

The Bible Notebook

I CORINTHIANS

Practical Principles

for

The Local Church

Volume I

By

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DEDICATION

To

General Dutch Shoffner

Dutch, you deserve that fourth star for all you have done for me!

&

To The Memory of

John Shoffner

*I still see John sitting in the office, working on records
at West Side Baptist Church*

And of course, the hunting and fishing!

INTRODUCTION TO I CORINTHIANS

The City of Corinth

Corinth owed its importance to its geographical location. It was located on the isthmus linking northern Greece with the Peloponnesian Peninsula. There were two harbors, one on the Adriatic Sea to the west and the other on the Aegean Sea to the east. Crossing the narrow isthmus at Corinth enabled ships and sailors to avoid the treacherous Peloponnesus. Larger vessels unloaded cargo and passengers at one port and they were hauled overland to the other. Small vessels were hauled four miles overland on a road composed of wooden rollers over which men pulled the ships.

Corinth, with a transient and cosmopolitan population, was a center of commerce and industry. Slavery was one of the factors that brought so many nationalities to Corinth. The city had an estimated population of 600,000. It has been estimated that 400,000 of these were slaves, many of whom were talented and cultured people.

Corinth was a great entertainment city. The Isthmian games were held nearby every other year. These games were second in importance to the Olympian games which were held every four years. The gladiators were particularly popular in this city that loved bloody sports.

Corinth was also a major religious center where the ancient Greek gods and goddesses were still worshiped. Eastern mystery religions were popular and the Egyptian religion of Isis was a favorite of many. The Jews had a synagogue there.

The most outstanding physical feature of Corinth was the massive plateau known as Acro-Corinth which rose nearly 2,000 feet from the surrounding land. At its foot the city grew and flourished. At the top its flat summit is where the 1,000 sacred prostitutes served Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

The most famous cult there was that of Aphrodite. In the old city of Corinth (destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and rebuilt in 44 B.C.) the worship of Aphrodite was popular. Aphrodite was worshiped elsewhere in Greece, but her worship took a unique form in Corinth. Sources say that a thousand prostitutes served in the temple of Aphrodite. The mixture of sexual immorality and religion was similar to the Baal worship of Old Testament times. In fact, the worship of Aphrodite in Corinth was probably an imported version of the Phoenician worship of Astarte (Astareth or Ashtoreth in Old Testament). Astarte was the female consort of Baal. We cannot be sure that this blend of religion and immorality was still practiced in Paul's day, but it probably did [DEAN - pp. 13f for Paul's Urban Mission Strategy).

PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP TO CORINTH

See Acts 18:1-8

1. In Corinth on his second missionary journey, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, lived with them, and worked at tent making with them (18:2-3).2. They preached each Sabbath in the synagogue (18:4).
3. The arrival of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia added a dimension of urgency and intensity to Paul's preaching (18:5).
4. Paul was driven from the synagogue and forced to move his ministry to the home of a proselyte named Titius Justus who lived near the synagogue (18:6-7).
5. Crispus, a leader of the synagogue, and many Gentile Corinthians were converted (18:8).
6. Paul was encouraged in his ministry in Corinth and received a vision from the Lord. He remained in the city for 18 months (18:9-11).
7. The Jews brought Paul before Gallio, Roman proconsul of Achaia, and demanded that he be punished for his contentious teaching. Gallio, regarding their requests as a Jewish dispute, refused to involve himself, and allowed the Gentile crowd to rough up Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, who had replaced Crispus (18:12-17).
8. Paul left Corinth, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him (18:18). After leaving Corinth, he sailed from Cenchrea to Ephesus (with Aquila and Priscilla). Leaving his friends in Ephesus, he sailed to Caesarea and then to Jerusalem. He later went to Antioch, passed through Phrygia and Galatia again, and returned to Ephesus where he remained for nearly three years (Acts 18:19 - 19:1).

In Paul's absence, the spiritual conditions within the church greatly deteriorated. He probably heard reports about conditions at Corinth from time to time. [THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR: Fall 1983, p. 27-28). While Paul was at Ephesus, four distinct factions developed at Corinth (identified as followers of Paul, Apollos, Peter, and Christ). Paul addressed these factions in two letters. He wrote a letter to Corinth prior to the letter called I Corinthians in the New Testament. He refers to this letter in I Corinthians 5:9.

The Corinthians responded to Paul's letter with a letter of their own. In this letter, they asked a number of questions. Though the questions are not given, the structure of I Corinthians gives us the clue to what these questions were. The first verse of chapter 7 begins, "Now, concerning the matters about which you wrote." Then he proceeded to discuss Christian marriage. In 8:1 we have "Now concerning food offered to idols" (see 12:1 and 16:1).

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-9).

A. Salutation (1:1-3).

1:1 - CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE. Literally, Paul was “a called apostle” (see Romans 1:1). His apostleship was due, not to himself or to men (Galatians 1:1), but to God. He was not one of the twelve, but his apostleship was on par with theirs because he was appointed by God. "The refusal of the Judaizers to recognize Paul as equal to the twelve made him the more careful to claim his position" [ATR].

OF JESUS CHRIST. In later epistles we find “Christ Jesus.” Jesus is His personal name; Christ is His title (He is the Messiah, the Anointed One).

SOSTHENES, OUR BROTHER. Literally, the brother. This Sosthenes, now with Paul in Ephesus, is probably the same Sosthenes who received the beating meant for Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:17). Robertson says, "If so, the beating did him good for he is now a follower of Christ" [ATR]. He is not the co-author of the Epistle, but merely associated with Paul in Ephesus and mentioned because they knew him in Corinth. He may have been forced to leave Corinth when he, as a ruler of the synagogue, became a Christian. Sosthenes may have been Paul's amanuensis at the time this letter was written.

1:2 - THE CHURCH OF GOD. The Greek word translated “church” means an assembly or a congregation. The church “of God” has carries the idea of a congregation belonging to God. Paul addressed the First Epistle to the Thesalonians to “the church of the Thesalonians which is in God”(1:1), and referred to “the churches of God” in 2:14 (See also, I Corinthians 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; II Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13).

The church of God" (a phrase unique to Paul in the N.T.) consists only of those who have been "sanctified in Christ Jesus," i.e., set apart for Him in regeneration/conversion. They are those who have called upon Him to save them and who have been set apart from sin unto service for the Savior [BSB: QV].

WHICH IS IN CORINTH. It is God's church. It is in Corinth. Even in Corinth, it is God's church. The city had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and then rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. Now, 100 years later, it had become very rich and very corrupt. The very word, “to Corinthianize,” meant to practice vile immoralities (today we call them orgies), and these immoralities were often associated with the worship of Aphrodite (Roman Venus). Corinth had schools of rhetoric and philosophy and made a flashy imitation of the real culture of Athens, but in fact it was a city known for drunkenness and immorality. All the problems of a large modern city come to the

front in ancient Corinth.

THAT ARE SANCTIFIED (*hegiusmenuis*, perfect passive participle of *hagiazo*). It means to make holy, to consecrate, to sanctify, or to show reverence, to venerate. This denotes individuals set apart for God glory and service. It is significant Paul used this word concerning the “called to be saints” in Corinth.

IN CHRIST JESUS. He is the sphere in which this act of consecration takes place. Those who were called were set apart for God's possession and His service. “This was true of the Corinthians because of their position in Christ (12:13), in spite of their blatant imperfections” [RSB].

CALLED TO BE SAINTS. One does not become a saint by being canonized by a particular church, denomination, or group. He becomes a saint by becoming a Christian. Saints are the elect of God - those who are in Christ Jesus by the grace of God. They are set apart by God for His glory and service.

WITH ALL THAT...CALL UPON. Paul showed the close connection between these "saints" in Corinth and believers everywhere. There is a close bond of fellowship between the Corinthian Christians and believers everywhere through the common bond of faith.

THEIR LORD AND OURS. Robertson says this is the correct interpretation. This shows the universality of Christ. We are brothers only in Christ.

B. Expression of Thanks (1:4-9)

1:4 - I THANK MY GOD. Singular as in Romans 1:8, Phil. :3, Philemon 4, but plural in I Thessalonians 1:2 and Colossians 1:3. The grounds of Paul's thanksgiving in his epistles are worthy of study. Even in Corinth he found a reasons for giving thanks, though in 2 Corinthians there is no expression of thanksgiving. There is, however, a note of victory running throughout the second epistle because of the good news brought by Titus that there had finally been a breakthrough in dealing with problems in the church. There is no expression of thanksgiving in Galatians.

THE GRACE OF GOD...IN CHRIST JESUS. Paul's expression of gratitude was on the basis of God's grace, not in general, but specifically given in the sphere of Christ Jesus. He thanks God for their salvation in Christ Jesus.

