

1 CORINTHIANS

Chapters 1 – 10:13



The Forum Terrace Church of Christ

Adult Wednesday Night Bible Class Fall Quarter 2019

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Introduction to 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

The Roman philosopher Cicero, said of Corinth that it was: “the light of all Greece.” After a church was started there by the Apostle Paul, it became a light to all the world for all ages. Especially because we can still read of it in Paul’s two letters and the account of its beginning in the book of Acts.

Author & Canonicity

The authorship of 1 and 2 Corinthians has seen little dispute. The Apostle identifies himself at the beginning of both letters(1 Cor. 1:1-3; 2 Cor. 1:1-2). The opening address of both letters follow the style of Paul which includes thanksgiving. Scholars agree that the letters reflect the Apostle’s vocabulary and spirit. Other internal evidence is the type of greetings similar to Paul’s found in other letters (1 Cor. 16:19-24; 2 Cor. 13:11-14). In 1 Corinthians 4:15 it mentions that he had “begotten” them through the preaching of the Gospel. This is support by Acts 18:1f.

External evidence of Paul’s authorship is found in the early Christian writers, such as, Clemens (95AD); Polycarp (70-155AD); Ignatius in 117 AD; Irenaeus (150-203 AD); etc. Further proof is found in the piece of limestone pavement found near the amphitheater at Corinth which reads: "Erastus, in return of the aedileship, laid the pavement at his own expense." This may have been the same friend of Paul and city-treasurer mentioned Romans 16:23 and 2 Timothy 4:20.

Textual criticism of 1 Corinthians has not presented a challenge to the letter’s place in the canon of the New Testament. “The problem of the text is so minor that most commentators do not mention the subject. We can rest assured that we have a reliable text of the book of 1 Corinthians” (Willis vii).

City of Corinth

The site of Corinth has been occupied for thousands of years. It is strategically located on an isthmus connecting the lower part of Greece, called Peloponnesus, and the main part of Greece to the north. The isthmus connecting the two sections of Greece is only about three miles wide. “The city itself was really three cities: the port of Cenchrea, about eight miles to the east, where ships from the Aegean would unload; the port of Lechaem, about a mile to the west on the Gulf of Corinth, where the ships would be reloaded, their goods having been transported in wagons over the isthmus and the ships on rollers; and the city itself on the high ground in between” (Elwell 515). This form of transportation of goods and the movement of small ships across the isthmus saved not only a great deal of sailing time but cutting off over 200 miles that it would have taken them around the Cape of Malea. So this allowed sailors to avoid the dangerous weather common with the voyage. Corinth thus lay in the path of both the north to south routes and the east and west traffic making the city one of the greatest commercial centers of the Roman Empire.

In about 575 BC Periander made the original attempt to cut a canal through the isthmus to connect the Aegean Sea with the Adriatic Sea. He soon gave up on this and made a stone-built overland road or boat ramp called a *Diolkos*. Later Julius Caesar, Caligula, and Nero came up with the same idea about digging a canal. Nero even visited the site and overturned the first shovel full of dirt to begin the project which was to use captured Jews as manpower. It was not until 1893 that the French finished the canal.

The Corinth of Paul's day was not the famed Greek city-state of ancient Greece. When Greece rebelled against the advances of Rome, L. Mummius was sent and the city was razed in 146 BC. The city lay in ruin for a century. Shortly before his assassination Julius Caesar recognizing the great advantage of Corinth's location and ordered it to be rebuilt as a Roman Colony. At this time, an amphitheater was built. Corinth became the capital of the Achaia Province of the Roman Empire.

Strabo (8.6.23c) stated that Corinth was repopulated by freedmen from Rome. It became a cosmopolitan city attracting tradespeople from all over the world, including Greeks, Jews, Syrians, sailors, traders, slaves (7:20-24); artisans, etc. The New Testament mentions individual Christians at Corinth, such as, Crispus, Aquila and Priscilla who were Jews. The Greeks mentioned are Stephanas, Achaicus, and Erastus. Fortunatus, Quartus, Gaius, and Titius Justus were Romans. It all contained quite a few who had become rich and many others who were far less fortunate. The city grew until it has a population between 500,000 and 700,000.

Religion & Culture of Corinth

Roman colonies like Corinth served "as outposts for promoting Roman culture, religion, language, and political systems as well as providing lands for retired Roman soldiers" (Oster 16).

Located on the southern extremity is Acrocorinthus, a rock formation rising almost 2000 feet above sea level. Strabo observed "the summit was a small temple of Aphrodite" [8]. At one time one thousand temple priestesses lived there. They would come down at night upon the city of Corinth and prostitute themselves to raise money for their pagan goddess. According to archeological finds venereal disease was very common and they may have used the lofts above the thirty-three wine shops found in excavations. "Aelian, the late Greek writer, tells us that if ever a Corinthian was shown upon the stage in a Greek play he was shown drunk" (William Barclay, *The Letters To The Corinthians*, p. 2-3). Quite a few clay drinking mugs have been found with the inscribed "cure for hangovers."

Immorality of Corinth became renowned. Aristophanes (450-385 BC) coined the verb *korinthiazō* meaning "to commit fornication" or *korinthiazesthai* meaning "to live like a Corinthian" to corinthianize. To call some girl a Corinthian lass was to label her as a whore.

Other pagan gods and practices have been discovered among the ruins. Evidence of imperial cult worship has been found. There is a Temple of Apollo which still has seven of its thirty-eight massive columns still standing erect. Many of the early Christians in Corinth had been pagans practicing idol worship and going to the temple feasts. To live in ancient Corinth was to be constantly exposed to the wickedness of the heathen environment. Paul even quotes the Greek poet Menander who wrote, "*evil company corrupts good morals*" (1 Cor. 15:33).

In 1898, a stone was found in a residential section of the city which bore seven letters which, when restored, read "Synagogue of the Hebrew". Apparently a community of Jews lived and was large enough to support a synagogue (Acts 18:4).

Corinth was also known for the Isthmian Games, held in honor of Poseidon. Paul alludes to these in 1 Corinthians chapter nine. "The prize for winning the games was a wreath made of myrtle, olive, or pine branches, plus additional benefits: a stipend from the state; remission of taxes; and special benefits for the champion's children. Winners were national heroes" (Elwell 514).

Date & Place of Writings to Corinth

Acts indicates that Paul's work at Corinth took place while Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12). An inscription from Delphi informs that Gallio "was governor to Greece when Claudius had obtained 'tribunician power' twelve times and had been acclaimed emperor twenty-six times." From other inscriptions, these events place the Delphi inscription between the end of 51 and August 52 "when he was acclaimed emperor for the twenty-seventh time" (107). Paul left Corinth shortly after Gallio was appointed. From there he journeyed to Ephesus and left for Antioch. He returned to Ephesus where he worked for three years (Acts 20:31). Paul wrote 1

Corinthians during his third missionary journey, near the end of his three-year ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:21–22). Therefore the date of the letter would have been written between AD 53-55.

Church at Corinth

On his second missionary journey Paul was directed by way of a vision to preach in Macedonia. After beginning his work in Philippi, he went to Thessalonica and Berea where he met with Jewish opposition. When he came to Athens, he had little success due to the rejections of the Gentiles of his preaching on the resurrection. Paul left Athens and likely traveled by boat to Corinth.

