a husband, an engineer, a construction worker, or a preacher. We serve God through each of these callings. Paul’s calling was to spread the gospel to an entire continent, which was no small task. To do it well meant strict discipline and perseverance. God encourages the Christian who works hard with rewards, the “prize” Paul mentions in this verse. They are not earned; they are yet gifts of God’s grace. When the Christian life becomes encumbered with pain, hardship, and trials, God promises us eternal “extras” that give us hope, in addition to the rewards of seeing people saved and God glorified. The Bible does not give us the full details of what these extra rewards are, but that they are simply of great value.

(25) What kind of “games” was Paul referring to? The ancient forerunner of our modern Olympics. These were grand, extravagant athletic events that attracted competitors and visitors from all over the Roman empire. They were held in Corinth every two years. The games consisted of racing, wrestling, jumping, boxing, javelin throwing, and the discus.

Insights

- The fruitful Christian life, like an Olympic competition, consists of:
- 1. Cutting out all that hinders.
- 2. Sticking to a plan.
- 3. Enduring the pain.

The Bottom Line

Train for the gold. This is the last of four criteria by which we should judge our lifestyle. Paul urges believers to test their activities and their actions with these tests: 1. It must not cause a new Christian to sin. (1 Cor. 8) 2. It must not impose barriers that keep some people from hearing the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:1-18) 3. It must not hinder your ability to relate to the people you’re trying to reach for Christ. (1 Cor. 9:19-23, which we studied last week) 4.

It must not hinder but promote your ability to communicate the gospel and fulfill your calling in serving God. (1 Cor. 9:24-27) The gospel of Jesus Christ is so wonderful that some will train as hard as an Olympic athlete just to tell others about it. The gospel is this: that Jesus was God who came to earth as a man 2,000 years ago, to take upon Himself the moral punishment that we deserved. By doing that, He won our release from condemnation to hell, and He earned God's forgiveness for us. All those who believe will receive a new, abundant, eternal life - a life that increases in love, joy, peace, and hope. Christ promised this new life to all who admit they are sinners and believe in Him.

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

About the Text

(1) What did Paul mean by the “cloud” and the “sea”? He is referring to the miraculous deliverance of ancient Israel from slavery in Egypt, nearly 1,800 year earlier. After leaving Egypt, God led the Israelites through the desert by having them follow a travelling pillar of cloud (cf. Exodus 13:21-22). Then, God parted the Red Sea so that they could cross it.

(2) What did Paul mean by “they were all baptized into Moses”? Paul meant that the Israelites had all the same religious marks that the Corinthian Christians had. The Israelites were “baptized,” having crossed the Red Sea. They participated in “communion,” having eaten the manna that God provided (cf. “spiritual food,” v. 3), and drank “communion wine,” having drank the water that miraculously gushed forth from a rock. And, they actually had Christ in their midst, because that rock was God’s way of foretelling about the Christ to come (cf. “that rock was Christ”). And yet they still fell deeply into sin, namely, idolatry. Paul brings out this point to warn the Corinthians that they are no different from the Israelites - that despite their Christian baptism and communion, the Corinthians could fall into gross sin just as easily as the Israelites did.

(6-10) These were harsh punishments on the Israelites. Will God ever punish Christians today? Yes, but for a different reason. God may punish believers as a fatherly chastisement. God punishes unbelievers as a result of the wrath that they deserve. Believers don’t suffer the wrath of God because Jesus Christ paid for their sins through His death on the cross (1 Thess. 5:9 - “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”). Unbelievers, however, receive the death that their sins deserve. God chastises believers in many ways. Sometimes, He works through our government authorities. If a Christian were to steal a car, for example, he still goes to jail, even though he repents of his sin. Sometimes, He works through ordinary consequences. Many drug addicts, for example, lose their jobs and are forced to live on the streets. And sometimes, He uses miraculous intervention, such as striking Ananias and Sapphira dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11). All believers struggle with sin (Rom. 7:14-25), and God disciplines all those He loves (Heb. 12:4-13). It should also be remembered that not all suffering is God’s chastisement for sin. When Jesus’ disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus replied, “Neither his man nor his parents sinned.” (John 9:1-3) God allows suffering and pain in the Christian’s life for other reasons too, such as to humble or to teach. (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-10)

(12) Does this verse mean that Christians could lose their salvation? No. The Bible is clear that true believers can never lose their salvation (Rom. 8:1, 38-39, Eph. 1:14, Phil. 1:6). Yet believers can still fall into deep sin and become ineffective and unfruitful for the Lord.

(13) If God will always “provide a way out so that you can stand up under [temptation],” then why do Christians still sin? This verse is not saying that God will

make every temptation failure-proof. It does mean that every temptation allowed by God still gives us a choice for a way out. The Christian alcoholic may think that it's impossible for him to resist the bottle, but he still has the choice to enter a rehabilitation hospital. The Christian struggling with homosexuality may think that it's impossible for him to change his/her orientation, but he still has the choice to seek professional help to overcome it. Hebrews 12:4 says, "In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood." Therefore, every temptation encountered by a Christian has a way out.

Insights

- 1. Our misunderstanding of God's grace may lead to careless sin.
- 2. God is so serious about sin, that He still chastises believers who are saved.

The Bottom Line

Beware of God's harsh chastisement for gross sin. Christians enjoy this wonderful fact about the gospel: that though we sin horribly, even daily, Jesus' death on the cross has so completely paid for our sins that we are forever forgiven and are forever assured of our eternal life. But there is another blessing that comes with being saved, although it's not pleasant at first. It's God's discipline. Just as a mother spanks a child for running out into the street without looking both ways, and then the child cries, that punishment will serve to give the child life-saving wisdom for the rest of his life. The same with the Christian life. God chastises us in order to build us up, and so that we won't take advantage of His grace.

1 Corinthians 10:14-22

About the Text

(14) What was idolatry like in Corinth? The pagans in the city of Corinth fashioned figures mostly out of stone, to which they would offer food as part of a religious ritual. The remains of such statues and the temples that housed them, are still in existence today. They are found in regions that formerly belonged to the ancient Roman empire. The pagan religions at the time 1st Corinthian was written were a mixed bag. There were emperor worship, Roman/Greek deities such as Zeus, Egyptian cults, and astrology and magic, which became popular.