1:5 - THAT. This denotes explicit specification of this grace of God given to the Corinthians. In chapters 12-14, Paul pointed out in detail the unusual spiritual gifts of which they boasted, and showed how those very gifts had become a snare to them.

IN ALL SPEECH AND ALL KNOWLEDGE. Inner knowledge should precede all speech.

But we assess one's knowledge by means of speech. Chapters 12 through 14 throw more light on this element in the spiritual gifts of the Corinthians (The gift of tongues, interpreting tongues, discernment) as summed up in I Corinthians 13:1-2. "It was a marvelously endowed church in spite of their perversions" [ATR: QV].

1:6 - EVEN AS. He is saying that they spoke (vs. 5) from an inner knowledge of Jesus Christ "Even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed" in them. "Even as" means in proportion to (I Thes. 1:5) or "inasmuch as" (Phil. 1:7, NKJV).

THE TESTIMONY CONCERNING CHRIST. The "testimony concerning Christ" points to the preaching and teaching of Paul and of others which was confirmed in their hearts and lives by the Holy Spirit.

WAS CONFIRMED IN YOU. The word translated "confirm" means to make to stand, to make stable, to secure, or to strengthen. This points to the purpose for which they had received the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1:7 - NOT LACKING IN ANY GIFT. Lacking (falling behind, KJV) in a spiritual gift is not desirable for any believer - and it certainly not God's will for that person. Paul does not want these believers to be lacking in any spiritual gift. However, in 2 Corinthians 8:7-11 and 9:1-7, he will rebuke them for falling behind in the collection (not paying their pledges - pledges made over a year before). It does not take too much imagination to find a modern application!

Spiritual gifts are abilities that God gives believers in order that they may serve Him. Every Christian has at least one gift (1 Peter 4:10). At Corinth all the various gifts were found within the group. Spiritual gifts are discussed in Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-14:40; and Eph. 4:7-16 [RSB: QV].

WAITING FOR THE REVELATION. The King James version has "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is an eager expectancy of the second coming of Christ. The attitude of expectancy and anticipation seems to be the idea Christians expressed here.

1:8 - SHALL CONFIRM. The NAS renders it, "*who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This is the same word used in verse 6 for confirm, denoting a guarantee, meaning to secure or establish. "The Corinthians had God's guarantee that they would be in Christ's presence when He returns and that they would then be blameless. This assurance is based on the wonderful fact that God is faithful (v. 9)" [RSB: QV].

TO THE END. This refers to the end of the age, denoting the final preservation of the saints, the hope of every believer. This hope is not simply wishful thinking, but a guarantee, confirmed by our Lord Himself.

BLAMELESS IN THE DAY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. The word in the Greek

(*negklaytos*) means blameless or above reproach, pointing to the fact that we will not be held accountable. Believers are unimpeachable, for none will have the right to impeach them, as Paul shows in Romans 8:33; Col. 1:22, 28. “The day of our Lord Jesus Christ” is one of the great themes of the Pauline Epistles. Regardless of one’s eschatological approach to Scripture, we all want to be found blameless when Jesus returns, above reproach in His reign, and unimpeachable in judgment..

1:9 - GOD IS FAITHFUL. This great truth is the grounds for Paul's confidence (see 1 Thes. 5:24; I Cor. 10:13; Romans 8:36, Phil. 1:16). You can always count on God to do what He has promised to do. [See Luther Rice Seminary study by Stephen Olford].

We often learn about God by studying His attributes - He is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, immutable. The Scripture emphasizes that God is also faithful - faithful in all things. Our salvation, our assurance, our hope, is directly related to His faithfulness.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and *God is faithful*, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13).

But as *God is faithful*, our word to you is not yes and no (2 Cor. 1:18).

Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to *a faithful Creator* in doing what is right 2 Peter 4:19.

If we confess our sins, *He is faithful* and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9, italics added for emphasis).

THROUGH WHOM. God is the agent (*dia*) of our salvation, as in Romans 11:36: “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” Furthermore, He is the ground or reason for our salvation as we see in Hebrews 2:10: “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.”

INTO THE FELLOWSHIP. “Fellowship” is from the Greek word meaning partner and denoting partnership, or participation in Jesus, here as in II Cor. 13:13f; Phil. 2:1; 3:10. It means fellowship or intimacy in Acts 2:42; Gal. 2:9; II Cor. 6:14; I John 1:3, 7, and participation in the contribution for the needy saints in Jerusalem by the saints in Corinth (II Cor. 8:4; 9:13). Paul thanked the Philippians for their participation in his ministry:

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now (Phil. 1:3-5).

The NKJV follows the KJV, “fellowship in the gospel.” The English word fellowship may refer to

anything from a warm, fuzzy feeling to Cokes and cookies after church on Sunday night. The Greek word points to the cooperation of believers in a ministry, their participation in the Gospel. Southern Baptists cooperate in the greatest mission endeavor in the history of the world when they send thousands of missionaries out to every part of the world through a cooperative effort called the Cooperative Program.

Robertson is right: "It is high fellowship with Christ both here and hereafter" [ATR:]. We participate in His ministry here and now, and it will just get better in "the Sweet Bye and Bye."

II. DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH (1:10 - 4:21).

A. The fact of divisions (1:10-17)

1:10 - I EXHORT YOU. Paul uses a common verb used over 100 times in the New Testament meaning to call to one's side. This corresponds to "I thank" (*eucharist*) in verse 4. This is a direct appeal after the thanksgiving.

BY THE NAME. Paul appeals to them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Name above every name:

...that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10).

THAT. The word is used here in the sense of affirmation rather than direct purpose.

THAT YOU ALL AGREE. The KJV renders it, "that ye speak the same thing." The action is continuous - that you keep on agreeing (speaking the same thing). Paul is interested in preventing divisions in the church - and solving the problem of divisions that already existed in this case. What is it that prevents divisions in a church? Love is important. Following the constitution and by-laws can help. But the key to preventing divisions is sound doctrine. When all the leaders teach sound doctrine and the people are taught sound doctrine most divisions can be avoided. There are sinful attitudes that can also cause divisions, sins like envy and jealousy that cause divisions among the carnal members. Among the spiritual members, sound doctrine is the key to avoiding schisms.

Paul is about to deal with divisions in the church. Here he will use an idiom from Greek political life which showed his acquaintance with Greek culture.

THERE BE NO DIVISIONS AMONG YOU. Paul uses the present subjunctive - that divisions may not continue to exist (they already had them). *Schisma* is old word meaning to split or rip (see

Matt. 9:16; Mark 2:21). Papyri use it for a splinter of wood and for ploughing. Here we have the earliest instance of its use in a moral sense of division or dissension. Also, see 1 Cor. 11:18 and John 7:43 (discord). Here it is “faction” for which the classical word is *stasis*. These divisions were over:

- a. Preachers (1:12 - 4:21)
- b. Immorality (5:1-13)
- c. Going to law before the heathen (6:1-11)
- d. Marriage (7:1-40)
- e. Meats offered to idols (8-10)
- f. Conduct of women in church (11:1-16)
- g. The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)
- h. Spiritual gifts (12-14)
- i. The resurrection (chapter 15)

THAT YOU BE MADE COMPLETE. The NKJV has, “that you be perfectly joined together.” This verb was used for mending torn nets, and here in moral sense, as in 1 Thes. 3:10. Galen uses it for a surgeon's mending a joint and Herodotus for composing factions [ATR:]. Paul is pleading, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, “that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

IN THE SAME MIND. “In the same mind and in the same judgment.” The first word denotes the frame or state of mind, the latter opinion or sentiment - which is the outcome of the former. Unity is important in the church, in the home, and even in politics. According to some speculations, if all of the American colonies had been more unified at the time of the American Revolution, we could have won the war for independence in 1 year. However, because of division and dissension it took eight long and very bloody years.

When you bring dissension into the church, you may well be delaying God's work for years while souls perish. Indeed, I have known of dissensions that were decades old and not “in any danger” of being extinguished. Unfortunately, the community knows when there are quarrels in the local church. Lost people know it, and they have no desire to be apart of it. They can find fussing and fighting elsewhere, they do not have to go to church for that.

1:11 - FOR I HAVE BEEN INFORMED. The word translated “informed” is *daylow*, to make plain. Paul is not acting on impulse or some vague rumor, but upon what he considers reliable evidence. He says, “*For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.*”

BY CHLOE'S PEOPLE. The words “by Chloe's people” (“Chloe's household,” NKJV) point to her family. The word, “people” (or household) is not in the Greek, though it correctly interprets the original text. Whether the children, other relatives, or the servants of Chloe, we do not know. It is also uncertain whether Chloe lived in Corinth or Ephesus. She may have lived in Ephesus - to name her if she lived in Corinth might cause problems for her. She may have moved from Corinth to

Ephesus, or she may have had family in Corinth. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit may have inspired Paul to respond to reports from one of their own.