At Corinth Paul met a husband and wife named Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2). They were Jews from Pontus who had recently been forced to leave Rome because of Claudius' decree. According to the Roman historian Suetonius, Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in 49 A.D., because "the Jews were in a state of constant tumult at the instigation of one Chrestus [i.e. Christ]." This couple were also tentmakers by trade like Paul. Paul would make tents all week with them to support himself while on the sabbath, he would enter the synagogue and preach. Sometime later Silas and Timothy rejoined Paul in Corinth. He made have brought financial support from Macedonia, so the apostle could devote his full time to preaching. The Jews rejected and blasphemed, so Paul shook the dust out of his garments against them and said, "*Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles*" (Acts 18:6). Following this Paul went next door from the synagogue to the house of Titius Justus. In time even the ruler of the synagogue, Crispus was baptized by Paul (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14). However, it seems the church would be mostly made up of Gentiles from the Corinthian community.

One night Paul received special encouragement from Paul in the form of a vision. The Lord told Paul He was with him and not to be afraid for no one would hurt or attack him. He was to continue preaching the Gospel for God had many souls that would come to Him in Corinth (Acts 18:9-11).

This promise was put to the test when the Jews drug Paul before Gallio. The Proconsul rejected hearing this religious issue. And Sosthenes, the new ruler of the synagogue, was beaten. Gallio was the "brother of the philosopher Seneca (Nero's tutor), and uncle of the poet Lucan, the author of the *Pharsalia*. Seneca speaks of him as amiable and greatly beloved" (Marvin Vincent, Vincent's Word Studies In The New Testament).

Paul's first visit and the founding of the church took place between 49-51 AD. While in Corinth, Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians. He stayed for eighteen months before depart for Antioch. He took with him Aquila and Priscilla. They stayed in Ephesus and met a preacher named Apollos. After helping correct his preaching on the baptism of John, the church sent him on to Corinth (Acts 18:27).

Purpose of Writing to Corinth

The occasion for Paul's letter to the Corinthians seems to have been initiated by three different sources of information by various groups. First, information came by way of the household of Chloe. "*For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you*" (1 Cor. 1:11). Next, there was a letter from the church at Corinth with various questions for the Apostle to address. Paul said, "*now concerning the things of which you wrote to me*" (1 Cor. 7:1). Finally, Paul received visitors from Corinth who may have supplied further information about the condition of the church. "*I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men*" (1 Cor. 16:17-18).

Paul deals with several problems at Corinth which do not seem to have a close connection with each other. The structure of the letter unfolds with an abrupt movement from one issue to the next.

First, he deals with the problem of division among the saints based on loyalties to men

instead the Lord and the Truth (1:10-4:27).

All of chapter five focuses on the need for church discipline on the man who had his father's wife.

In 6:1-8 Paul condemns the practice of taking one another to court. He instead wants them to use one another to work out their issues instead of airing their dirty laundry before the world.

Fornication and prostitution had been a social occasion of some of the Corinthians' past life of sin. Some were trying to justify a return to sexual immorality. They were arguing that what is done in the body is of no consequence. Paul reminds them their bodies and their souls have both been redeemed by Christ and therefore are His and not their's to do with as they please (6:9-20).

Beginning with chapter seven Paul addresses a series of questions sent to him by the saints at Corinth. Although this letter does not exist in any form today, we can reconstruct some of what was asked by looking at Paul's answers. First, they had several questions in regard to marriage. They were not to abstain from sex obligations within marriage (7:1-7). Divorce is not permitted for Christian couples or mixed marriages (7:10-16). He deals with a present distress (7:17-24). Singles, either widows or virgins, should wait the benefits of marriage or remarriage and the single life (7:25-40).

Next Paul answers questions "*concerning things offered to idols*" (8:1f). According to Munn: "The economic factor arose from the practice of sacrificing animals to the idols. Some of the meat sacrificed was consumed in the sacrifice, some of it was eaten by the priests, and some of it was sold in the markets of the city. Accurate identification of this meat was often impossible, and a customer would have no way of knowing whether his meat had come from the altar of some pagan temple. When a citizen went to dine with a friend, there was no way of knowing whether the meat served him had come from the worship of an idol."

In chapter nine verse three Paul complains that the Corinthians are "*sitting in judgment*" over him. He defends his apostleship at this point and reinforces his apostolic authority.

Paul next focuses on their concerns over visiting the pagan temples and eating meat from the market place in 10:1-11:1.

There appears to have been a question in regard to a woman wearing or not wearing a covering on her head when she worshiped (11:2-16).

In 11:27-34 Paul gives more detail concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper than anywhere else outside of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The Lord's Supper degenerated into a social occasion without proper respect for the elements, one another, etc. Paul's remedy was for them to partake in a proper or worthy manner and wait for one another when eating it as a true spiritual fellowship meal

The Corinthians through the laying on of the apostle Paul's hands had been greatly blessed with many spiritual gifts (12:1ff). They were divided over the importance of these gifts and those who had them. Love is more important than all of them (13:1-13). Instructions are given for the proper and orderly use of these gifts in the worship assemblies for the purpose of edification (14:1ff).

In Athens Paul had been ridiculed because of his preaching on the resurrection (Acts 17:32). They held that a resurrection of the body was repugnant. Apparently fifty miles south of Athens, the congregation at Corinth had some who were denying the resurrection.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 Paul appears to answer questions regarding the coming collection for the needy saints at Jerusalem.

In Paul's closing comments, he points out they needed to prepare themselves for Timothy's arrival (16:5-11).

Summary

The church at Corinth was a young congregation of believers. Even though they were blessed with leaders like Paul, Apollos, Titus, and Timothy as well as spiritual gifts to guide them, they were babes in Christ faced with a plethora of problems. After about four letters from Paul the

church became a united fellowship of saints powerful enough to withstand the pressure of a gross, pagan culture.

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Questions:

1. What evidence is there internally and externally for the Paul's authorship of 1 Corinthians?

2. Why did Corinth become such a major point of commerce in the Roman Empire?

3. When was the canal finally made?

4. When and how did Corinth become a Roman Colony?

5. What does "corinthianize" mean?

6. What significant archeological finds have been found at ancient Corinth which seem to support Acts 18 and 1 Corinthians?

7. What is the date for Paul's letter of 1 Corinthians? How do scholars arrive at this date?

8. Who worked with Paul at Corinth to establish the church there?
9. What happened before the judgment seat of Gallio?
10. How long was Paul in Corinth?
11. What was the purpose of Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians?
12. Who was Sosthenes? (See 1:1; Acts 18:17).
13. Why do you think Paul mentions that he is an Apostle to the church of God at Corinth which he had established the church himself a couple of years earlier?
14. What are the past benefits of grace the Corinthians had received?
15. In what two things were they enriched? For what purpose?

Application & Discussion:

1. Why are the words "*grace*" and "*peace*" so important that Paul mentions them in the greetings of most of his letters?
2. Why should Christian look forward to the coming of the Lord?

Homework: Meditate on some negative influences of our culture upon the local church.

Unity in the Church & Wisdom of God

1 Corinthians 1:10-1:25

Paul's Plea for Unity

■ Same-mindedness

The apostle Paul made the following plea for unity: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Cor. 1:10). There are divisions today, because all do not speak the same thing. And so there is no way that they are perfectly joined together. To be of *"the same mind"* implies unity of belief or faith and purpose while being of the *"same judgment"* implies unity of action. This is by no means the first and only time the New Testament commands saints to be of the same mind (2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2). Paul encouraged brethren to be *"like-minded one with another"* so they could with *"one mind and mouth glorify God"* (Rom. 15:5,6). Paul said it would be his joy if be *"like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"* (Phil. 2:3). *"Let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind"* (Phil. 3:16).