(16) What does the cup and bread refer to? The Lord's Supper, that Christian celebration using bread and wine to remember the story of Jesus Christ by.

(16) Why does it mean that the Lord's Supper is a "participation" in the blood and body of Christ? The answer is found in the original Greek language. The word "participation" is a translation of the Greek word, *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is best translated "fellowship," where it usually is in most other occurrences in the New Testament. What this verse means, in other words, is that when Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, they form a close, common bond between themselves. That is why Paul writes on in verse 17, "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

(20) In what way were these pagan religious sacrifices offered to demons? Apparently, these ancient religious practices actually evoked supernatural powers. They were popular, even among some of the Corinthian Christians. But Paul warns that these powers were not of God. These Christians needed to know that they weren't performing some harmless ritual with a statue, but rather they were playing with dangerous demonic powers. Today, many non-Christian religious practices are becoming popular. In San Francisco alone, there are over six hundred cults, many of them tracing their roots to the same ancient pagan religions during Paul's day. There is also the New Age Movement, with its channeling, crystals, and mystical meditation practices. There are also the deceptively "harmless" toys like Ouija boards and tarot cards. The practice of the occult has also crept into entertainment such as some rock concerts, magic shows, and the Renaissance Pleasure Faire. Also, since the 1700's, the Masons and other "lodge" movements and secret societies became popular, even among some Christians. The message of God for today is that Christians must discerning in their activities, being careful not to play with demonic powers that masquerade as "harmless" fun. Such participation, says verse 22, will arouse the anger of God.

Insights

- Even in this sophisticated world, dark demonic practices lurk in the most unexpected places.

- God detests the Christian's involvement in such activities.

The Bottom Line

“Flee from idolatry.” (1 Cor. 10:14) Jesus Christ paid the enormous price of death on a cross in order to win us salvation. All who believe in Him, regardless of our sinfulness, will receive deliverance from the world's darkness. Therefore, Christians must not return to those dark forces. Although it seems that horoscopes and psychic hot-lines are harmless entertainment, they are in reality tapping into demonic powers. Even if a Christian says “I don't really believe in it. I just do it for fun,” his curiosity in those practices could reveal in him a budding belief in those powers. Christians have no place calling on spiritists (those who hold séances), consulting tarot cards, playing with Ouiji boards, rubbing the belly of a Buddha for good luck, or participating in the New Age movement. Of course, we should not be so superstitious as to avoid having a tourist's picture taken in front of Japan's giant Buddha. It's the participation in the ritual itself - that's the problem. When you call upon any supernatural powers other than Jesus, you fall dangerously into idolatry.

1 Corinthians 10:23 - 11:1

About the Text

(23) What did Paul mean by “everything is permissible”? He meant that God’s boundaries for the Christian life allows for much freedom. Christians are still bound by divine laws such as the Ten Commandments and great commandment to love God and neighbor. But unlike the Jews, we believe we are no longer bound by the seemingly endless ceremonial laws (like annual feasts), food laws (like avoiding pork), Israelite social laws (like executing adulterers), and human traditions (like limiting one’s travel to 1/4 mile on the last day of the week). Therefore, for the Christian, there is comparatively much freedom. But Paul here makes his final point about why shouldn’t use our freedom to simply do whatever we desire. His point, which he began since chapter 8, is that many of the activities that God’s law permits us to enjoy, are not always constructive to others all the time. In other words, the Corinthian Christians played by the rules, but weren’t winning the game. It was like basketball players standing still on the court - they’re within the boundaries, but not making any baskets. In short, Paul’s point in the following verses is that Christians should use their God-given freedom to do good to others (that’s how we serve God), and not to simply gratify our own selfish pleasures. Thus, he leads into one of God’s supreme principles for Christian conduct in verse 24: “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.”

(25) Meat market? What in the world does that mean? Paul was referring to what he wrote in 1 Cor. 8:4-6. There, he affirmed the Corinthian Christians, who were formerly non-believing pagans, that God’s law permits one to eat meat that has been used in a pagan religious ritual, as long as he doesn’t get involved in the ritual itself. Such meat was perfectly good, and it was regularly sold in the market after the ritual was over. Many Jews, however, thought it unlawful to eat such meat, and often went to great lengths to research the background of any meat they bought at the market. If they found it was used in a pagan sacrifice, they wouldn’t buy it. Paul, however, says that to God it doesn’t matter. Meat is meat. It’s all from God. Therefore, give thanks, and eat it.

(28) If God’s law allows believers to eat meat that was formerly used in pagan sacrifice, then why did Paul command Christians to refrain from eating it if the host speaks up about where it came from? Because it would injure that host’s conscience. In other words, Paul said that if an unbelieving host of the party warned you, a Christian, that the meat was formerly used in a pagan sacrifice, out of moral concern for you, then you should not eat it, even though it would be permissible in God’s eyes. If you did eat of it, the unbelieving host might think that you are sinning (v. 30) and then conclude that God permits Christians to sin, which, of course, He does not. The Christian must be careful to maintain a godly reputation in order to better share the gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers, and to keep from leading young believers into sin.

(31) What does it mean to “do all to the glory of God”? Glory, in the Old Testament, was the bright light of God, like a million-watt spotlight. God possesses glory of such magnitude,

that when Christ comes back He will light up the sky so that the whole world would see (Matt. 24:27). Also, God said that no one can see God and live - probably because the brightness of God is too intense for man to take. And when Moses saw the glory of God, God had to specially shield him by placing him in a cleft in a rock, and covering him with His hand until He had passed by (Ex. 33:12-23). The bright light of God is fueled by His perfect goodness, supreme authority, and divine majesty (Ex. 33:19). There are certain attributes, or characteristics, of God that only He possesses, such as omnipresence and ultimate power. These attributes is what makes God give off a supernatural luminance. By “doing all to the glory of God,” we are to make Him “shine.” That is, we are to live our lives in such a way that it reveals God’s goodness to the world. This is the Christian’s ultimate goal in life.

Insights

- It is possible to appear to keep the Ten Commandments, and still make God look bad.
- God primary directive to all Christians: let the world see the goodness and greatness of God through you.