Christianity was already causing a social revolution in the position of women and slaves. The name Chloe means “verdant” (which means green or flourishing). As a name it carries the idea of tender virtue. It was one of the epithets of Demeter the goddess of agriculture and for that reason some, like Lightfoot, think she was a member of the freedman class like Phoebe (Romans 16:1), Hermes (Romans 16:14) and Nereus (Romans 16:15).

QUARRELS. The NKJV has contentions. The word refers to unreasonable wrangling (as opposed to discussions, or debates) that were leading to the schisms. The word is listed in the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19f) and the catalogs of vices (2 Cor. 12:20; Romans 1:19f; 1 Tim. 6:4). Unfortunately, though the church is last place we should quarrel and divisions, as many have discovered, it is not always easy to avoid them.

To dwell above with saints we love,
That will be grace and glory.
To live below with saints we know;
That's another story!

[BI: QV].

1:12 - NOW THIS I MEAN. Explanatory use of *lego* (to say, to address, bring charges). Paul goes directly to the heart of the problem: “*Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’*” Each faction claimed a party leader. Could you imagine the wrangling if Catholics, Baptists, Church of Christ, and Pentecostals were all members of one congregation?

I AM OF PAUL. This was a “Paul” faction, followers of Paul in the church at Corinth. After all, he had begun the work and founded the church at Corinth. He was the one who had taught them initially and laid the foundation for the growth of the church. This was the party which was so loyal to Paul that they would not entertain any thought or program they thought would either oppose or change anything Paul had taught them, of any work he had begun.

A pastor once confided that when he became pastor of the church he was serving at the time he discovered that many of the active members were still so committed to the former pastor to ask him for advice. Every time the new pastor recommended anything he heard comments like, “Brother Smith always did thus and so”, or “Brother Smith never did it like that.” After months of this he asked the church about electing a Vacation Bible School Director. Some one responded, “Brother Smith always served as Director.” The quick witted pastor said, “I have already called Brother Smith, and he said he is not going to come back and do it this year!”

APOLLO. Apollos is probably an abbreviation of Apollonius. One group followed (or claimed as leader) this eloquent Alexandrian whose philosophical and oratorical preaching was in contrast with the studied sermons of Paul (1 Cor. 2:1; 2 Cor. 10:10). People have different tastes in styles of

preaching. There is no problem with this. But Apollos refused to be a party to this strife and soon returned to Ephesus and refused to go back to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:12).

CEPHAS. This is the Aramaic name given to Simon by Jesus (John 1:41), *Petros* in Greek. Except in Gal. 2:7,8, Paul called him Cephas. He has already taken his stand with Paul in the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:7-11; Gal. 2:7-10). Paul had to rebuke him at Antioch because he was intimidated by the Judaizers (Gal. 2:11-14), but there is no evidence of a schism in doctrine between Paul and Peter. 2 Peter 3:15f suggests a cordial relationship between them. There is no direct evidence that Peter ever visited Corinth. Judaizers came and pitted Peter against Paul to the church in Corinth, probably based on Paul's rebuke of Peter in Antioch. The Judaizers followed Paul from place to place making personal attacks after their defeat at the Jerusalem Conference. This third faction was formed by use of Peter's name. This was the really "orthodox" wing of the church, the gospel of the circumcisions.

AND I OF CHRIST. This fourth faction arose in reaction to the partisan use of Paul, Apollos and Cephas with a spiritually proud boast that assumed a relationship to Christ not true of the others. This partisan use of the name of Christ may have been made in the name of unity against the other three factions. Sound familiar?

1:13 - IS CHRIST DIVIDED. *"Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* Literally, does Christ stand divided? The fourth, or Christ party, claimed to possess Christ in a sense not true of the others. Perhaps the leaders of this Christ party with their arrogant assumptions of superiority are the false apostles, ministers of Satan posing as angels of light (2 Cor. 11:12- 15).

Denominational divisions may be a hindrance to some lost people who know little of the Scripture, but wonder why all denominations cannot agree. In fact, this has led to the rise of some so-called "non-denominational" churches, or "community churches. John MacArthur founded the Grace Community Church in California. His father was a Baptist minister and he is basically Baptist in theology, but in his area the community church idea probably opened the door to more people than a church with the name "Baptist" would have. MacArthur, unlike many separatists, has spent his time preaching the Gospel rather than fighting other denominations.

I was leading a Bible conference in Omaha a number of years ago when someone introduced me to a lady who was visiting. I asked the lady about her church affiliation and she said, "I am Evangelical Free." I said, "We have something in common; as a Southern Baptist, I am evangelical and I am free." I pulled into the parking lot of the original location of the Baptist Book Store in Jackson, Mississippi not long before their first relocation and saw a church van with sign that identified it as the property of a Baptist church. It also identified the church as an Independent Missionary Baptist church. I commented to Becky, my wife, "That is exactly what a Southern Baptist church is - independent and missionary!"

A few years ago I had the distinct privilege of preaching in revival services in my hometown, Sledge,

Mississippi. Each evening a group of Methodists came for the service. I could not help but reflect on the long, harmonious relationship that had existed between the Sledge Baptist Church and the Sledge Methodist church. Both church were “half-time” churches, which meant that each church had its own Sunday School and on first and third Sundays the Methodists left Sunday School and walked down the street to the Baptist church for the worship service. On second and fourth Sundays the Baptists went to their won Sunday School and then walked over to the Methodist church for the worship service. Students were permitted to leave school and attend morning revival services at either church. They had a wonderful relationship and that fellowship continued after both churches went “full-time.”

A lot of people condemn denominations, but before I condemn the existence of varius denominations, I would like to focus attention on the fellowship within each local church. The major problems dividing Christians are not so much interdenominational as intra-church problems - dissension within the local church. These are the ones that are most destructive.

Dr. Bill Smith, a retired university professor, is a friend of many years whom I met at my health club. When I was hospitalized following a heart attack in 1996, and during my recuperation, Bill checked on me often. He had members of his Presbyterian church in Monroe, Louisiana praying for me. When I was able, I attended a meeting of the Patrick Henry Society which meets every Tuesday at noon in their church. I wanted to thank them for praying for me. I loved the fellowship with those fellow believers.

When it comes to other denominations, I seek to emphasis the many thing upon which we agree rather than the few areas upon which we disagree. I doubt that I would convert them and I know they will not convert me. It is not always that simple in the local church where we are sometimes forced to deal with potentially divisive issues. That is a far greater test.

WAS PAUL CRUCIFIED FOR YOU? An indignant “no” is demanded. Paul tactfully employed himself to illustration this point, rather than Apollos or Cephas. How can church members become so enamored with a human being, even one like Paul or Peter that they put them ahead of the Lord? There is little doubt that anyone who is guilty of this will admit that they are putting the pastor, evangelist, singer, or denominational worker ahead of Christ. The very thought would be shocking to them. Yet, their commitment to the individual is so great that it clouds important issues and dishonors the Lord. They deceive themselves into thinking that support of the minister is tantamount to serving God.

One particular church I have observed for about forty years has had three very charismatic pastors during those years. All three did an outstanding work at the church, but probably no greater work than some of their other pastors. The problem was that following each of them their successor was never really given an opportunity to be their pastor. Twenty years after the last one left some of the people were more interested in what he was doing that what their current pastor was doing.

WERE YOU BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF PAUL? There is no way Paul wanted to be

put on par with Christ or the Trinity. Nor would any other God-called servant of Jesus Christ. Any time members begin to praise the pastor too much he must point them to the Lord. I had rather hear a church member quote the Scripture than quote me anytime.

1:14 - I THANK GOD. This is incredible ! He says, *“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius...”* He is thanking God that he did not do what all too many preachers brag about doing! We are so caught up in nickels and noses (statistics) that Pepsis and pizzas (in less prosperous times, hot dogs and Kool Aid) have become a major evangelistic tool. While it can really serve a purpose, it can also pad the church rolls with lost people. There is nothing wrong with serving Cokes and cookies, but we must guard against abuse, and there are some who abuse it.

Today many churches send announcements about revivals to the Baptist state paper. There was a time when reports were published following the revival and the evangelist who had the highest numbers got the most revivals. They even counted the “rededications.” Churches wanted to grow and if they did not grow they blamed the pastor - especially if they did not have as many additions reported in the state or associational minutes. So, guess who the pastor wanted to get to preach the next revival? That is right - the one who reported the best numbers.