■ Religious Division Condemned

Some will argue that there is one body but it is divided up into many different denominations. When the first sign of denominationalism reared its divisive head Paul condemned it. *"Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ'"* (1 Cor. 1:12,13a). Paul rebukes this by way of three questions (1 Cor. 1:13). *"Is Christ divided?"* NO! *"That there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another"* (1 Cor. 12:25). *"Was Paul crucified for you?"* NO! Christ died to purchase them. *"For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body"* (1 Cor. 6:20). *"Were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* No! *"And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized"* (Ac. 18:8). But, if Christ was crucified for them and they were baptized in Christ's name, then those who claimed, "I am of Christ" were correct, because these two necessary conditions have been fulfilled.

■ Paul's Mission

Paul's comments to the Corinthians in 1:17 have been confusing for some: *"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect"* (1 Cor. 1:17). It does not say that Paul did not baptize. It does not say that Paul did not preach the essentiality of baptism to salvation. It does not say that Paul did not baptize lest some should think baptism was essential to salvation. It does not say the baptism is not part of the Gospel. It does not say that baptism is not essential to salvation. The brethren were dividing up over the preacher who had baptized them (v. 12). For this cause he thanked God that few were baptized of him, and not that a few were baptized (v. 15). *"Baptism was such an important thing in the view of the early Christians that Paul congratulated himself in having baptized so few at Corinth, lest some should say that he 'baptized in his own name' - lest the faith and reverence due to Christ might be 'divided' - and a part be transferred to the distinguished administrator. How could this have been, if baptism had been a mere symbol of no vital consequence?"* (J. W. Wilmarth, "Baptism and Remission," Baptist Quarterly, July, 1877, pp. 312,313).

Even the word *"sent"* demonstrates Paul's apostolic commission. *"Sent"* is from the Greek

word *apostelen*, a cognate of the Greek word for "apostle" (*apostolos*). It means an official is sent in an authoritative capacity. Paul was sent out as an apostle not so he could baptize, but so he could preach the Gospel (Ac. 9:15,16; 22:14,15; 26:16-20). It is not necessary to be an apostle to baptize.

The Foolishness of God vs. the Wisdom of Men

When Paul established a church in Corinth, he was in a society which worshiped human wisdom. In fact, the very word "philosophy" means "love of wisdom." He conceded to the reality that in human eyes, the Gospel was not very wise.

Paul was by no means anti-intellectual. He was all for Christians using their mind and not just their emotions. Diligent study, meditation, and giving yourself to reading are not only things he practiced but commanded other Christians to engage in to be faithful to God (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:35; Col. 1:9; 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:15). His argument in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 is not a call for blind acceptance of the Gospel without reasoning, but an attempt to prove that God's way is superior to man's wisdom. He would accomplish this through a series of contrasts between the foolishness of God and the wisdom of man.

- **Human Wisdom Finds Preaching the Cross Foolishness, Divine Wisdom Declares it to Be the Power of God unto Salvation**

Paul began his argument in verse eighteen: "*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*" (1 Cor. 1:18). The idea of God on a cross was repugnant in the first century mind. In about 152 AD an early Christian by the name of Justin wrote, "They proclaim our madness to consist in this, that we give to a crucified man a place equal to the unchangeable eternal God." Graffiti scratched on a stone in a guardroom on Palatine Hill, near Circus Maximus in Rome, shows the figure of a man with the head of an ass hanging on a cross. Below is a man in a gesture of adoration and the inscription says, "Elexa Manos worships his God." Cicero wrote, "This very word 'cross' should be removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears." They might have reasoned: "How could God send God to hang naked on a cross and be left for the birds to eat?"

No Greek or Jew of Paul's day could have ever imagined the symbol of a cross being used as jewelry or wall decor. Yet, one of the main features of Gospel preaching is the crucifixion. Without it - all men will perish. Salvation is a continual process. Preaching the cross is its power (Rom. 1:16).

- **Human Wisdom is Temporary, Divine Wisdom is Eternal**

Paul continues, "*For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.' Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*" (1 Cor. 1:19,20). This Old Testament quote comes from Isaiah 29:14 where the Jews had a plan to pit the Egyptians against the Assyrians and save the nation. God brought their plans to nought and still saved besieged Jerusalem by sending an angel to slaughter 185,000 Assyrian army in a single night.

Paul then fires off a series of questions that mock human wisdom. All of the great men of education, publication, and argumentation could not come up with a wise solution to man's greatest problem: sin and man's greatest enemy: death. Human wisdom has solved nothing. God's plan through the Son of Man has destroyed all their plans.

- **Human Wisdom is Impotent, Divine Wisdom is Powerful**

The world does not possess the ability to come to the knowledge of God without the assistance of revelation. "*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, Because the foolishness of God is wiser*

than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:21-25). God cannot be known via the pursuit of human wisdom. It is true that some things about God can be discerned through nature (Rom. 1:18ff). All the collected wise men of old through the present cannot reveal to us God without the preaching of the revealed divine truth. All the accumulated insights of the greatest Greek philosophers equals foolishness.

Salvation from sin and its consequences (death) can only come through preaching the cross. To man this is just foolishness. But God chose out of His own free will to save men by the foolishness of preaching.

Neither the Jews or the Greeks wanted the preaching of the Gospel. The Jews wanted a sign. They were given many miracles of Jesus, including those in His ministry and those surrounding His crucifixion. Most of all they were given the sign of the resurrection. Next, the signs on the day of Pentecost prophesied by Joel had been given to them. Finally, all the signs and wonders given by the Holy Spirit through the early Christians. Let them demanded more signs. On the other hand, the Greeks wanted wisdom. They loved nothing more than to use the mind in their logical attempts at solving the greatest mysteries of man. How illogical in the mind of the Greek for God to kill God in order to rescue man from death.

The preaching of the cross had two distinct affects. 1) It was a stumbling block to the Jews. After all concerning those whose bodies were hung on a tree the Law of Moses said, *"his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God"* (Deut. 21;23). The Greek term for "stumbling block" is *skandalon* from which the English word "scandal" is derived. God cursing God by hanging a Jew on a cross was a scandalous message. 2) And the preaching of the cross was foolishness to the Greeks. The Greek word translated "foolishness" is *moria* from which we get the word "moron." This is exactly how the intellectuals of Athens treated Paul on Mars' Hill when they heard him preaching about the resurrection (Acts 17:32). It was bad enough to use the crucifixion for a positive result, but Paul proclaimed the resurrection when their philosophies saw death as a solution to the problems of life. It was totally moronic; because the unloving gods of paganism would never sacrifice themselves out of love for lost man and then come back to earth.

To both the Jew and the Greek their rejection was their loss. *"The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; so what wisdom do they have?"* (Jer. 8:9).

Questions:

1. By what authority does Paul make his request in verse ten?
2. What was not to be among the Corinthians?
3. What were they to do instead?
4. What four factions existed in the church?
5. How should the questions in verse 13 be answered?

6. Who did Paul baptize? Why was he glad that he only baptized them?

7. True False In 1 Corinthians 1:17 Paul is saying that preaching is more important than baptism, because anyone could baptize, but not everyone could preach the Word of God.

8. The world thinks preaching the cross is _____. But how do the saints view it?

9. What is to become of human wisdom (1:19)?

10. True False The world does not possess the ability to come to the knowledge of God without the assistance of revelation.

11. How do the Jews respond to the preaching of Christ?

12. Show passages from the Bible demonstrating God's wisdom and power are superior to that of man's.

Application & Discussion:

1. Paul informs them of three prerequisites in order for one to call himself after another religiously. What are they? How can this be used to teach against denominationalism?

2. List all the things modern man rejects as foolishness in the doctrines of the Bible?

Homework: Strive to promote better unity in the congregation by being of the same mind and judgment on things pertaining to the Truth. Do this by studying together on this with an open Bible.