The Bottom Line

Do all to the glory of God. God’s goodness is clear: He sent Jesus Christ to die for the sins of the world, that whoever believes in Him are assured of their eternal life, the complete forgiveness of their sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and all love, joy, hope, and peace in life. This is the gift of salvation to all who believe in the story of Jesus Christ. Now that we believe, how then should we live to express our gratitude for our salvation? Paul describes in these verses that the Christian life does not consist of simply adding new rules and new restrictions to our present way of living. Rather, our entire lives must be changed by a radically different principle of living. In other words, we don’t need a few new musicians to fix the orchestra; we need a new conductor. In today’s passage, Paul gives us such a “conductor.” It’s found in a conducting life principle: do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

About the Text

Note: This is a difficult passage for many to accept, especially in today's modern world. God's Word may offend some of you today. Often, as a result, we read "into" the text our own preconceived ideas about gender roles. Please be aware that the gender discussions of the world, such as the feminist movement, tempts us to color our interpretation of the Bible and how we live our lives. That is why I urge all readers to come to the Word of God with a humble, ready, and willing heart to obey God's will, and to come with the strength to resist the influence of the world.

(3) What does the Bible mean by "head"? The word, "head" refers to authority. See Ephesians 1:21-22, 5:22-23, Col. 1:18, and 2:10. In other words, there is a chain of authority, where Christ is in authority over man, and man over woman.

(4) In summary, why did Paul want women to cover their heads? In this passage, Paul appeals to two reasons. First, because it was "disgraceful" in that culture for women not to cover their heads (v. 4-6). Second, it was because of creation order, that is, woman was created after man and from him (v. 7-12).

(4) What kind of "covering" is being written about in this verse? We don't exactly know. All we know is that it something that was put over and draped down from the head. Because no other details are given in Scripture, we can assume that God did not intend this covering to be practiced throughout all time. Rather, He intends for us to follow the timeless principle underlying the practice.

(4) What is the meaning of "prays and prophecies"? It refers to the gathering of Christians for worship. It is not a phrase that limits the discussion to only prayer and prophecy, but to the worship service in general.

(7) What does it mean that man is the "image and glory of God"? The phrase, "image of God," refers to man's being made in the likeness of God. See Gen. 1:26-27 and 9:6. "Glory of God" refers to man's being made from God, just as the radiance of God's glory shined from God Himself. In other words, God was the source of man.

(7) What does it mean that woman is the "glory of man"? Just as God was the source of man, so man was the source of woman. In Gen. 2:22-23, woman (Eve) was made out of one of Adam's ribs.

(10) What is the meaning of "because of the angels"? Scholars do not know for sure, except that it was an appeal by Paul to a universal reason for women to practice special decorum in worship. Other Scriptures related to this passage: Eph. 5:22-33, 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Insights

- God designed women and men to different roles where women are to submit to men in the home and in the church. (2-10)
- God designed women to be equal to men in worth, abilities, and honor. (11-12)

The Bottom Line

Submit to God's design for men and women. God sacrificed His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to pay the price for our sin. Those who simply believe are assured of their eternal and begin a new life in Christ. But living for Christ takes a lot of trust sometimes. Some of God's commands don't make sense to us. Since we live in a world of women governors, mayors, and CEO's, it seems unreasonable that God should limit the authority of women in the home and in the church. But we must trust God and His Word. We may not know the full reason for God's placing men and women in different levels of authority, but we must trust that God knows best - He is the creator, you know. As you further your study of the Scriptures on the issue of gender roles, how readily would you accept what you read? How ready are you to accept your station in life? In a world where men dress like women, and women dress like men, do you accept God's design for you and your gender?

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

About the Text

(18) What kind of “divisions” were there in that church? Among the many schisms present in the church (see chap. 1-3), Paul here targeted their problem of the wealthy humiliating the poor. The phrase “those who have nothing” in verse 22 indicates this. The early church typically celebrated the Lord’s Supper through the eating of a complete pot-luck style meal. Many scholars believe this meal was the “love feast” mentioned in Jude 12. Although the members of the church were supposed to share their food in one common meal, the wealthier members would eat their own food, not sharing it with those who were only able to bring very little or none at all. Verse 21 indicates that they were eating their own supper, not the Lord’s Supper. (In the original Greek language the word *idion* in verse 21 means “one’s own” supper as opposed the Lord’s Supper.)

(23) What is the Lord’s Supper? It is the ceremony that God commands all true believers to celebrate together. Through the eating of symbolic bread and the drinking of symbolic wine (or grape juice), we are to remember Jesus Christ’s last supper before He died, and remember *why* He died - it was to earn God’s forgiveness for all our sins. The bread represents His body that died on the cross. Thus the words “this is My body” in verse 24. The cup of wine or grape juice represents His blood that flowed from His body as He was tortured and nailed to the cross. When Christians celebrate the Lord’s Supper using these two elements and affirming their unity as one family under God, they make a statement to the world as if they are saying “Jesus Christ died for us and gave us new life.” Thus the words, “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” in verse 26.

(27) How does one eat the bread or drinks the cup in an “unworthy manner”? By failing to love and embrace all their believing brothers and sisters regardless of race, wealth, maturity, or personality (cf. verses 20-22); and by failing to understand the meaning of the Lord’s Supper (cf. verses 23-26). This is consistent with the words in verse 29: “For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the Body [of the Lord] eats and drinks judgment on himself” (the original Greek sentence does not have “of the Lord”).

(30) What happened to the Corinthian Christians for profaning the Lord’s Supper? Paul indicates that they became sick and some even died, as a result of the Lord’s discipline. Keep in mind, however, that these Christians, if they were true believers, were still saved. That is, they still received the full love from God, pardon for sins, and eternal life (see Rom. 8:1). But as a father lovingly disciplines His sons, so God disciplined the Corinthians by allowing sickness and death for their committing such a great sin. This does not necessarily mean that God disciplines all violators in the same way. It does mean, however, that the irreverent and segregated participation in the Lord’s Supper arouses God’s anger.