When a church sends out a pastor search committee, it often looks for a pastor who had reported baptizing large numbers of people. What is wrong with that? Should that be disregarded? Of course not. But I have reported some of the best numbers I have seen - and I have reported some of the worst numbers I have seen. Often when the number of baptisms were down, I had actually worked harder than at any other time. At one church I labored with the people for three or four years just laying a foundation for future work before people started coming to our church, and longer before they began coming into the church by baptism and by church letter.

Whether the baptisms were high or low, I never saved one person. All I have ever been able to do is faithfully witness uncompromisingly preach the Gospel - Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Holy Spirit did all the convicting and God did all the saving when individuals received Christ - all by grace through faith.

It would be interesting to see what a modern day Pastor Search Committee would do with Paul's resume'. As a matter of fact, it would probably be very shocking to look at the criteria set by many committees in looking for a pastor to discover that Paul would lack the qualifications set by many American churches. In one large church, members of a Sunday School class were discussing what kind of man their search committee would recommend to their church. One man said, “I will tell you exactly what kind of man they will recommend. He will be between thirty-five and forty-two years of age; he will have an earned doctorate, his wife will have a degree in education or a social science, he will have two or three children, and he will look good on television.” They thought this was a joke until the committee shared information about the man they had invited to preach in lieu of a call. He was thirty-eight years old, his wife had a degree in elementary education, they had three children, and from the description they knew he would look good on television! There is nothing wrong with either of the things mentioned - but Paul would not have made the short list.

1:15 - BAPTIZED IN MY NAME. Paul was glad he had baptized so few at Corinth, he says, “so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.” Paul did not say that pastors should not baptized as many as profess faith in Jesus. What he was saying was that he was glad he had not baptized others at Corinth. Jesus Himself baptized no one (John 4:2) possibly to avoid this very kind of controversy.

1:16 - THE HOUSEHOLD OF STEPHANAS. These are mentioned as an afterthought. Robertson and Plummer suggest that Paul's amanuensis reminded him of this case. Paul called him a first-fruit of Achaia (1 Cor. 6:15) and so earlier than Crispus, and he was one of the three who came to Paul from Corinth (16:17), clearly a family that justified Paul's personal attention about baptism.

BESIDES. Paul did not mean to leave anyone out who should be mentioned. This does not mean that he did not take baptism or church membership seriously, but it does reveal the mind of the great Apostle on the subject. He is serious about the doctrines of Sin, Justification, and Sanctification, but he places no importance on who gets credit for the nickels and noses, the usually accepted barometers of success in evangelism.

1:17 - FOR CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE. Paul uses the Names for the Members of the Trinity interchangeably. He was God-called, he was Spirit-called, he was Christ-called. “*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.*” Or, for Christ did not send me to be a baptizer (like John the Baptist). He had a general call to preach, baptize, and disciple people, but his specific call was to preach the Gospel. If there is one thing we may deduce from this, it is that the Bible does not teach baptismal regeneration.

BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. This is how Paul understood his call (mission) as an apostle of Christ. He was called to be a “gospelizer,” a proclaimer of the Gospel. He baptized a few people, but associates baptized most of those who were converted under his ministry, just as associates in many large churches today do the baptizing. Evangelists today seldom baptize those who receive Christ as Savior, but leave that to the pastor.

NOT IN NOT IN CLEVERNESS OF SPEECH. Paul knew the work, and he knew the philosophies well enough to debate the brilliant philosophers of his day (see Acts 17). But, preaching was Paul's forte, his genius, and his calling. It was neither as a pretentious philosopher or a professional rhetorician that Paul appeared before the Corinthians (I Cor. 2:1-5). Bruce points out that this (in the Greek) cannot carry conviction [BRUCE:]. This is Greek philosophy, a mere noise in words.

LEST THE CROSS OF CHRIST SHOULD BE MADE VOID. Void means to be empty. In Paul's preaching the cross of Christ is the central theme. This expression shows clearly the stress which Paul laid on the death of Christ, not merely as a great moral spectacle, and so the crowning point of a life of self-renunciation, but as in itself the ordained instrument of salvation [LIGHTFOOT].

B. The Causes of Divisions (1:18 - 2:16).

1. Misunderstanding of the message of the cross (1:18-2:5).

1:18 - FOR THE WORD OF THE CROSS. Literally, for the preaching of the cross. This is the opposite of “cleverness of speech” in verse 17. “Through his incidental illusion to preaching St. Paul passes to a new subject. The discussions in the Corinthian church are for a time forgotten, and he takes the opportunity of correcting his converts for their undue exaltation of human eloquence and wisdom” [LIGHTFOOT:].

TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING. The preaching of the Cross may seem foolish to professional Greek; philosophers, but for those who knew Christ in a saving relationship, it is far more. “*For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*” What Paul will stress in this passage is that the philosophies of the world, so highly prized by the Greeks, were nothing less than the antithesis of the wisdom of God expressed in the preaching of the Cross.

FOOLISHNESS. Many people in this enlightened age who think of themselves as wise in the things of this world show both by their words and expressions that they think of the Gospel as foolish - and those who preach it as fools. I have seen it and heard it many times. The more sophisticated the person is, the more embarrassed he seems when you speak of Jesus Christ.

There is no subject which bears this out more than the creation/evolution debate. This has been intensified by secular, humanistic education which often brain washes children and young people into believing that science has proved evolution and that any person who rejects evolution - or believes in creation - is foolish. So, how do the Christians deal with that attitude? Unfortunately, many accept a compromise view that allows them to pay lip service to both positions, as contradictory as they are. Never mind the fact that both creation scientists and evolution scientists have shown that you must accept one view or the other. There can be no compromise (Day/Age or Gap theories). If you want to make some Christian leaders nervous, tell them that you really believe in the Genesis account of creation. If you want to see a humanists sneer, tell them that evolution is religious - it must be accepted by faith, since there is the evidence is insufficient to prove it.

BUT UNTO US WHICH ARE BEING SAVED. Sharp contrast to those that are perishing and those who are being saved, and rightly so. This present passive participle is again timeless. Salvation is described by Paul as a thing done in the past (we were saved, Romans 3:24), as a present state (by grace you have been saved, Eph. 2:5), as a process, (by which also you are saved, 1 Cor. 15:2), as a future result, (you will be saved, Rom. 10:9).

THE POWER OF GOD. This is *dunamis Theou*, as in 1:16 . No other message has this power (dynamite) of God (I Cor. 4:20). God’s power is shown in the preaching of the cross of Christ

through all ages, now and always. No other preaching wins men and women from sin to holiness, no other power can save a depraved soul. Every soul-winner shows this conviction with Paul.

Every God-called preacher of the Gospel knows that when he is preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit, there is something going that is far more than making a speech. He is also aware of the difference in preaching in flesh and preaching in the spirit. There is a sharp contrast between preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit and speaking in the weakness of human oratory and reason.

1:19 - WILL DESTROY. The quotation is from Isaiah 29:14. Here we find, “For it is written, “I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.” The failure of worldly statesmanship in the presence of Assyrian invasion is the background. Paul applies to his argument with force. The wisdom of the wise is often folly, the understanding is often rejected. “God’s wisdom rises in the Cross seen above human philosophizing which is still scuffling at the cross of Christ, the consummation of God’s power” [ATR -].

True wisdom is not under attack either here or elsewhere in Scripture. The great Wisdom Chapter of Job, Job 28, deals with the value one should place of wisdom.

But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its value, Nor is it found in the land of the living. The deep says, 'It is not in me'; And the sea says, 'It is not with me.' It cannot be purchased for gold, Nor can silver be weighed for its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, In precious onyx or sapphire. Neither gold nor crystal can equal it, Nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or quartz, For the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, Nor can it be valued in pure gold. "**From where then does wisdom come?** And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, And concealed from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard a report about it with our ears.' God understands its way, And He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth, And sees under the whole heavens, To establish a weight for the wind, And apportion the waters by measure. When He made a law for the rain, And a path for the thunderbolt, Then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. And to man He said, '**Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,** And to depart from evil is understanding’ (Job 28:12-28, NKJV, emphasis added).

1:20 - WHERE IS THE WISE? SCRIBE? Paul refers to Isaiah 33:18 without an exact quotation. The reference is to the sudden retreat of Sennacherib following the annihilation of men and officers. The Greek word *for wise (saphos)* probably refers to the Greek philosopher, and scribe (*grammateus*) obviously denotes the Jewish scribe. The word “debater” (*suzaytaytays*), “disputer” in the NKJV, may point to both the Greek and Jewish disputant and doubter (Acts 6:9; 9:29; 17:18; 28:19).

HATH NOT GOD MADE FOOLISH?. Strong negative, “Did not God make foolish?” This is from an old word meaning to be foolish, to act foolish, then to prove one foolish as here, or to make one foolish as in Romans 1:22.