Wisdom of Preaching

1 Corinthians 1:26-2:16

- **Human Wisdom is For Elite, Divine Wisdom is for All**

Many of those who were objecting to the preaching of the cross might have argued that all those who are Christians are from the lower classes of society. To this, Paul would respond, *“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are”* (1 Cor. 1:26-28).

First, the wise, mighty and noble do not often heed the call of the Gospel. This is not due to the weakness of the message but the foolish pride of the sinners. Those who trust in their intellect, their wealth, their health, their reputation, their nobility, etc. will not give up their stature in the world to carry a cross (Lk. 9:23). Only those who recognize they are in need of salvation will seek to be saved.

By choosing the foolish things, God has brought shame on the wise. In AD 178, Celsus wrote that Christians were the most vulgar and uneducated people around. Far more recently, Ted Turner said, “Christianity is for losers.” The weak are those who are devoid of strength or power due to lack of education or wealth. The “base” are those Christians who are not from any noble birth or rank. Yet it would be these poor elements of society that would preach the Gospel to the rest. A wealthy banker would be taught by the lowly janitor. The cafeteria lady would win the highly educated professor.

Sometimes we think that we need rich people to reach the wealthy with the Gospel or men and women with multiple doctorates to teach the intellectuals. Being ashamed of the Gospel we long for a famous, pretty face to convert and bring the lost to Christ by virtue of their power of persuasion instead of the power of the Word preached. Instead, God uses nobodies to reach the somebodies of this world.

- **Human Wisdom Exalts Man, Divine Wisdom Glorifies God**

Finally, in defense of the foolishness of preaching the cross Paul wrote, *“that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 1:29-31).

God alone is the author of our salvation. Neither the wisdom of the Greek or the heritage of the Jews could have ever dreamed up the Gospel Plan of Salvation. Only God can freely dispense salvation to man (Eph. 2:8-10).

There seems to be very little glory in the preaching of the cross. The cross, crucifixion, self-sacrifice, the resurrection, the weak and poor elements of society all lack the luster lusted for by man. There is nothing for either Jew or Greek to glory in or about when it comes to his salvation. The appeal of becoming a Christian is not its popularity among those who like to glory in themselves.

The only glory is in Christ. Only He can make us right with God, bring us moral purity in sanctification, and ransom us from the slavery of sin and death by our redemption. Due to these blessings we are not ashamed of the Gospel preaching of the cross (Rom. 1:16).

Questions:

1. Which groups of sinners are less likely to answer the call of the Gospel?

2. What does God use to humble the wise and powerful?

3. Why has God chosen lowly things like fishermen for apostles, the resurrection, and the cross as a way to victory?

4. What four blessings are there in Christ Jesus (1:30)?

5. In who or what should men glory? What were they glorying in before?

6. How did Paul come preaching?

7. What was the focus of Paul's preaching (2:1)?

8. What was Paul's disposition when he came preaching (2:3)?

9. What was their faith to be in after Paul preached to them?

10. What is the mystery Paul is preaching?

11. Why did men crucify Christ (2:7-8)?
12. Who has revealed the mystery?
13. Can men read each others' minds (2:11)? Explain.
14. Why cannot foolish men understand what the Holy Spirit teaches?
15. How do we have the "*mind of Christ*"?

Application & Discussion:

1. Why are so few wise and powerful sinners obedient to the Gospel?
2. How important is oration style and quality and personality in preaching the Gospel?

Homework: Be thankful for the revelation of God's wisdom through preaching and teaching.

Carnal Christians vs. Godly Builders

1 Corinthians 3:1-23

Questions:

1. How does Paul have to speak to the Corinthians?

2. Why does Paul continue to feed them "*milk*"?

3. What demonstrates their carnal minds (3:3)?

4. What roles did Paul and Apollos play at Corinth?

5. What role does God play?

6. How are Paul and Apollos "*one*" (3:8)?

7. How will they be rewarded for their work at Corinth?

8. Who represents the "*field*" or "*building*"?

9. Who laid the foundation at Corinth?

10. What is this foundation?
11. Why should the builder's on the foundation be careful how they build?
12. How will each builder's work be tested?
13. Who is a temple of God and how?
14. What will become of those to destroy the temple of God and why?
15. How do some deceive themselves? How can they avoid this deception?
16. How do "*all things*" belong to the Corinthians?

Application & Discussion:

1. How is a carnal-minded or worldly Christian different from that of a mature saint?
2. List the ways a local congregation work may be tested?

Homework: Do your part to build upon the foundation of the local church.

Following the Apostle

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Questions:

1. How are the Corinthians to view Paul and his co-workers?
2. What is required of a steward?
3. Why does not Paul judge himself?
4. Why wait for Christ to come in judgment?
5. Why has Paul used Apollos and himself as builders and stewards?
6. How should the Corinthians have answered Paul's questions in verse seven?
7. How does Paul wish they had reigned (4:8)?

Matching: Sacrifices of the Apostles

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 8. ___ | apostles | a. | apostles endure |
| 9. ___ | made a spectacle | b. | Bless in return |
| 10. ___ | Fools for Christ's sake | c. | Corinthians distinguished |
| 11. ___ | Weak | d. | apostles entreat |
| 12. ___ | Dishonored | e. | Corinthians strong |
| 13. ___ | Reviled | f. | men condemned to death |
| 14. ___ | Persecuted | g. | Corinthians wise in Christ |
| 15. ___ | defamed | h. | to the world, angels and men |

16. Why did Paul write these things?

17. How is Paul their father? What should they therefore do?

18. Why is Paul sending Timothy?

19. Why are some at Corinth puffed up?

20. What does it mean for Paul to come to them "*with a rod*" (4:21)?

Application & Discussion:

1. How should leaders respond to judgment and criticism?

2. Does Paul's statement in 4:15 contradict Jesus in Matthew 24:11? Explain.

Homework: Pray for and encourage those who are our "fathers" in the faith.

Church Discipline

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Questions:

1. How unnatural was this man's fornication?
2. What was wrong with his relationship to his father's wife?
3. Why isn't the woman mentioned in this chapter?
4. Why did they tolerate such sin among their membership?
5. What should be their attitude toward this situation?
6. What decision did Paul arrive at?
7. When were they to carry out Paul's decision?
8. What does "*deliver such a one to Satan*" mean?
9. What was the objective of this action?

10. Of what is leaven symbolic?
11. What represents the leaven and what represents the lump in this illustration?
12. What will be the result of cleaning out the old leaven?
13. How is Christ our Passover?
14. What is the feast they are to celebrate? How is it to be celebrated?
15. What had they misunderstood in one of Paul's previous letters?
16. In order not to associate with the fornicators in this world what would they have to do?
17. How were they to treat an immoral brother?
18. Who judges the immoral people of the world?
20. List six phrases in this chapter which denote corrective discipline.

Application & Discussion:

1. Is church discipline limited to just those specifically mentioned here? Explain.

2. List and read other passages related to church discipline? How to they help.

Homework: Find some brethren in the congregation who is unfaithful or overtaken in a fault and strive to restore them to the Lord through repentance.

Problems of Litigations & Prostitution

1 Corinthians 6:1-20

Questions:

1. When brethren have a problem with one another to whom shall they take it?

2. How will saints judge the world?

3. How will saints judge angels?

4. Who were they appointing to judge matters of conflict within the church?

5. Who should they choose to help judge these differences?

6. Instead of taking each other to court what should the Corinthians saints be willing to do?

7. What are some doing to their brethren?

8. Who will not inherit the Kingdom of God?

9. What three things changed the Corinthians into acceptable subjects for God's kingdom?
10. Things can be lawful but not...?
11. What argument are some at Corinth making with regard to food? What application would they think this has in regard to fornication?
12. Show from other scriptures that the body was not made for fornication?
13. How is the "*Lord for the body*" (6:13)?
14. A Christian's body is a part of....?
15. Can one be joined to a prostitute and joined to the Lord at the same time? Explain.
16. How is fornication different from other sins?
17. What is our body?
18. Who owns our body and why?