Insights

- In worship, God demands that we come as one family. (17-22)
- In worship, God demands that we give our full attention to Jesus Christ. (23-26)
- In worship, God is serious about sin. (27-34)

The Bottom Line

Worship radically. That is, worship, especially when celebrating the Lord's Supper, with abounding love for your fellow believers, and with full attention on the cross of Christ. True worship should be something that the unbeliever has never before experienced nor understood, for it is truly an act of God. Only the power of God can move believers to be so loving and reverent when they gather. Worship, like all transformed areas of the believer's life, flows from a genuine understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 12:1). Christ died on the cross to take upon Himself the punishment that we deserved for our sins, thus earning a new, eternal life for us. After three days, He rose from the dead, proving the truth of His claims about Himself. He promised that if you believe, regardless of how sinful you are, you can be sure of your salvation and eternal life. The resulting new life for the believer is so wonderful that the true believer cannot help but worship God with reverence, and embrace his new brothers and sisters with love.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

About the Text

(1) What are “spiritual gifts”? These are special abilities that God’s Holy Spirit gives to believers. The believers of the early church in Corinth knew that they possessed such special abilities, but held the gift of tongues (the supernatural speaking of an unintelligible language) as the only genuine gift. Paul writes these verses and the next two chapters to refute their error.

(2) Why did Paul mention the Corinthians’ former pagan background? Probably to remind them of their tendency to be led astray by the practices of pagan cults. Pagan cults are often very “religious,” that is, they often have extreme practices that those unaware will mistake for holiness. See for example 1 Kings 18:28-29, where the prophets of the Baal cult frantically slashed themselves with swords to gain the attention of the “gods.” The Corinthians, though believers, were still attracted to such religious ecstasy. Paul points out that it would be a mistake for them to ignore the more ordinary practices of Christians as true workings of God. Today, we also tend to be attracted to one form of religion or another, to the exclusion of other workings of God. Those who seek only those churches that speak in tongues, for example, could be missing out on other fine churches where God is surely working powerfully. Paul’s point is that true “spirituality” takes on a vast variety of forms.

(3) What does this verse have to do with spiritual gifts? It means that a spiritual gift should be judged not merely by the intensity of the experience (which was the error of the Corinthians) but by the content of its message, the message that Jesus is Lord. In other words, a believer’s abilities are truly from God (true spiritual gifts) if they exalt Jesus Christ as Lord. This was Paul’s criterion for discerning spiritual gifts. The mark of a true spiritual gift has nothing to do with how supernatural the ability seems, nor how emotionally intense it feels. Paul gave only one criterion, which is why in the next couple of verses he says that these spiritual gifts take on much more variety than we think.

(8) What is a “message of wisdom”? In light of 1 Cor. 2:6-16, where “wisdom” is the message of Christ crucified, a “message of wisdom” is therefore a believer’s God-given ability to explain the story of Jesus Christ’s work to others in a clear, insightful way.

(8) What is a “message of knowledge”? Scholars are unsure because there is little mention of this term in other parts of Scripture. Some Christians believe it is a form of clairvoyance, i.e. the supernatural ability to gather information apart from ordinary means. But such a conclusion would be speculative because of the lack of Scriptural evidence.

(9) Why is “faith” listed as a spiritual gift when every Christian is supposed to have it? This verse is not referring to “saving faith,” which all true believers have, but rather “working faith,” the kind that “moves mountains,” cf. 1 Cor. 13:2. God gives a few Christians such extraordinary faith that extraordinary things happen.

(10) What is the gift of “prophecy”? It is the ability to communicate a revelation from God. It includes the supernatural ability to foretell the future (as did the Old Testament prophets who foretold the coming of Christ), as well as the ability to explain and apply Scripture, which is itself a revelation from God. Acts 2:17-18 indicates that all Christians have this ability to some extent (e.g. we should all be able to explain Jesus Christ to our kids). But some have this ability in greater measure than others.

(10) What is “speaking in tongues” like? It is the praying or speaking in a language that the speaker has not known prior to the utterance, nor do listeners understand. It sounds like foreign language that no one understands, except for a few. These few are said to have the gift of “interpretation.”

Insights

- We tend to judge the presence of the Holy Spirit by the intensity of the experience. (1-2)
- God’s Holy Spirit is present wherever Jesus Christ is exalted as Lord. (3)
- God’s Holy Spirit works in a greater variety of ways than we expect. (4-11)

The Bottom Line

Use your spiritual gift, no matter how different it is. Jesus Christ died on a cross not only to earn for us the forgiveness of sins, but also the many blessings of salvation. God gives all these blessings to all those who believe in the story of Jesus Christ. Those blessings include spiritual gifts, i.e. the special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to each and every believer so that he can serve others. These gifts are sometimes not immediately recognized as useful by others, yet God encourages us to use them for His glory. The musician, for example, who is able to compose God-exalting music for the electric guitar, might not find immediate acceptance at a traditional pipe-organ-style church. Yet God wants such a believer to find ways to use his gift, perhaps elsewhere if need be. Also, the church as a whole needs to create more opportunities for Christians to exercise their gifts, even though they may seem unconventional at first.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

About the Text

(12) Why is Christ compared to a “body”? Because God mysteriously calls the gathering of believers the “body of Christ,” the church. See v. 27, Eph. 5:23, and Rom. 12:5. Therefore, the writer, Paul, sets up the physical human body as an analogy to describe the church, the “body of Christ.”

(13) What does it mean to be “baptized by the Spirit”? It means to be given the Holy Spirit when one becomes a true believer. In Acts 19:1-7 and 10:44-46, God gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believed. In 1 Cor. 2:12-14, people in fact cannot understand the gospel of Jesus Christ unless they have been first enabled by the Spirit. Some Christians today believe that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is an event in a Christian’s life that is separate and distinct from the time he first becomes a believer. In other words, a person first becomes a believer and is baptized in water, then perhaps months or years later, he reaches the next level in his Christian growth by being “baptized with the Spirit.” At this level, he speaks in tongues and his ability to serve God and live a Christ-like life is suddenly boosted. But according to this verse, true Christians have already been baptized with the Spirit at the time they became believers. Note how Paul refers to all of the Corinthians as having been baptized by the Spirit. Of course, the view that all Christians have already been baptized by the Spirit does not eliminate our need to seek more of the Spirit. Although all believers have started with the Spirit, we should continually seek a greater “filling of the Spirit,” longing for God to empower us to do extraordinary works for Him.