1:21 - WISDOM. *“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”* Two wisdoms are contrasted - the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. We should emphasize the fact that they stand in marked contrast. They are poles apart, as the modern debate between creation and evolution will illustrate. To entertain the very thought of creation, one must also entertain the possibility that God exists (or at the very least, a god).

DID NOT COME TO KNOW GOD. They failed to know Him. This is a “solemn dirge of doom on both Greek philosophy and Jewish theology that failed to know God” [ATR]. If at the end of one’s life it can be said that he “knew not God,” nothing else really matters - power, wealth, fame, family, even religion. It would be far better never to have been born than to have been born once and not be born twice.

THROUGH THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE PREACHING. Emphasis is on the message proclaimed. (The KJV renders it, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe). The proclamation of the Cross seemed foolish to the wise then and now, but it is consummate wisdom, God’s wisdom. Remember two things: first, the foolishness of preaching is not the preaching of foolishness. Second, it is not the act of preaching but the message preached. One person may deliver very eloquently a message weak in theology but strong on emotions and move an audience. The devil will be his greatest ally in such an endeavor (even when the man is convinced that he is serving the Lord). But one another stands and proclaims the clear and simple Gospel or Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit with full knowledge that all genuine results are in the hands of Almighty God. He may not see immediate results - in fact never see the results. But he has God’s Word for the fact that His word will never return unto Him void. The Lord Himself proclaimed, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Is. 55:11). Paul noted in writing to the saints at Thessalonica (1:1ff) that when he preached to them they understood that they were hearing the Word of God. Even when they had no New Testament, they understood through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that they were hearing God’s message and they responded to it.

Please never let it be said that Paul confused “the foolishness of preaching” with foolish preaching. The message we preach, and our method of delivery may appear foolish to a dying world, but God forbid that we should ever give anyone any grounds for the charge by preaching false doctrine, confusing Scriptural facts, or dispensing half truths.

Once, a number of years ago, my older son, John, and I visited a mission church which our church supported with monthly contributions. I was to preach that Sunday, so we arrived early enough for Sunday School. John was invited to attend a youth class and I sat in on an adult men’s class taught

by the principal of an area high school. The lesson that day included the passage from Acts 26:28, where King “Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (KJV). The Sunday School lesson stressed that the traditional view, used so often by evangelists, was not the best interpretation. Contrary to claims of evangelists and the great hymn which proclaims, “almost persuaded, now to believe,” Agrippa was not almost persuaded to receive Christ. In the original language we see that Agrippa is astounded that Paul, in so few words in with so little time would proceed to try to convert him. With incredulity, he exclaimed, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian” (NAS). It would probably not do injustice to the original if we added a series of quotation marks and question marks at the end.

It was very obvious to me from the beginning that the Sunday School teacher had not tread his Sunday School lesson. When we reached that verse he asked me to comment on it - as a matter of fact, as I recalled as we came to each verse he asked someone to comment on it. I shared the view of the writer of the lesson, but it was obvious that he was planning to deal extemporaneously with the verse, following the traditional view. When I finished my answer he turned to the retired pastor at the end of the table and asked him what he thought. The minister had not read his lesson either! He never said that, and I doubt that anyone else there knew that their teacher and the retired minister were not prepared, for it seemed to me that no one there had even read over the lesson.

When I was in college and seminary I worked part time for the Agricultural, Stabilization, and Conservation Service (USDA). One day I picked up my assignment and went to see a local farmer who lived in town. I learned that he was pastor of a medium sized church. Without telling him that I was in the ministry, or that I had just finished a Homiletics class, I asked him how he prepared his sermons. He responded, “Well, you see, I have intellect.” I don’t have to study to preach. I just get up and preach” “Extemporaneously?, I asked.” He said “That’s it.”

When I was a young man, not long out of seminary, Dr. Luther Hall, Director of Missions in the Monroe, Louisiana area, recommended me to Dr. James Horton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Monroe to teach the book of James in a Winter Bible Conference (then, the January Bible Study). I was made aware of the fact that Dr. Horton, who had never heard of me, made some inquiries about me before he called. Dr. Ray Rust, pastor of First Baptist Church, Bastrop, Louisiana called and told me to expect a call from Dr. Horton in just a few minutes and urged me to take advantage of the opportunity.

I began on Sunday evening and went through Friday evening, teaching two hours each night. I had really put a lot of time into preparation, not wanting to run out of material each evening before covering the material I wanted to cover in each session. Following the final session, the Associate pastor, Walter Mangum, waited for most of the people to speak with me and then he came to me and made a statement I will never forget. He said, “Johnny, you are the best prepared teacher we have ever had come for a Bible study.” I would only have been more flattered if he had said that I was the best teacher, the most brilliant, or the most articulate. But that is not what he said. He said that I was the best prepared. I was also probably the most insecure, and the least qualified, which is why I was so well prepared.

I made up my mind at that time that I might never be the most charismatic, the most articulate, or the most brilliant, but there is one thing I could do. I could be prepared. For those who think that those who study and prepare a sermon or Bible lesson are not depending upon the Holy Spirit to lead them, or to give them a message, I have a question. Is it not reasonable to assume that the Holy Spirit can reveal His will and purpose and illuminate our mind and spirit that we might understand the Word of God in the quiet of the pastor's study as well as He can do so in the activity and noise of the fellowship, worship, and activity immediately prior to the time he stands to deliver the message?

TO SAVE THEM THAT BELIEVE. This is the heart of God's plan of redemption, the proclamation of salvation for all those who trust Jesus Christ on the basis of his death for sin on the cross. "The mystery religions all offered salvation by imitation and ritual as the Pharisees did by ceremonialism. Christianity reaches the heart directly by trust in Christ as the Savior. It is God's wisdom" [ATR -].

The point of this is that God's chosen method for saving men is through the preaching of the Good News, Gospel of Jesus Christ Who died on the Cross for our sins. We can preach, but lost people are persuaded, not by the wisdom of the preacher, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:4, 5).

1:22 - FOR INDEED. Continuing the thought of verse 21, he writes, "*Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom.*" There were two distinct cultures in churches Paul started on his three missionary journeys, Jewish and Gentile. There was a vast difference in the thinking, the philosophy, and religious background between those cultures.

AS FOR SIGNS. The Jews often asked Jesus for signs (Matt. 12:38; 16:1; John 6:30). The Palestinian Jews were constantly demanding that Jesus prove Himself with signs. One probably reason is that there was behind their investigation of Christ many centuries of prophecy that was uniquely Jewish. However, they were never satisfied with the signs they had been given. They always demanded more.

SEEK AFTER WISDOM. The Jews claimed to possess the truth, the Greeks were seekers of the truth (as in Acts 17:23). And Paul's audience on Mars Hill in Athens had indeed sought the wisdom of the world, and they had listened philosophically to his presentation. Then, most of them rejected his message and turned their back on Christ.

Today, the Gospel is heard by scientists who would subject everything to scientific scrutiny, and to the eastern mystics who view everything from a totally different perspective. There are many today who grew up in Sunday School and know the language of the church as well as many stories and quotations from the Bible; and there are the neo-pagans who, though growing up in the so-called Bible Belt, know nothing about the Bible. We have but one Gospel to preach to a wide range of

people with different backgrounds. We must still preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified and let the Holy Spirit to the convincing. We must be very careful to avoid the modern error of letting the world dictate to the church what gospel it wants to hear.

God places a premium on wisdom, as we so often see in the Wisdom Literature (Books of Wisdom - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon).

O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions (Ps. 104:24, NKJV).

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever (Ps. 111:10, NKJV).

Solomon was inspired to write the Book of Proverbs, and appropriately so, for he was the wisest of men and the author three thousand proverbs and a thousand and five songs (1 Kings 4:32). At the risk of seeming trite, we must agree that the wisdom of Solomon was proverbial. Look at the way he introduced this great work book and you will see why it belongs in the section known as Wisdom Literature.

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding, To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity; To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion; A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction (Pro. 1:1-7, NKJV).

1:23 - BUT WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED. Regardless of what Jew or Gentile demanded, Paul says, “...*we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness.*” This stands in sharp contrast with the folly of both Jews and the Greeks. When we preach “Christ crucified,” we are preaching the complete Gospel. The virgin birth, the babe in a manger, the flight to Egypt to escape Herod, the visit to the Temple at age twelve, and even the miracles and teachings of Christ are precious to every child of God. But the Gospel is not complete until we come to the Cross, and of course, the story of the Cross is not complete if we leave Jesus on the cross or in the grave. Jesus died for our sins (a vicarious death) so that we would not have to die for them. He arose that we might have life. In Romans 10:9-10, Paul writes:

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

WE PROCLAIM. We proclaim Christ as crucified as in 2:2 and Galatians 3:2, not as a

sign-shower, miracle worker, or philosopher. Jesus died for us and commissioned us to proclaim His salvation to a lost and dying world. This is the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20. In Acts 1:8, Jesus predicted that His followers, once the Holy spirit came upon them, would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. He has no other plan for evangelism and world missions than the proclamation of the Good News by Spirit-filled believers.