Application & Discussion:

1. A brother backs into one of the older sister's walker in the church parking lot. Arguments ensue. Lawyers are contacted to sue. What might the church do to help rectify this situation?

2. What things can a Christian do to "*flee from fornication*"?

Homework: Remember to treat your body as the property of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Problems with Marriage & Divorce

1 Corinthians 7:1-16

Questions:

1. Who had written Paul?

2. Does 7:2 mean that a man cannot even shake hands with a woman? Explain.

3. What is the remedy for the need of physical intimacy God created in men and women (also see Hebrews 13:4)?

4. Sex in marriage is optional and not an obligation between a husband and wife? Explain.

5. Why can't a spouse argue, "It is my body and I will do with it as I please"?

6. Under what conditions can a husband and wife forego intimate relations?

7. Why is it not wise for a couple to prolong foregoing intimate relations?

8. What is the difference between a concession and a commandment from Paul?

9. What is implied concerning Paul's marital status (7:7-8)?

10. What situations should prompt the unmarried or widows to marry (7:9)?
11. Are verses ten and eleven talking about separation or divorce? Explain.
12. What two options does a wife have if the husband divorces her?
13. Should Christians divorce their non-believing spouses?
14. Why should Christians remain married to their unbelieving spouse?
15. What if the non-Christian spouse chooses to divorce?
16. What is the end objective in dealing with mixed marriages (7:16)?

Application & Discussion:

1. In Matthew 19:8 Jesus gave fornication as the only reason for divorce. Is Paul giving Christians a second and third reason in 1 Cor. 7:10-16? Explain.
2. What might a Christian do to help win their non-Christian spouse?

Homework: Find an struggling married couple and encourage them to strengthen their marriage.

Stay Married or Stay Single

1 Corinthians 7:17-40

Questions:

1. Why is circumcision and uncircumcision nothing?
2. Why should a Christian who is a slave not be overly concerning with his status?
3. Does Paul mean that is wrong for those who are Christians to be circumcised or become freemen? Explain.
4. What credentials does Paul have in giving advice to virgins, that is, those who have never been married?
5. Why should they remain single?
6. Would it be a sin for these virgins to marry? Explain.
7. From what did Paul want to spare them?
8. What should they do because *"the time is short"* (7:29-31)?
9. What is passing away?
10. Where do the unmarried place their care and concerns?

11. Where does the married man place his cares or concerns?
12. What is the difference between a wife and a virgin?
13. Why does Paul tell the Corinthians these things?
14. When should father go ahead to give their virgins over to be married (7:36)?
15. Under what conditions should a father do better by not giving her in marriage?
16. When is a wife free to remarry?
17. Who can widows remarry?
18. Why does Paul think widows would be better off not remarrying?

Application & Discussion:

1. Under what circumstances today would it be wise to remain unmarried as a Christian?

2. What benefits do single Christians bring to a congregation?

Homework: Find a single Christian and give them encouragement.

Eating of Meats Offered to Idols

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Questions:

1. What “*knowledge*” is under consideration in this chapter?
2. What is the difference between knowledge and love?
3. Who is known by God?
4. Compare idols to God in 8:4.
5. Is Paul encouraging the possibility there might be other gods in heaven in 8:5? Explain.
6. What is God the Father's role and our relationship to Him?
7. What is the role of the Jesus Christ and our relationship to Him?
8. Why do some Corinthian Christians feel defiled with regard to idols?
9. What does food have to do with our standing before God?

10. What is this "*liberty of yours*" in 8:9?
11. How might a Christian be a stumbling block to a "*weak*" Christian?
12. Why should the "*weak*" brother's reaction be so important to other Christians who are not "*weak*"?
13. How can one in this situation sin against a "*weak*" brother?
14. What was Paul willing to do for the sake of a brother who is "*weak*"?

Application & Discussion:

1. Does Paul's statement "*no other God but one*" (8:4) negate the doctrine of the trinity or Godhead? Explain.
2. A brother or sister in Christ was converted from being a Muslim or Jew or Seventh Day Adventist. They grew up never eating pork. You know that such is not unclean or forbidden. However, they are "*weak*" in the matter and their conscience is bothered by the eating of pork. How should you deal with this situation?

Homework: Make note of "*weak*" brothers in Christ and make sure to avoid being a stumbling block to them.

Do Not Muzzle Your Ox

1 Corinthians 9:1-14

According to an unknown author a preacher is supposed to have the grace of a swan, the friendliness of a sparrow, the strength of an eagle, and the night hours of an owl, and some people expect such a bird to live on the food of a canary. While discussing wages for Paul the Bible does compare a preacher to an animal - an ox (1 Cor. 9:9). This lesson is not written in a vain attempt to receive a raise or to justify a CEO-like paycheck.

Is it scriptural to pay full-time preachers? Paul received “wages” in return for his “service.” *“I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you”* (2 Cor. 11:8). Paul received “wages” which is a payment in exchange for service. The first day of the week contribution not only supplied the needs of needy saints, but paid preachers like Paul who was laboring in Corinth. The preacher is a worker (2 Tim. 4:5), he is a minister or servant (1 Tim. 4:6), he is a teacher (2 Tim. 2:2) and a constant student (1 Tim. 4:13).

Furthermore, Paul received support from the church at Philippi. At least on two occasions the church at Philippi sent to Paul while he was in Thessalonica. They even continued to supply his needs when he was in Rome. They sent wages to him by their messenger named Epaproditus. *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now”* (Phil 1:3-5). *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity”* (Phil 4:10). *“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities”* (Phil 4:15-16). The aid Paul received was directly from the supporting congregation. It was given not as a gift but as wages so he could work among other brethren. To be sure, Paul did more than just preach a couple of sermon, teach a class, and write a weekly bulletin article.

In 1 Corinthians 9:1-14 the apostle Paul defends his right to receive wages from other congregations while working for the Lord at Corinth. This paragraph is not an interruption of his thoughts in chapters eight and ten. Paul is using himself here as an illustration of the mature use of liberty. “He elucidates how he had foregone several of his rights in order that the progress of the gospel might not be hampered. He did not marry in order that he might be more free to do the Lord’s work; he did not require the church to support him lest some charge him with preaching for the money that he received. Indeed, Paul’s life was an example of the rule which he cited in 8:13” (Mike Willis, Truth Commentary on 1 Corinthians, 228).

- **Liberty as an Apostle**

His first apology or defense centers upon the fact that he is an apostle. *“Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 9:1,2). Paul as an apostle could have “pulled rank” and authority, however this is not the kind of servant he represents. He is just as free to do what is right and receive what is fair as any other Christian or apostle. As proof he gives two verifications of his apostleship. First of all, he has seen the resurrected Savior (Acts 9:4,5; 18:9,10; 22:17,18). This is indeed a qualification to be one of the apostles of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:22). His second proof is the Corinthians themselves. They were his seal. In ancient times a seal was used as a means for

verifying the authenticity of ownership or authority. The Corinthians were a living seal that he was a genuine apostle. Of course, any Christian could have come in like Paul and planted a church. After all, Aquila and Priscilla were working in Corinth, but they were not apostles. Paul not only could perform the works of an apostle, but he has the ability to bestow spiritual gifts upon them (Acts 8:17,18). The Corinthians had many spiritual gifts which would have come via Paul (1 Cor. 12,14).