(22) What “weaker” parts of the body is Paul referring to? He is probably referring to internal bodily organs such as the liver, gall bladder, and the intestines. These parts of the body do not exert strength as a leg muscle would, but they are more vital to the body than the muscle. Without these internal organs, the body cannot live. In the same way, there are people in the church who work in the background, away from the spotlight, and receive little or no recognition. Yet they are often the most indispensable to the church.

(23) What are the “unpresentable” parts? Paul is referring to the genitals. While some cover these organs out of shame, Paul says we should cover them out of honor for them. Because God created the human body, all body parts are “good,” even our sex organs.

(28) What does it mean that God appointed apostles “first,” and prophets “second”? In establishing the early church, Christ first sent out His apostles, who preached the message of salvation until a gathering of believers could be formed. An example of this is Paul, who won many converts, and started churches for them, but never stayed in any church for more than a couple of years. He even mentions in the first chapter of this letter that he rarely ever baptized others. He left that job up to Apollos. Secondly, Christ established prophets. Apollos could be an example of such a prophet. Ephesians 2:20 says that Christ’s church is built on this “foundation of the apostles and prophets.” The list goes on, where Paul describes the order in which God established the ministries of the early

church. Churches today are established in a similar order. First, the gospel must be spread (e.g. knocking on doors), then the Word must be taught on a regular basis (e.g. a Bible study), then people begin to help each other (e.g. miracles, healing, helps), then when the group grows someone must organize it (e.g. an administrator), and then God gives rise to other manifestations of the Spirit, some for personal benefit such as the gift of “tongues.”

(31) Why does Paul say that some gifts are greater than others, when he just finished saying that all members are needed? Some gifts edify the whole church more than other gifts. Although God encourages all Christians to use their gifts for the benefit of the church, some gifts such as teaching have the ability to benefit the entire church, while other gifts such as “tongues” often benefit only the person who is praying.

Insights

- God has given every true believer a spiritual gift. (12-13)
- God designed you for a specific role in the church. (14-20)
- The church needs you, even if you think you “don’t fit in.” (21-26)
- God commands that Christians use their gifts, no matter how unusual, for the benefit of the church.

The Bottom Line

Use your gift. Jesus Christ died on a cross not only to earn for us the forgiveness of sins, but also the many blessings of salvation. God gives all these blessings to all those who believe in the story of Jesus Christ. Those blessings include spiritual gifts, i.e. the special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to each and every believer so that he can serve others. These gifts are sometimes not immediately recognized as useful by others, yet God encourages us to use them for His glory. Also, the church as a whole needs to create more opportunities for Christians to exercise their gifts.

1 Corinthians 13

About the Text

(5) What does it mean to “keep no record of wrongs”? It means to not notice evil that is done to you. Those who are the most loving are not offended easily.

(6) If we don’t notice evil, then why does Paul say “love does not delight in evil”? Ironically, a loving person resists doing evil himself, yet overlooks the evil done to him. For example, Jesus Christ was perfect, committing no evil. Yet as the soldiers tortured Him, He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” In a similar way, the Christian grows in his/her hatred for evil, and delight in God’s righteous laws (“truth”).

(8) What does it mean that “love never fails”? God intended love to last eternally. This is the point of the following verses.

(8) Why would “prophecies... [speaking in] tongues... and knowledge” pass away? According to the next verse, we won’t need them when Christ returns and we are living in eternity with God. Spiritual gifts, whether they be the ability to prophesy or the ability to administrate, are to be used for the building up of the church in this present age. But when the church has been fully built up, complete, and perfect, then there will be no need for such gifts. For example, my gift in teaching the Bible will no longer be needed in eternity, because all God’s children will see God face to face and have a complete knowledge of Him.

Insights

- God requires Christians to love, else they are nothing to Him. (1-3)
- Godly love is a decisive action, not a feeling. (4-7)
- God made most things to be temporary, but intended love to be eternally permanent. (8-13)

The Bottom Line

What a deal, I thought. These athletic shoes looked just like the real brand name ones - same logo, same color, same style. Not even I could tell the difference. But after wearing them for three days, the rubber was separating from the material, and the shoelace eyelets popped off. Such is the Christian without love. Like a cheap, mechanically produced copy, he resembles his master only in the features that are easy to simulate. It’s easy, for example, to point out the sins of others, pray in public, conduct meetings, and with the right preparation, teach a Bible lesson with the precision of a scholarly book. Jesus did all that. But a Christian who tries to copy Jesus without love is far from the original. Even the world can tell the difference. Just as a man, blind since birth, cannot conceive of color until his eyes are miraculously opened, so the natural man cannot conceive of perfect love until his eyes of faith are miraculously opened. Without an understanding of Jesus Christ, we cannot

truly love, because we have never seen it before. We see only the world's love, which is only like the crayon scribbles of a child who thinks he's writing. That is why the cross of Christ remains to be the only seed where true love blossoms. God may have provided us a wonderful spouse, children, and a home, but that doesn't demonstrate the full depth of His love. It is only when we understand how enormous His sacrifice was, and how glorious was His throne, and how vile our sin, our how miserable we were without Christ, how wonderful was His gift of salvation, and how vast was His plan - only then do we clearly see the love of God. We have tasted God's love only when we can almost hear Jesus say as He hung in agony on that cross, "[your name], my child, this is for you, which I had planned from all eternity." Then, when we see God's love in this way, we are so impressed, because there is no love like it, that we cannot help but want to love in the same way.

PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love. Make me more compassionate and merciful so that I might be more like Jesus. Whatever I do, whether I teach or whether I eat, let love of Jesus shine in all that I do and speak. In Jesus' name, Amen.

1 Corinthians 14:1-25

About the Text

(1) What are “spiritual gifts”? Special abilities that God gives to believers for the purpose of serving God and others in the church.

(1) What kind of “prophecy” was Paul writing of? Judging from the context, it was the general meaning of prophecy - the intelligent communication of God’s truths. The narrow meaning of prophecy - the foretelling of the future - is not the issue here.