STUMBLING BLOCK. The Greek word, *skandalon*, denotes a trap, or snare, and appropriately, a “stumbling block” when applied to humans because it connotes a cause for stumbling, as papyri examples bear out. The simple Gospel which Paul and others preached proved a stumbling block to many Jews who tripped over the Gospel because Jesus was not the kind of Messiah for whom they had been waiting. They were far more interested in a political messiah than a spiritual Savior. They wanted a Messiah who would throw off the shackles of Rome and re-establish the kingdom of David and make Israel a world power. There was no room in their minds for a condemned and crucified Messiah (Matt 27:41; Luke 24:21).

FOOLISHNESS. The Gospel was viewed as folly by most of the philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17:32). The Greeks considered anyone who was crucified as a criminal and thus of no importance or value. Worldly wisdom (Greek philosophy) was as highly prized by the Corinthians as it was by the Athenians. The very word, philosophy (lover of wisdom), comes from the Greeks, but the wisdom they had known and loved was the antithesis of the wisdom of God.

What do you do when you discover that your whole world view, your philosophy of life, and the systems and thoughts by which you live are faulty? Some, like the Gnostics of Paul’s day, tried to wed it to their new view. But is it not sad that those poor ignorant primitives were so confused? Is it not wonderful that we are so much more sophisticated in our philosophy today?!?! Unfortunately, little has changed in two thousand years. The world is still at enmity with God and the philosophy of the world is still the antithesis of the wisdom of God.

Anyone born in America between the Second World War and the end of the Twentieth Century has lived in the three basic world-view periods in the history of mankind - Pre-Modern, Modern, and Post-Modern. As theologians view it, there is the theistic view (almost everyone believed in God, a god, or gods), the humanistic world view (evolutionary atheistic Humanism), and New Age or Post-Modern theism (pantheism, monism,). The humanistic period in America can be expanded to include philosophical pioneers of the first half of the Twentieth Century, those whose writings and teachings ushered in the Post-Christian era in America. Francis Shaeffer said that England entered the Post-Christian era in 1895 and America in 1935. The mid-south slipped into the Post-Christian era after the Second World War.

Evolution was a key and the Scope’s trial in 1925 was a catalyst. Within ten years of that famous trial, college and university professors in America were no longer trying to teach evolution as an alternate theory. They were teaching evolution as fact and waging a war against Christians to prevent creation from being taught as an alternate theory. In the early sixties, the US Supreme Court removed prayer and Bible reading from public schools. Interestingly enough, all moral and social

indexes leaped off the charts. Crime and moral problems escalated at an unprecedented rate, beginning about 1963. William Bennett has received a lot of publicity for publishing statistics and charts showing the change in the moral and cultural indexes that have occurred during the past decades. Those indexes prove that the claim is more than speculation.

Many Christians welcomed the Polls which reported an increase in spiritual interests in America. We thought a revival was taking place. Sadly, that revival of spiritualism was not Biblical Christianity. There has been a tremendous increase in interest in New Age (Post-Modern) religions; Eastern Mysticism (Hinduism), Buddhism, Native American shamanism, witchcraft, Satanism, and every kind of pagan thought imaginable. The great missionaries and prophets of the period are entertainers who find a writer waiting to report everything they say, and masses of Americans who cling to what ever it is they are preaching.

The wisdom of the world is still the very antithesis of the wisdom of God. With that in mind, we should heed the inspired words of a wise man: “A prudent man conceals knowledge, But the heart of fools proclaims folly” (Pro. 12:23). Solomon also wrote:

The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of understanding (Pro. 10:21).

He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm (Pro. 13:20)..

Fools mock at sin, But among the upright there is good will (Pro. 14:9).

The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, But the mouth of fools feeds on folly (Prop. 15:14).

Paul describes pagan and New Age worship in these words:

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (Rom. 1:22-23).

1:24 - BUT TO THOSE WHO ARE THE CALLED. The NKJV renders it, “but to those who are called,” but the NRSV follows the NAS, “the called.” “The called” of Christ are the elect, those chosen by the Grace of God. Christ's people are those whom He has called out that they might be called by His name (Rom. 8:28; Gal. 1:6; 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:15). The believer who is ever cognizant of his election will have a deeper understanding of his relationship with God the Father, and he will walk before Him in humility. He, or she, will be constantly reminded, “I did not choose Him, He chose me.”

THE WISDOM OF GOD. The Gospel may seem foolish to the unsaved, “*But to those who are*

the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Here we have a condensed comparison, the Gospel of salvation, far from being foolish, is wiser than the wisdom of man. A thorough study of the Book of Job will highlight the vast chasm that separates the wisdom of God from the wisdom of man. It is amazing to discover how many modern scientific discoveries are almost casually mentioned in the Book of Job. For example, in Job we read of the water cycle, ocean currents, astronomy, and the weight of air. We even find references to the dinosaur (behemoth and leviathan) in Job. Yet, there is a far greater illustration of the wisdom of God and that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1:25 - THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD. Paul continues the argument of verses 23 and 24. The crucifixion may seem foolish to lost Jews and Gentiles, but not only is the wisdom of God greater than the wisdom of man, “...*the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*” There is no foolishness with God, but this is an expression we would expect in this context because it shows the extreme between the wisdom of God and that of man.

WISER THAN MEN. The reference is to the wise act of God in sending His only begotten Son to die for our sins. Again, we have a condensed comparison, this time, he says that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man. Since there is no foolishness in God, we must conclude that Paul is thinking of what the world would view as foolish - namely the Cross (Christ crucified).

WEAKNESS OF GOD. The same idiom is used - the weakest acts of God (as men may think of them) are “stronger than men.” The cross might have seemed like a defeat for God, but it has conquered and is conquering the death, hell, and the grave - and will never taste defeat. It is mightiest force on the face of the earth.

1:26 -CONSIDER YOUR CALLING. “*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble...*” The Christian should always keep his calling before him. Here, this refers to the act of calling by God, based not on the external condition of those called, but on God's sovereign love. We must never lose sight of that calling. Furthermore, we must never lose sight of the fact that this calling is all of grace, not works and not any combination of grace plus works (see Rom. 11:6). There is the call to salvation, and the call to serve Jesus Christ, and there is the call to the ministry, all of which are of grace and not of man's choice. He chooses us, we do not choose Him.

HOW THAT... NOT MANY... NOT WISE... POWERFUL... NOBLE. This provides us with an indication of the social and cultural make-up level of the church - in the First Century, or any century. Those who have witnessed to very many people have seen the attitude of the rich and powerful, and the intellectual toward the Gospel. Some, usually the intellectual, may scoff at the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In their ignorance they are totally unaware of the Scripture, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became (lit., were made) fools” (Rom. 1).

God's ability to save is not in question. The problem has to do with the inability of the wealthy, those of prominent position, and the erudite to break the trust in their own abilities and powers and trust only in the Lord. Consequently, the church at Corinth,

made up of the common people, is representative of most N.T. congregations [BSB].

AFTER THE FLESH. Paul says, “*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.*” According to the standards of the flesh there are not many wise (*sophos* - wise, philosopher), not many people are truly men of dignity and power (*dunatos*). And not many are noble, of high birth (*eugenays*). There are three claims to aristocracy - culture, power, birth, neither of which merit the attention of God.

The NKJV follows the KJV in adding the words “are called” (in italics). These words do not appear in the Greek, but were probably supplied because of the use of the word “calling” (*klysis*) at the beginning of the verse.

God's ability to save is not in question. The problem has to do with the inability of the wealthy, those of prominent position, and the erudite to break the trust in their own abilities and powers and trust only in the Lord. Consequently, the church at Corinth, made up of the common people, is representative of most N.T. congregations [BSB].

1:27 - GOD CHOSE. “*But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong...*” Three times this solemn verb (chose or chosen) occurs in verses 27-28 with the purpose stated each time. Twice the same purpose is expressed, “to shame...” the “wise” and the “strong.” The purpose in the third example is “that he may nullify...” The contrast is complete in each paradox: “the foolish things” and “the wise;” “the weak things, and “the things which are strong;” “the base things” and “the despised” (vs. 28). It is a carefully worded and powerfully stated piece of rhetoric.