- **Legal Right to Eat and Drink**

His next apologia (defense) is found in verses three and four. *“My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink?”* Paul is using two common legal terms. The first is one representing a legal defense. The second word *anakrino* (examine) described the introductory investigation before a trial. The question is rhetorical. Of course, Paul has the right or power to eat and drink just like anyone else. Who could deny the working man these basic necessities of life?

- **Loved Ones**

Paul argues further, *“Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?”* (1 Cor. 9:5). If no one would deny a preacher the right to eat and drink, he would certainly not deny the needs of his family. After all, there was the well known fact that other servants of God, such as, Peter were able to work and support their families. Peter was indeed married (Matt. 8:14). Preachers do not have to take a vow of poverty or celibacy in order to preach the Gospel. Note that these other men received enough that their wives were able to travel with them in the work. What a blessing and a help their wives would have been to them in the ministry as they spread the Gospel from town to town and from house to house. One special note about this passage, these men had “believing” wives that went with them.

- **Legitimate Prerogative**

“Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?” (1 Cor. 9:6). When Barnabas first comes on the scene he is giving his goods to those who have need in the early church (Acts 4:36-37). Perhaps, he was wealthy enough to also support himself while spreading the Good News as Paul did with his tent-making. This was done voluntarily, because Paul infers that they did indeed have the right to be supported so all their spare time was not taken up in the pursuit of secular work. His use of Barnabas is wise. Who could deny wages to the Son of Encouragement who gave so freely to the needs of others when the church was young and struggling?

- **Laborers**

Next, Paul departs from making arguments from his personal life to illustrations of workers in everyday life that the brethren would be most familiar. *“Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?”* (1 Cor. 9:7). Who is going to be able to raise an army while expecting the soldiers to work at a civilian job in order to support themselves? They are not going to be fit to fight on the battlefield during the day, if they are working all night. Who will deny the shepherd a portion of the milk and cheese and meat from the flock? Do owners want him to abandon the flock, while he seeks to pursue his needs? What about a farmer who counts on the laborers in the field? Is it wise to rob them of food, so they have to seek employment to feed themselves while the harvest rots in the field? Likewise, soldiers of Christ need to be supported so the war for souls can go on victoriously. Spiritual shepherds need to be supported, so they can feed and tend the flock night and day. The fields are white unto harvest. Why pray to the Lord for workers and than not pay them, so they can bring in the sheaves before it is too late. A laborer is worthy of his hire in the secular realm how much truer should it be in the spiritual realm.

- **Livestock**

Paul appeals to the Old Testament scriptures and the animal kingdom for his next point. *“Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in*

the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written,..." (1 Cor. 9:8-10a). This apostle is not speaking by human authority. He has the law of God in support of his teachings. He appeals to the Law of Moses which required fair treatment of dumb animals, such as oxen, who work for their food. For whom did Moses write this down. Not for oxen, they cannot read. He was not providing them with a means to appeal to the judges or city elders if they were muzzled. Moses was appealing to men to benefit themselves by treating their beast of burdens with proper care. If an animal were to be paid for their work under the Old Covenant, certainly the "oxen" who labor for God should not be muzzled in the New Covenant.

- **Law of Sowing and Reaping**

Then Paul appeals to the Law of Sowing and Reaping. "*He who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope*" (1 Cor. 9:10b). He refers to this same concept in Galatians 6:7,8. This law is acknowledged universally in all pursuits. Why would this rule not apply to preachers of the Gospel?

- **Need for Material Blessings for Superior Benefits**

As a continuation of the point previously made by using the law of sowing and reaping, Paul continues to show that sowing spiritual seed of the Word is far more beneficial than the material wages he would reap in return. "*If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*" (1 Cor. 9:11). If you were to place the work of an evangelist on one side of the balance and the wages received on the other side of the balance, they could never be equal. Why? Because the spiritual value of his work is far greater than the material goods he receives in return. However, the pay check given by the Lord seems to be such a "GREAT THING" to some brethren. God has so richly and abundantly blessed us as Christians (Phil. 4:19; Jn. 3:16) how can anyone of us begrudge what is given to his servants. After all, churches are paying God's workers with God's money. The funds do not coming from their bank accounts. Think about the sweet deal with have with God. He gives us spiritual blessings and preachers only have to receive material goods in return for their labor. So if you have ever thought that the wages of a preacher are proportionate to what you received from God through him, you are right.

- **Other Preachers Received Wages**

Now Paul reminds the Corinthians that the other preachers had received wages of them. "*If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ*" (1 Cor. 9:12). By the same reasoning and authority they support others like Paul, they should now support him. Why then did Paul not accept any wages? He voluntarily surrendered the right, because it would have presented some kind of obstacle to the preaching of the Gospel at Corinth. The word for "*hinder*" is a military term for making slits in the road as obstacles to a pursuing army. Paul did not have to rely on the churches for support all the time. He could make tents (Acts 18:3). It was customary in his life and his self-denial. He told the elders of Ephesus, "*Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me*" (Acts 20:34). Just because he had a right to, did not mean he had a need to receive wages. Just because he could did not mean he should. Paul was willing instead for their sake to endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ (2 Tim. 2:3).

- **Levites and Priests**

Paul goes back to the Old Testament to use the example of those who were supported while performing service in the Temple. "*Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?*" (1 Cor. 9:13). The priests and Levites who worked the Temple were not muzzles. When the people did not give as they were commanded, the Temple service was neglected because the priests and Levites would have to leave and find means to support their families. King Hezekiah made a special commandment to the people of his day. "*Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote*

themselves to the Law of the Lord” (2 Chron. 31:4). Later, while Nehemiah was governor over the Jews he had to issue a similar edict because God’s servants were not being supported. “I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. So I contended with the rulers, and said, ‘Why is the house of God forsaken?’” (Neh 13:10,11a). Now that we have a better High Priest, a better sacrifice, a better tabernacle and a better covenant, why not do a better job of supporting God’s servants today?

- **Lord’s Commandment**

Last, but by no means least, Paul appeals to the commandment of the Lord Himself. *“Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). Perhaps, Paul is referring to the commands, he issued when He sent out the twelve on the limited commission. “Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food” (Matt. 10:9,10). Luke’s account says, “And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house” (10:7).*

The apostle Paul gives clear teaching that those who preach the Gospel should be paid wages. Still there are some in the Lord’s church and even among denominations that are opposed to men charging poor brethren for preaching a free Gospel.

Questions:

1. From where did Paul receive wages to preach the Gospel?
2. How does this discussion of preacher pay fit in with the previous points made in chapter eight?
3. What two verifications of his apostleship does Paul give them?
4. What are the Corinthians to Paul's apostleship? What does this mean?
5. What is Paul’s defense in paying the preacher in verses three and four?
6. How does Peter figure into Paul's argument?
7. How does Barnabas figure into Paul's defense?

8. What is his arguments from the illustration of soldiers and husbandmen and shepherds?
9. What does the Old Testament say about feeding oxen while they work?
10. Did God say this for the sake of oxen? Explain.
11. What is the law of sowing and reaping?
12. Can one receive material blessings for spiritual effort? Explain.
13. Why had Paul and those with him not use their right to receive wages in the past?
14. What is the gist of the argument Paul makes from the Levites and Priests serving in the tabernacle and later the Temple?
15. What is Paul's final argument for paying the preacher?

Application & Discussion:

1. Should part-time preachers who help support themselves receive just as much respect as others who are fully supported? Explain.
2. Has God given churches the option of paying or not paying their preacher wages for the work he does? Explain.