(2) What is speaking in “tongues”? It is the supernatural ability to pray in a language previously unknown to the worshipper. The problem in the ancient church of Corinth, as it often is in some churches today, is that no one understood the language spoken. Therefore, while it put the one praying on a spiritual high, the rest of the congregation heard only gibberish.

(20) Why did Paul tell them to stop being like children, then in the next sentence tells them to be “infants”? He told them to be well-developed (like “adults”) in their thinking, but least-developed in evil. Simply put, he was telling them to be godlier.

(21) What was the point of this quotation from the Old Testament? This quotation is from Isaiah 28:11-12. Paul saw the phenomenon of tongues as the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy which foretold that the speaking in unintelligible languages was a sign of judgment to those who would not believe.

(22) How is tongues a “sign... for unbelievers” when Paul states in the next verse that it doesn’t help them at all? Scholars offer a variety of interpretations of this verse. The one I hold to is that Paul meant tongues as a “sign of judgment” to unbelievers, in reference to the preceding verse. In other words, when a congregation speaks in tongues in front of an unbeliever, the strange phenomenon will keep the visitor in his unbelief. Although there are differing explanations for this verse, the next verse makes the point of the passage clear: the practice of tongues turns off the visitor, the intelligent teaching of God’s Word leads him to conversion.

Insights

- Christ moves believers to love in such a way that they are more concerned with other people’s conversion and growth than their own personal spiritual experiences.

The Bottom Line

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. (1 Cor. 14:1) A pastor asked a group this question: “If you knew Jesus were

coming back tomorrow, what would you do?" One member replied, "I would mount a bullhorn on top of a truck, and announce His arrival." Another said, "I would take out an ad in the newspaper." Still another said, "I would contact the 6 o'clock news." But the last member remarked, "I would wait for Him on top of a mountain." Sometimes, it is a temptation to turn all our energies inward, like the man who waits on top of a mountain. It is good to have a personal quiet time with the Lord, but that is not all there is to the Christian life. Even six of the Ten Commandments deal with our relationship to our neighbor. If we put on the kind of love explained in the previous chapter, our energies become directed outward. We want to reach out to others and build them up. No longer are we concerned only with our own individual spiritual enrichment, but we are also concerned with the enrichment of others. This is the secret of Christians who make the greatest impact on the world for Christ. The most effective spiritual leaders and evangelists reach millions for Christ, not because of their tight administration or slick advertisements, but because they love those who are lost in Christ. Also, the most effective pastor loves his congregation. The most effective teacher loves her students. The most effective greeter loves visitors. Love, in other words, is the Christian's radar. It makes us aware of others in the room. The Christian who so loves, says Paul, halts his speaking in an unknown tongue, then opts to speak in an intelligible language for everyone else's benefit. Likewise, the Christian might also curb his use of "thee's" and "thou's," the use of scholarly theological terminology in the presence of children, and the high pressure for donations in the presence of unbelievers. With this loving awareness of others, Christ's church is built up.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, open my eyes so that I may see the world as Jesus does. Forgive me for being selfish about my own spirituality, and help me to be concerned about others in my midst, so that I might edify them. In Jesus name, Amen.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

About the Text

(26) What kind of gathering was Paul writing about? Christians gathering for worship. In the ancient church in Corinth, the worship services were basically a “free for all,” where believers all spoke and sang at the same time, each person doing his own thing. It was mass confusion. Everyone was in it for himself. No one was concerned for another. It is to this situation that Paul gave corrective advice.

(27) What is the speaking in “tongues”? As mentioned in the previous messages, it is the ability that some Christians have to speak to God in a language that they do not understand. In the earlier part of this chapter, Paul saw the weakness of this gift in building up others in the church. Thus, he advises the Corinthians to limit their use of tongues in this verse.

(29) What kind of “prophets” is being referred to here? In the early church in Corinth, prophets were the main teachers during the worship service. This was during a time when the New Testament was still under formulation. Such teachers receive direct messages, or “revelations” from God, and communicated them to the congregation. They had the kind of authority in the church that pastors and elders have today. The problem in the ancient church was that these prophets all spoke at the same time. It was a confusing mania of words. Each prophet had his say, but the congregation wasn’t growing from this kind of confusion.

(32) How could the Holy Spirit come under the “control” of prophet? The Holy Spirit powerfully enables a believer to do God’s work, even to speak as His messenger. But unlike demon-possession, the speaker is fully conscious, fully aware, fully in his right mind, and fully in control of his faculties. The Holy Spirit empowers us, but doesn’t overtake us.

(34) What was Paul prohibiting women to do? Bible scholars are in great disagreement as to exactly what kind of “speaking” the women were prohibited from doing. However, a few general conclusions can be made about these verses: Women were not to teach in these worship services. This is confirmed by 1 Tim. 2:11-12, where Paul prohibits women from teaching men in the church. Women were not to speak in a way that violated their role of submission in these worship services. Evidence of this is in verse 34 and also 1 Tim. 2:11. Women were not to speak in a way that caused disorder and confusion. This comes from Paul’s main point of this passage, that everything be done in an orderly and peaceful way, in order to strengthen the church (vv. 26, 33, 40). It is possible that women in the ancient church asked questions that were disruptive to the service, since in the Jewish synagogue, women typically sat on one side of the room while men on the other.

(36) Why did Paul ask this question? Paul knew that the Corinthians wouldn’t listen to his advice right away. They thought they knew it all already. Therefore, Paul sarcastically points out that they aren’t the only ones who know the Word of God.

Insights

- God is orderly, and thus demands order among His people.
- Christ's church is built up through orderly worship.