1:28 - THE BASE THINGS. He continues, “*and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are.*” When God decided to choose a people for Himself, he might have chosen a great power like the mighty Egyptians, but instead, He chose a poor, exiled people who were in bondage to the Egyptians. When the birth of Jesus was announced, it was not to kings, to the chief priests, the Pharisees or the Sadducees, but to lowly shepherds. When Jesus chose His twelve apostles, He might have chosen men of prestige, power, or wealth, but he chose people like Peter and Andrew, James and John, simple fishermen. Throughout the history of Christianity, God has so often called as His ministers poor young men from humble surroundings and modest backgrounds, rather than men of means or power. Often, the very popular and the very wealthy are too busy to listen to God.

1:29 - SO THAT NO MAN MAY BOAST BEFORE GOD. The NKJV has, “that no flesh should glory in His presence.” This is an additional purpose in God's ultimate choice in all three instances. He will permit no one to glory is to boast in his position or his accomplishments (Eph. 2:9). The construction in this verse is strong, showing that not a single boast is to be made. In 2 Cor. 4:7–10, Paul further shows this principal:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the

power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

1:30 - BY HIS DOING. That is, by God's work. He chooses you, you do not choose God. You are saved by His grace, and not through your work. "*But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption...*" "Righteousness" is the righteousness imputed unto us by grace, through faith (when we are born again).

IN CHRIST JESUS. God the Father places each believer "in Christ Jesus." He is the Person by Whom we are saved, and He is the One in Whom we live. No one can place himself in Christ - only God can place us in His Son. This is God's wisdom.

WHO WAS MADE UNTO US WISDOM FROM GOD. The incarnation, cross, and resurrection. Christ is the wisdom of God (Col. 2:2f). What does that say of anyone who rejects Jesus Christ?

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SANCTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION. These three words amplify wisdom (*sophia*). All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ Jesus. We are made righteous and holy, and redeemed in Christ Jesus. Redemption comes last for emphasis when, in fact, it is the foundation of the other two. In Romans 1:17, we see clearly the righteousness we receive in Christ. In Rom. 3:24, we have Paul's conception of redemption (*apolutrosis*, setting free, as a ransomed slave) in Christ. In Romans 6:19, we have Paul's conception of sanctification or holiness (*hagiasmos*) in Christ. "Sanctification" is present and progressive. "Redemption," is the basis for Sanctification. There is one other possibility here. "Redemption" can also be used of our future glorification.

1:31 - SO THAT. "...so that, just as it is written, *"LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."* The shortened quotation is from Jeremiah 9:24. This admonition is as valid for the modern believer as for the ancient saint.

It is interesting to observe the demographics of Paul's congregations - many were from the lower classes in the large towns. The First Epistle to Corinth is one of the most important historical witnesses to primitive Christianity.

2:1 - NOT WITH EXCELLENCY OF SPEECH OR OF WISDOM. The word translated "excellency" denotes preeminence, rising above, with the idea of excess or superfluity. Paul did not go to them with a rhetorical display or with philosophical subtlety. He did not try to overwhelm them with his brilliance or with his oratory, though based on his sermon on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17) he was fully capable of doing so. The preacher of the Gospel must be more concerned with communication the message than in glorifying the messenger.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD. The word for mystery is an old word (*mueo*) meaning to close, to shut, to initiate (Phil. 4:12). Christ crucified is the mystery of God (Col. 2:2). Paul did not hesitate to appropriate this word from the mystery religions, but he puts into it his ideas, not those in current use. In other words, he Christianized it. In the biblical sense a mystery is something once concealed but now revealed. The mystery of God is very different from the mysteries of the mystery religions of old and eastern mysticism which has become so popular with many in the west today. Paul wrote to the Colossians,

Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, *the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages* and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:25-27, (NAS, italics added).

This mystery of God was once “hidden from the past ages” (Col. 1:26), but is now made plain in Christ (I Cor. 2:7; Rom. 16:25f). Old Testament saints lived with a mystery, the progressive revelation of God’s messianic covenant. In the new covenant, written in the blood of the Lamb of God, that mystery (Jesus) is revealed.

2:2 - I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANYTHING AMONG YOU. Literally, he says, "For I did not decide to know anything among you." Paul means that he did not think it expedient to know (preach, teach) anything beyond this “Mystery of God.” He was not there as philosopher, even though he probably understood Greek philosophy and the mystery religions of the world as well as anyone. He was not there to overwhelm them with his intelligence or baffle them with his oratory.

On July 2, 1998, my wife, Becky, and I listened to the Rush Limbaugh radio program we drove into town. Guest host, Tony Snow, was talking on the phone with one of the most brilliant men in America, William F. Buckley, Jr. At one point Tony Snow observed that some people seem etymologically challenged when talking with Buckley, whose vocabulary is nothing short of amazing.

I was both amazed and disappointed, amazed at Buckley wisdom in so many fields, and at the same time disappointed by the Scriptural ignorance of this very religious man.

Buckley is a devout Catholic, as is Snow. Snow asked him why he submitted himself to the authority of the pope. Buckley explained that he believed that Jesus established the (Catholic) church when Jesus spoke the words to Peter, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matt. 16:18). The original text (Greek) disallows this interpretation. Peter is a tiny pebble, the church is built on a solid rock foundation. The church is built, not upon Peter, but a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, based upon the divine revelation of that fact by God the Father (through the ministry of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost).

Paul did not dazzle the people with his oratory, his vocabulary, or his logic. He simply preached the

mystery of God - which is the Gospel. Why? Because his purpose was to persuade people to turn to Jesus, not to praise the preacher. Every person who preaches the Gospel today should remember his example.

SAVE JESUS CHRIST. Both the person and the office are intended. Paul had no intention of going beyond Christ and Him crucified. That does not mean that he did not teach sound doctrine with regards to every area of the church. He preached the basic truth of the Gospel and did not confuse them with the philosophies of the world. The focus of Christianity is Jesus Christ, not church history, not bibliographies of saints, not statistics (all of which are important, but secondary). The hope of the world is Jesus Christ, not rituals, not ceremonies, and not creeds.

AND HIM CRUCIFIED. Literally, “and this one as crucified.” It has been suggested that this phrase was selected by Paul from the start as the center of his Gospel message. While he used the term, we must remember that originated with the Lord. There are many beautiful stories about Jesus, from the promise of His coming, to the announcement of His birth to Mary, to the virgin birth, to the perfect life, to His preaching and teaching ministry, to His miracles. All of these are important, but the Gospel is incomplete if we stop with them. The heart of the Gospel is the Cross. However, in preaching “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” Paul did not leave Him on the Cross. Yet, the message of the Cross is incomplete without the Resurrection, Ascension, His intercession for us, and His Second Coming.

2:3 - I WAS WITH YOU. Rather, “I came to you.” What he was saying was that “I not only eschewed all affectation of cleverness or grandiloquence, but I went to the opposite extreme of diffidence and nervous self-effacement” [ATR]. Paul is not talking about a cool complacency. He was not overwhelmed by the challenge, but there was every reason to take it seriously, as a review of his experiences at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Ephesus, and now Corinth clearly shows.

IN FEAR AND IN MUCH TREMBLING. Paul had arrived in Corinth on the Second Missionary Journey after having been forced out of Thessalonica by fellow Jews who followed him to Berea where they stirred up enough opposition to force him to go to Athens where he was mocked before setting out for Corinth. He was concerned about the welfare of the new believers he had left behind there. He had arrived in Corinth after a discouraging experience in Athens (Acts 17). The overwhelming depravity of the people of Corinth must certainly have added to his anxiety.

2:4 - NOT IN PERSUASIVE WORDS OF WISDOM. This may seem contradictory, for every preacher desires to be persuasive. Yet, the persuasion was not in the words of Paul, but in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He said, “*and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power...*”

BUT IN DEMONSTRATION. The force and power of Paul’s message came, not by eloquence or reasoning skill, but by the power of the Spirit. The world has seen many examples of men and women who could move crowds with their oratory. There are many people who can so control a crowd of people that they can persuade them to do almost anything. Adolph Hitler could incite a

crowd as few people ever have, but there are some modern evangelist who know how to control a crowd with emotions. With some, it is like watching a pendulum swing back and forth between entertainment and fear, between loud laughter and tears, until he has the people so caught up emotionally in what he is saying that they surrender their will to him. Unfortunately, that kind of evangelism has filled church rolls with lost people - which would explain why many members do not feel compelled to worship the Lord on His Day.

OF SPIRIT. Here “spirit” can be Holy Spirit or inward spirit as opposed to superficial expression and power.