Homework: Thank God for the ability of preachers to work full-time to edify the saints and share the Gospel.

Paul's Example of Sacrifice & Self-Control

1 Corinthians 9:15-27

Questions:

1. Why did Paul write the things he did in 9:1-14?
2. Why would it be better for him to die?
3. Why does Paul preach the Gospel?
4. With what stewardship has Paul been entrusted?
5. What is Paul's reward for preaching without charge to the Corinthians?
6. Why has Paul made himself a servant of all men?
7. What would Paul be or do to win the Jews to Christ?
8. What does Paul mean by being without law?
9. Who do you think Paul is referring to here in 9:22 as "weak"?

10. How many receive a reward in running a foot race? How many receive a reward for successfully running the Christian race?
11. What kind of self-control do athletes demonstrate in order to win?
12. Compare the athlete's crown to that which Christians will receive?
13. What is the athlete's objective?
14. What does Paul discipline and why?

Application & Discussion:

1. Should a soul winner compromise his morals or the preaching of the Truth in order to save a soul? Explain.
2. What sacrifices should a saint be willing to make in order to save a soul?

Homework: Run like you are the last person to get on the ark, and brother, it is starting to rain!

They All Fall Down

1 Cor. 10:1-13

The famous Harvard philosophy professor George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The ancient Israelites served as a history lesson for Christians at Corinth. What happened to them was an *example*. The word in Greek is *tupos* from which the English word "type" is derived. Its is found in verses six and eleven. It means "to strike". If a man should strike his fist into a ball of putty, he would leave there, not his fist, but the type of it. I typed this lesson into the computer by striking various keys on the keyboard. What happened to the Israelites is typical or a type/antitype relationship to what goes only among Christians who fall.

Notice Paul says all of the Israelites were blessed. The term "all" is found five times in contrast to the word "many." They received the blessings of salvation, protection, guidance, sustenance, and forgiveness.

Israel: Type of Blessings

▶ **Need for Deliverance**

The children of Israel had become slaves in Egypt (Ex. 1:7-11). Their numbers grew at an alarming rate. Pharaoh feared them. So, he enslaved them to serve Egypt. In bondage to Egypt, the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance (Ex. 2:23-25). Like the Israelites, all men were made servants to sin and in need of deliverance (Rom. 6:17).

▶ **Sending of a Savior**

Moses was raised up by God to be the Deliverer of the Children of Israel (Ex. 3:10). Today, Christ is our deliverer; *"even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come"* (1 Th. 1:10). Christ died on the cross for our deliverance.

▶ **Baptism**

In a sense all the Israelites were baptized unto Moses (1 Cor. 10:1,2). The sea represented God's salvation of His people through the Red Sea as they crossed safely. In like manner, all sinners must be baptized to be saved from sin. As they were baptized into Moses were are baptized into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5).

▶ **Protection**

God is often portrayed at a rock of safety offering protection in the Old Testament. The word used here is *petra* meaning a massive rock cliff. The rock shows Israelites enjoyed the protection of Christ in the wilderness.

▶ **Guidance**

The guide for the Israelites in the wilderness was God represented in a physical form of a cloud. The cloud represented God's presence and glory among them (Ex. 14:19-22), indicating his leadership and protection. God guided them by *"a pillar of cloud by day"* and *"a pillar of fire by night"* (Ex. 13:21).

▶ **Sustenance**

A rabbinic interpretation of Numbers 21:16-18 that a well, known as Miriam's Well and shaped like a rock, had accompanied them, providing water wherever they went. The Lord provided them with water from a rock and food from manna and quail. Manna foreshadowed Christ (John 6:3-58) and the words He speaks. And he is able to give the water of life (John 4:1f).

Need for the Comparison between Christians and Israel in the Wilderness

Why does Paul need to make a type/antitype argument for the saints at Corinth. In chapter eight some of them were weak with regard to the eating of meats and the abundance of idols. Paul used himself as an example of a mature Christian who disciplined himself to better serve God in chapter nine. Now Israel is an example of spiritual immaturity, shown in their overconfidence and lack of self-discipline.

The Corinthians were saved, baptized, well taught, lacking in no gift, and presumably mature. They may have felt confident they can handle any temptation. Yet Paul does not want them to be “unaware” or ignorant. Israel had all the aforementioned blessings from God and still fell into the same sins that were common in Corinth in association with pagan rituals and feasting. Paul list the sins Israel succumbed to in the wilderness. Note, in Psalm 78:13-16 these sins are also listed as a warning.

Israel of Type Punishment for Sin

Even though “all” were blessed by God, still “many” displeased God. *“But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness”* (1 Cor. 10:5). The word “most” is a gross understatement as only two men arrived in the Promised Land. The Israelites who had been recipients of God's richest blessings were strewn out all over the wilderness like paper littering the countryside. The Israelites are accused of five things: Lusting after flesh, being idolatrous, committing fornication, tempting God and murmuring. When we read in God’s Word about the failures of others, do we respond, “That would never happen to me.” Yet Israel with all these blessings and advantages they still fell.

■ **Lust, 10:6**

Israel became discontent with the food which God had miraculously provided (the manna) and desired meat (Num. 11:33,34). God sent them quails to eat but immediately sent a great plague which killed those who lusted. The Corinthians lived in a wicked word given over to wicked desires. The Greeks even had a verb to describe their behavior. To *corinthianize* was a term synonymous among the ancients with licentiousness.

■ **Idolatry, 10:7**

The phrase *“The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play”* (10:7) is a quote from Exodus 32:6. The Israelites built a golden calf as their object of worship. The calf was a popular Egyptian god. When Moses returned from Mt. Sinai, the idol was destroyed and 3000 who would not repent were put to death. Eating and drinking was feasting connected to pagan worship. The Corinthians were warned, *“therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one...For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?”* (1 Cor. 8:8,10). And Paul conclude this argument based on the Israelites fall in the wilderness with this warning: *“therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry”* (Cor. 10:14). Today, we must remember that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). One can make an idol out of just about anything by putting it in the place of or before God (Matt. 6:33).

■ **Fornication, 10:8**

Verse eight is a reference to the occasion when the Midianites, under the counsel of Balaam (Num. 31:16), caused Israel to turn aside to false gods through the use of Midianites religious prostitutes (Num. 25:1-9). In Numbers 25:1 we hear of Israel *“playing”* the harlot and in 25:2 they ate and bowed to the gods. The Corinthians saints had been warned to *“flee sexual immorality”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). At Corinth there was a temple to Aphrodite with a 1000 prostitutes. “Dio Chrysostom mentions prostitutes being taken from festival to festival to satisfy the sexual needs of the participants and those attending.” Although sex itself is not immoral, sex outside marriage is evil (Heb. 13:4). Sins involving sex are not harmless dabbling in tabooed enjoyment as is so often depicted but powerful destroyers of relationships and souls.

■ **Tempting of Christ, 10:9**

Paul next accused the Israelites of tempting Christ *“as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents”* (10:9). Remember Christ existed back then as God. This affirms Christ’s deity and preexistence. Of course, God cannot be tempted to do evil (Js. 1:13). While the Israelites were going around Edom on their way to the promised land, they became dissatisfied with the manna which God miraculously provided for them and complained to God (Num. 21:5,6; 21:4-9). They faced deadly serpents in punishment. God sent fiery serpents among them which destroyed many in Israel. The Corinthians could put Christ to the test by carelessly dabbling in the culture and their past.

■ **Murmuring, 10:10**

“Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp” (Num. 11:1). Throughout their wanderings in the wilderness the Israelites never seemed to be able to stop their belly aching. God the provider became God the destroyer. They told Moses, *“we remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”* (Num. 11:5,6). They complained about no food. God set up fast food service through out the wilderness. They complained about no meat. *“Where’s the beef”*. God sent quail. They complained about wanting more water. They wanted unlimited refills.