The Bottom Line

In this passage, Paul applies the principle of love, as explained in chapter 13, to worship. Some may say, "Isn't worship something that happens just between me and God? If my attention is on God, why must I care what the other members think?" Yes, it is true that in worship, our attention should be fully on God. But for corporate worship, the gathering of Christians for worship, Paul identifies an additional purpose: "All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church." Paul was calling for people-sensitive worship services, which is an outgrowth of love. A "free for all" worship service is attractive to some, but not edifying to all. Among the ancient Corinthian Christians, they would all speak at once, like a hundred car horns in a traffic jam. Especially in today's 50-channel cable TV society, we would love a worship service where we could pray when we want, sing what we want, sit where we want, and listen to what we want. But the Bible says there must be a "traffic controller," who regulates the worshiper's participation, without quenching the Spirit, so that the whole church benefits. Biblical worship certainly allows for some degree of freedom and spontaneity. But there must be some kind of bridle too. This way, the church is edified, and God is glorified. When you gather for worship, do you come only to "get something out of it"? Or do you come to also "strengthen the church"? Do you approach the worship service like you would a concert, where you could anonymously slip in and out? Or do you take the time to greet visitors, encourage the downcast, lift a burdened soul with Scripture, help set up chairs, and pray for the sister in need? There are many ways you could build up one another.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

About the Text

(2) What did Paul mean by “otherwise, you have believed in vain”? The English translation is a bit awkward, but in the original Greek the meaning is clear: If you believe the gospel, you will be saved; if you don't believe (“believe in vain”), you will not be saved (“[it will be] otherwise”). In the Greek, verses 1 and 2 form one, long sentence. By these words, the Bible indicates that salvation is not through good works but by belief (faith) in the story of Jesus Christ.

(3) What does it mean that “Christ died for our sins”? It means that Jesus Christ died on a cross not by accident, but on purpose - to take away our problem of sin and make us right with God. He did this by taking upon Himself the punishment that we deserved for our sins, which was death. Then, having lived a perfect life free from all sin, he transferred that perfection onto us who believe, so that we stand clean and forgiven before God, no matter how much we've actually sinned. Even though we Christians still commit sins, they are not held against us, because Jesus Christ earned God's complete forgiveness for us. No longer do you need to feel guilty, even though you've committed an awful sin, because Jesus Christ makes you clean.

(5) Who is the “Twelve”? The twelve apostles of Jesus Christ.

(6) What does the Bible mean by “fallen asleep”? They died.

(7) Who is James? Jesus' half-brother, the son of Mary and Joseph. Remember, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, not Joseph. Therefore, James and Jesus share only one parent - Mary.

(7) Who are the “apostles” mentioned in this verse? This term refers to all those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus, who were also specially commissioned by Him to tell the world about Jesus, and who started churches. The term also includes the Twelve Apostles, who were personal disciples of Jesus.

(8) Why does Paul call Himself “abnormally born”? The original Greek word behind this phrase was to denote something “freakish,” monstrous, and ugly. Paul felt that way about himself for several possible reasons. First, he used to persecute Christians before he became a believer. Second, he was probably short (“Paul” means “little guy”). Third, he did not meet Jesus in the “normal” way like the others (cf. Acts 9:1-19). Fourth, he wasn't a polished speaker (cf. 2 Cor. 10:10). Fifth, his tortures and imprisonment may have disfigured him to ugliness (2 Cor. 11).

(9) Why does Paul seem so down on himself? It was to magnify the grace of God. In other words, Paul showed how undeserving and unlikely he was to become a servant of God. Yet God was so kind (that's “grace”) that completely changed Paul so that He would

use him to reach the world for Jesus Christ. God often uses the least likely candidates to do His work. He used the stuttering and stammering Moses to lead the nation of Israel. He used a young boy, David, to become the king of Israel. He used a poor carpenter, Jesus, to save the world. And He used a beat-up, short, former hit-man, to reach the world for Christ. Today, God still works like this. Never underestimate the kindness and power of God. Although you may feel like nothing, believe in what God can do through you. Through your weakness, suffering, pain, torment, lack of education, or lack of talent, God may use you powerfully to do His work in spreading the love of Christ to this world. When God works this way, He shines all the more brighter, just as a surgeon is applauded all the more if he were forced to use the crudest of tools.

Insights

- The story of Jesus Christ is the most important message of Christianity because it miraculously saves people from darkness. (1-7)
- God often calls the least likely candidates to bring that gospel to the world. (8-11)

The Bottom Line

Do not underestimate the grace of God. Jesus Christ's death on the cross will cleanse you more than you think. God forgives more than you think. God changes people more dramatically than you think. God strengthens the weak more than you think. God provides more than you think. God proved His kindness to us by sending His Son Jesus Christ to die in our place. So consider God's call now. Could He be calling you to a work that you have never imagined yourself doing before?

1 Corinthians 15:12-58

About the Text

(12) What is meant by the “resurrection of the dead”? It is the belief that when Christ returns, the bodies of all believers who have died will be raised as new, immortal, transformed bodies. Jesus Christ possessed such a body, a physical “glorified” body, when He was raised from the dead 2,000 years ago.

(12) Why did Paul need to defend this belief? Because the Corinthian Christians doubted it. Being influenced by Greek philosophy, the Corinthians saw the physical human body as inferior to the soul. Therefore, the idea of the future reunion of the soul with the body seemed foreign and inconceivable to them. Today, there is still a lingering popular belief that the believer’s final state is where his soul, and only his soul, rests in heaven. But according to several passages in the Bible, the soul must be reunited to a resurrected “glorified” body sometime in the future. See John 11:24-26, Romans 8:17-25, Rev. 20:4-6)

(13) Why does one’s denial of the resurrection of the dead lead to one’s denial of Christ’s resurrection? Logic. If one denies his own resurrection on the grounds that such a miracle is impossible, then he must logically conclude that such a miracle was impossible for Christ.

(14) Why does the denial of Christ’s resurrection make Paul’s preaching and one’s faith “useless”? Because if the resurrection of Jesus Christ were not true, then all of His claims, including His promise of salvation to us who believe, would become suspect. His resurrection, being the miracle of all miracles, was to authenticate all the promises and deeds of Jesus Christ. In other words, the resurrection of Christ is like the one hook the supports a hanging plant. If the hook breaks, then all the strands that support the planter will fall as well. In short, all of Christianity falls if belief in Christ’s resurrection falls. For this reason, Paul explains what would happen if belief in the resurrection of Christ, as well as the resurrection of the dead in general, were to crumble. His preaching would be “useless” (14), he would be a “false witness” (15), we believers would still be in our sins and barred from salvation (17), our faith and religion would be meaningless (17), and all we would have to look forward to is this present life, which for many is full of hardship and troubles (18).

(20) What is meant by “firstfruits”? Literally, it means the first part of a fruitful harvest that is given over to the Lord. In this passage, it means that we believers will all be part of a great resurrection, of which Jesus was the first (and the only one so far) to experience it. It implies that we believers will be resurrected in a similar way that Christ was.

(24) What “end” was being spoken of here? The end of the present age, that is, this world as we know it today. At that time, Christ will come back, and all the end-times events that He foretold will have happened.

(25) What does it mean that Christ will “put all His enemies under His feet”? It means that in the end Jesus will eliminate all evil and suffering in this world. It will become a place where “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Rev. 21:4).

(29) What is the “baptism for the dead”? Nobody knows for sure. There absolutely no other mention of it in the Old or New Testaments, and there is no reference to it at all in any other ancient Christian writings. In other words, we today have no clue as to what this practice was all about. Some cults have based a major doctrinal teaching on this verse. It is dangerous to do so. Because of the lack of other Biblical support, any conclusions drawn from this verse are speculative possibilities at best. Christian Bible scholars offer many possible explanations for this text, but again they are only possibilities. No one can be sure.

(30) Why did Paul say “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” if there were no resurrection? He meant that if we could not be certain about the Christian faith, God, salvation, Jesus, etc., there is no reason to live a godly life. We might as well indulge in anything and everything that makes us happy in this life.

(35) When our bodies are resurrected, what will they be like? The Bible gives some general features about such a body. First, it will be so different from the old body, that Paul compares it to a seed and a full-grown plant (v. 37). Second, it will sometimes be unrecognizable (John 20:14-15). Third, there will be few physical limitations (e.g. it can pass through walls), cf. John 20:19, 26. Fourth, it will retain some features that the old body had (John 20:27). Fifth, it cannot die (v. 42). Sixth it will have great strength (v. 43). Seventh, it can eat, and retains some familiar biological processes (John 21:12-13).

(44) If our resurrected body is physical, then why does Paul call it a “spiritual body”? It is “spiritual” only in the sense that it has been dramatically transformed by divine power. The other Bible passages that describe the resurrected body prove that it is still a physical one.

(55) How does the resurrection remove the Christian’ fear of death? There is now something much greater to look forward to. If one believes in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he can sure of his salvation. As a result, the Christian sees death as a momentary pause, a comma in life, and as an entrance to a life of perfect peace, painlessness, and bliss.

The Bottom Line

Christ’s promise of the believer’s future glory helps him live for God today.

1 Corinthians 16

About the Text

(1) What was this “collection” for? It was for the poorer Christians in Jerusalem. Possibly because of persecution (Acts 8:1) or famine (Acts 11:28), the Christians in Jerusalem were so poor that they needed to combine all their belongings into one common pot, cf. Acts 2:44. Paul instructed the wealthier Christians in both Corinth (Greece) and Galatia (now modern Turkey) to have compassion upon their fellow Christians and give generously to their needs.

(2) Why on the “first day of every week”? This verse, along with Acts 20:7, gives some indication that some churches in the early history of Christianity (ca. 55 A.D.) had already chosen Sunday as their day of gathered worship. Other writings of the early church (e.g. Justin Martyr, 150 A.D.) show that the practice of gathering and giving offerings on each Sunday quickly became part of Christian tradition. These verses do not, of course, prohibit Christians today from meeting for worship on other days of the week. But they do describe the development of religious practice in the early church, giving a glimpse of our own heritage.

(3) What does “in keeping with his income” mean? Simply that the rich were to give more, and the poor less.

(5) Where is Macedonia? It is the region north of Greece, about 150 miles north of Corinth. This was a considerable distance to travel in Paul’s day. But for Paul, who traveled extensively as a missionary, Corinth would be his next stop after Macedonia.

(8) Where is Ephesus? It was a large cosmopolitan city on the western shore of what is modern Turkey today. It was the city where Paul stayed the longest at - about two to three years. There was much “fruit,” that is, he won many converts there, the church grew strong and mature, and the people there were eager to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(20) What is a “holy kiss”? It was a custom probably carried over from Judaism. It is called “holy” because it was meant as a sign of affection and fellowship done between Christians only. Most churches do not practice this custom anymore, nor do we know exactly how it was done (was it on the cheek?). Nevertheless, God calls Christians today to practice the spirit of that act, that is, to warmly greet and care for each other.

Insights

- The world loves “fences.”
- Christ reconciles believers not only to God, but also to each other.
- God commands us to express our new “kinship” in practical ways.

The Bottom Line

In modern society, we like to draw boundary lines and say “mine.” We protect our privacy to the extent that we erect fences between homes, place those rubber dividers on the grocery store check-out stand, and hang “no soliciting” signs outside our doors. Some non-Western peoples cannot understand our obsession with privacy. Of course, it is not necessarily wrong to protect one’s privacy, yet it can become a hindrance to intimate fellowship among God’s people. In the churches of Paul’s day, the privacy lines for God’s people got fuzzy on purpose. They took up collections for poorer Christians in Jerusalem (v. 1-4). Some of them even shared all their possessions (Acts 2:44). They opened up their homes (v. 19). And they greeted each other with a kiss (v. 20). They confessed sins to one another (James 5:16). They were like family, God’s family. Modern relationships are like billiard balls all colliding with each other on a pool table. We each have a hard, impenetrable shell where we’d rather not get too personally involved in another Christian’s affairs. We’d like church to be a cocktail party. We’d rather put on our Sunday best, keep our problems to ourselves, and say “it’s none of their business.” But God calls us to be more like clay balls. We are to bond to each other, molding and reshaping ourselves around one another, such that when one ball is ripped away, bits of us are torn away and cling to that ball. That is why the elders at Ephesus cried and kissed Paul when he left (Acts 20:37). That is why we call each other brothers and sisters. When we become believers in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we not only become reconciled to God, but we become radically divorced from the world, and we become part of a new family, which God calls the “family of believers” (Gal. 6:10). Do you have a band of believers whom you can trust, confide in, and open up to? How many believers do you personally know by name? Do you have a group of Christians whom you would sacrificially give your money and time to?

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen the bond of fellowship between all brothers and sisters in Your family. You have adopted us as Your own children. Now, create kinship between us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.