As long as we have people in the church we are going to have complainers. Paul had to defend his style of speaking and his apostleship to the Corinthians. Complaining dishonors our heavenly Father; whereas contentment glorifies Him. Murmuring “implies that we know better what we need than He does; it charges God with placing unnecessary restrictions on our freedom and generally allows man to set in judgment of God.”

Warning

Paul finally arrives at the purpose or reason for these illustrations from the Old Testament: *“now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come”* (10:11). The Israelites’ struggle is typical of our struggle. The Corinthians were warned not let what happened to the nation of Israel happen to them. The examples serve as admonitions to correct their mind or spiritual attitude. The age to come is the Christian age the last age. It is the time of fulfillment of God’s promise to Abram, *“all peoples on earth will be blessed through you”* (Gen. 12:3). The idea is that God had aforementioned events recorded for the benefit of those of us who live in the Christian era.

The warning is of the Corinthians saints possibility of failure just like the Israelites. *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12). Perhaps in their arrogance they might have been thinking: *“We have been baptized eat and drink the Lord’s Supper, we are in Christ and he in us, we are saved and safe; and can eat meat offered to idols and go to pagan festivals with sex and nudity and not be tempted to sin.”*

The Israelites were “all” blessed by God and “many” fell. Privileges are no guarantee of success. Good beginnings do not guarantee good endings. The good news is that not one has to fail when temptations come (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

God Helps Us From Falling in Temptation

✚ **God Enables Us to Bear Temptation**

No temptation comes to man that man does not have the ability to bear up under. *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”* (1 Cor. 10:13). Many will say that cannot help yielding because the temptation is too great. Such calls God a liar. God is faithful; He can be trusted. No temptation will be so great that we cannot say “NO!” How? Four ways come to mind,

1) in response to our prayers (Lk. 22:43); 2) through knowledge (Pr. 24:5); 3) God's grace (2 Cor. 12:10b) and finally, 4) God's providential care (Rom. 8:28).

✦ **God Provides a Way of Escape**

While living on the Gulf coast in Florida we were threatened by a few hurricanes. "Evacuation Route" were marked to direct residents to safety when a storm threatened. According to 1 Corinthians 10:13 every temptation has an evacuation route. Every temptation has an accompanying escape hatch. There is always an alternative to giving in to temptation. Even when we cannot escape a situation, God always provides a way to escape temptation. Sometimes we do not look for God's way of escape because we do not really want to escape.

Submarines, ships, and planes designed with escape hatches. God provided an escape hatch for Cain. "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen. 4:7). Satan gives us a door to do evil, God gives us a door to do good. Like a game show contestant who has a choice between door #1 or #2. We cry out to the actress in the thriller to make her escape, "don't open the door, run for it." However, they always open the door. Even Lot had a choice not to pitch his tent toward Sodom and not to live in Sodom.

God provides this way of escape due to His loving care and mercy. He wants us to avoid sin. No one has to sin. Adam and Eve never had to eat of the tree. They could have looked for a way out. Some teach that we are born totally depraved and wholly inclined to evil. This promise of God says that sin is a choice.

Our duty is to look for the escape hatch. Consider what 1 Cor. 10:13 does not say. It does not say that God will remove the temptation. It does say that you may be able to endure it. The way is not always an easy escape. Sin is often the easy way out of a situation. It is not marked with a brilliantly lighted exit sign. As a man who was often tempted to steal his neighbor's watermelon explained, "When I pass a watermelon patch, I can't keep my mouth from 'watering', but I can run!" Many of us are like Lot's wife. We are constantly looking back at the temptation. Still others are looking too hard for an excuse to give in than a way of escape. Deacons Smith and Jones, two pillars of the church were working in the hayfield on a Virginia farm. Suddenly, Smith called out excitedly: "What is this we've found in this haystack? Look here a jar of liquor." Both of them pondered, and Smith said, gravely: "Brother Jones, we had better drink up this before some poor weak brother finds it and falls by the wayside."

✦ **God Does Not Allow Us to Be Tempted Beyond Our Ability**

It was due to the efforts of Samuel Plimsoll (1824-98), British reformer, that the merchant Shipping Act of 1876 was passed, requiring all ships to bear a mark known as the Plimsoll Mark and indicating the maximum load line on a ship. By this act the Board of Trade of England was empowered to detain any vessel deemed unsafe, and the amount of cargo was restricted. Thus making the long and perilous ocean voyage of those days much safer. Because of his work, Plimsoll became known as the sailor's friend. The Plimsoll Mark with its graduations and figures, may be seen on the bow of ships near the water line as they lie at anchor in a harbor.

In God's sight, each of us has a similar mark, though we may not be able to see it. The trials and temptations we face may seem unbearable, but He knows our limit, His everlasting arms are underneath, and by His grace we can bear them without sinking. God knows our limitations. God has set a limit on the intensity of every temptation. He has set a limit on the intensity of the temptations you will face. He knows how much you can handle. The Heavenly Father wants us to triumph over not being defeated by temptation. We are to do the resisting and escaping. God will do the adjusting on the testing.

God sets the limitations on Satan. Satan knows our weaknesses and will exploit them if permitted. Remember, Satan had to get "permission" to tempt Peter, and he had to demand it (Lk. 22:31-32). Before Satan could go after Peter, he first had to check it out with God. We are not at his mercy as some would have us believe. Satan, like all creatures, is ultimately under God's authority. The war for the universe, however, ended long ago. Now the battle is for the possession

and corruption of men's souls is on till the end. In both our victories and defeats, God continues to keep the enemy in check.

Our duty in temptation is to resist. Oscar Wilde once said, "The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it. I can resist everything but temptation." "I can't help it"; "the devil made me do it"; and "there was no way I could say no" are phrases of defeat. Furthermore, they are simply not true, but as long as you believe you are at the mercy of the devil, you are. Imagine a city whose citizens were convinced that no matter what measures they took, their enemies would eventually overrun their walls. They would probably just surrender without a fight. Ability plus opportunity is responsibility. God knows your ability. God gives the opportunity by way of an escape hatch. It is therefore your responsibility to say no to temptation.

Questions:

1. What does it mean that the Israelites were a "type"?

Matching the Israelite type with the Christian antitype

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2. ____ Deliverance from Egypt | a. Baptized into Christ |
| 3. ____ Moses | b. Deliverance from sin |
| 4. ____ Crossed the Red Sea | c. Living water |
| 5. ____ Rock | d. Guidance by Christ |
| 6. ____ Pillar of Cloud and Fire | e. Christ |
| 7. ____ Water from a Rock | f. Protection by Christ |
8. Why were the bodies of the Israelites scattered in the wilderness?
 9. How many of the adults that left Egypt survived to reach the Promise Land? Who were they?
 10. What events represent Israel's lust?
 11. What example of Idolatry is given?
 12. What event in Israelite history is eluded to their problem with fornication?

13. Explain the event referred to in 10:9?
14. What did the Israelites complain about? Why is murmuring against God and His leaders such a serious sin?
15. Why did Paul list these sins of Israel?
16. What warning does Paul give the Israelites?
17. True False Yielding to some temptations are simply unavoidable.
18. Why did Cain fall into temptation and kill his brother? How could he have avoided sin?
19. True False The way of escape is always easy to find in every temptation.
20. Why are we able to bear up under any temptation?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are our "idol" today?
2. Is Satan's power to tempt man limited? Explain.

Homework: Learn from the history of those who have fallen and do not repeat it.