AND OF POWER. This points to the power of the Holy Spirt manifested in the hearts and lives of those who hear the Gospel. It denotes spiritual power, rather than intellectual acuteness (cf. 1:18). This is the power of which Jesus prophesied:

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The word translated power is the Greek word *dunamis*, which is variously translated power, might, strength, or miraculous power. It is the word form which we get the word dynamite. The power of God is an explosive power, yet, a controlled power.

The wisdom and the power of the gospel that changes people's lives comes from above, from God, not from humans. The implication of this is that we must be careful not to try to substitute human wisdom and power for the authentic power of God.

The Spirit empowers God's people to carry out the world missionary task. Paul and all other evangelists do this work, not with the persuasive power of words as men of the world use, but with the power of the Spirit. This power of the Spirit, which is in fact the power of God (v 10), consists precisely in the content of the message about Christ, for the gospel is the power of God (Ro 1:16). By reminding the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit empowers the church to do evangelistic work [DSB].

2:5 - THAT YOUR FAITH. He preached the Gospel in the power of the Spirit, he says, “*so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*” The only place for faith to rest is in God’s power, not in the wisdom of men. Science, philosophy and politics (even religion) have seen changing theories. But one can always depend on the sure word of God. If salvation depended on human intellect or wisdom, some would have a significant advantage over others, but since it depends on “the power of God” no one is disadvantaged in his ability to receive Christ. The ground is level only at the foot of the Cross.

2. Spirit of life, 2:6-16

2:6 - YET WE DO SPEAK WISDOM. Paul says that when they were in Corinth they spoke “among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.” These “mature” people are the same people he described as spiritual people in 2:13, 15. What does he mean when he said that he did not speak with words of wisdom, but he did speak with wisdom? Is this a contradiction? No.

Paul had been discussing his method of preaching in public. Here he reflects on more intimate conversations concerning Christian truths which he felt free to discuss only with Christians who have accrued a great deal of knowledge and experience. These mature men were distinguished not only from great men of the world who do not acknowledge Christ, but also from young Christians whose understanding and experience were still very limited [NCWB].

2:7 - A MYSTERY. Now the apostle says, “but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory...” “God’s wisdom is a mystery”? What does that mean? Mystery religions love language like that! But Paul not referring ancient traditions that are distinct from the Gospel he is preaching. There had been a progressive revelation of God’s plan, will, and purpose throughout the entire Old Testament period. Now “God reveals his plan gradually to men as their spiritual comprehension increases” [NCWB].

“The message which Paul proclaimed was **God’s secret wisdom**, known only by God’s revelation (Matt. 11:25). At the heart of this wisdom is the plan of salvation intended **for our glory**, determined **before time began** (Eph. 1:4) [BKC].

2:8 - CRUCIFIED THE LORD OF GLORY. He continues, “*the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*” In the Gospel of John (17:1), the glory of God is associated with the crucifixion. Paul here links “glory” with the “crucified Lord,” a paradox, as we have seen, to both Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23). “Crucified the Lord of Glory” - the One glorified by the Father (John 17:19) - holds before us the inseparable connection between His humanity and his divinity.

2:9 - JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN. Here Paul cites Isaiah:

THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,
AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,
ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.

This is an inspired exposition of the idea set forth in Isaiah 64:4 - “For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, Nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.” Isaiah 64:4 speaks to those who *wait* for the coming Messiah, but here Paul speaks to those who love the Messiah as having already appeared.

2:10 - THE SPIRIT SEARCHES ALL THINGS. “*For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.*” The plan of salvation was prepared

by the Father, carried out by the Son, and applied by the Spirit (Eph. 1:3-14) to all believers who as a result love God (1 John 4:19). The only way the Corinthians can know this is “through the Spirit,” - the Holy Spirit - who knows and reveals the “depths of God” concerning our salvation.

Whereas the OT primarily shows the dealings of God the Father with his people, and the Gospels show us God the Son living on earth, the epistles deal predominately with the ministry of God the Spirit in the lives of those who love God. Before Jesus left this earth, he told the believers how the Spirit would come to reveal the riches of God in Christ (see John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15) [NCWB].

2:11 - WHO AMONG MEN KNOWS. *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”* Who, indeed, really understands the “thoughts of a man?” That is, how can we know the thoughts of another person? Only the Holy Spirit knows the First Person of the Trinity and reveals Him to us. Only the spirit that it in that person knows his thoughts. “Thoughts” were added by the translators, but the idea is to know God. The idea here is to know by personal experience. If we do not know the thoughts of man how can we know the thoughts of God.

THE SPIRIT OF MAN THAT IS IN HIM. The self-consciousness of man that resides in man or woman (generic term for mankind). “What is in man can be known only by the human spirit; likewise, what is in God can be known only by the divine Spirit” [NCWB].

2:12 - BUT WE. *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God...”* By “we” he means Christians, who at the time of their salvation were given the Holy Spirit, Who reveals the will of God to us. But here we must be very careful to avoid a serious error. The Holy Spirit, Who indwells the believer, is the divine Author of Scripture, and one of His primary works is to illuminate the hearts and minds of believers so that they may understand Scripture and apply it in their daily life.

The Holy Spirit will lead us and guide us in decisions we must make - but those decisions will always be consistent with God’s Holy Word. We must beware of the implications of claims of extra-biblical revelation and “words of knowledge.” If God should give you a direct revelation, would not that be on par with Scripture? Would it not have to be inerrant? Does the Holy Spirit work in a supernatural way in the life of a believer? Absolutely! But never in any manner, or in any matter, that supercedes Scripture, or that contradicts Scripture.

NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD. The “spirit” here mentioned is not the human spirit of an individual (“the spirit of the man which is in him,” 2:11), but the spirit of Satan, the evil one who rules this world, and is in direct conflict with the Spirit of God (see Eph. 2:2). The spirit of the world is not simply a secular spirit - make no mistake about it, it is the spirit of the devil.

BUT THE SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD. Rather, from God, (*ek*), which proceeds from God. It was for the purpose of making known to us the thoughts of God (vs. 11), that “the Spirit who is

from God” came (see John 16:13). The Holy Spirit reveals the mind of God, not just to some Christians but to all (1 Cor. 12:13). One of the most important ways by which you can know that you belong to God is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life.

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW. Here is a distinct claim of the Holy Spirit for understanding (illumination) of the revelation received. It is not a senseless rhapsody of secret mystery, but God expects us to understand the things that are freely given us by God. "God gave the revelations through the Holy Spirit and He gives us the illumination of the Holy Spirit to understand the mind of the Spirit" [ATR].

2:13 - WHICH THINGS ALSO WE SPEAK. *“Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual **thoughts** with spiritual **words**”* (“thoughts and “words” are supplied by translators for smoother reading) Paul shows the revelation he received was communicated. There is revelation (vs. 10), illumination (vs. 12), and inspiration (vs. 13). He claims the help of the Holy Spirit for the reception of the revelation, for the understanding of it, and for the expression of it. He claimed this authority for his preaching (1 Thes. 4:2).

MAN’S WISDOM. Though human wisdom is more desirable than human folly, Paul did not rely upon human reason in preaching to them. In computer terminology, the world is “user friendly” to those of the world, but the things of God are not discerned through human wisdom, nor are they communicated through “man’s wisdom.”

TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT. Paul means that the help of the Holy Spirit in the utterance of the revelation extends to the words. His epistles bear witness to this lofty claim. “They remain today after nearly nineteen centuries throbbing with the power of the Spirit of God, dynamic with life for the problems of today as when Paul wrote them,” [ATR]. The inspired Word of God remains supercharged with the power of God.

COMBINING SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS WITH SPIRITUAL. There is a problem here: *sunkrino* originally meant to combine, to join together fitly, in later Greek, to compare. Some have, “decide.” A.T. Robertson and Lightfoot prefer the earlier meaning, combine. [ATR: 89]. The expression can mean: (1) Combining with spiritual men, or explaining spiritual things to spiritual men. (2) It could mean combining (matching) spiritual things with spiritual words.

The context seems to indicate that Paul was speaking about how he (as with the other apostles) was given the utterance by the Spirit to express spiritual truths. This affirms the divine inspiration of NT Scripture, for the apostles were given their words by the Spirit. These words of the Spirit can be understood by other believers in whom the Spirit is also working [NCWB].

2:14 - A NATURAL MAN. *“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”* The KJV translates it “the natural man,” but there is no article in the Greek. Paul is not using modern psychological terms here. Just think how complicated things might be for us if they there had any Freudian psychology in Paul’s day! The great missionary exercises variety in this verse

in his use of terms (*pneuma* and *pneumatious*, *psuche* and *psuchikos*). Man is spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). The papyri have many references to both *pneuma* and *psyche*. In 1 Corinthians 15:44, 46 there is a contrast between *psuchikos* and *pneumatikos* as here. "The *psuchikos* man is the unregenerated man while *pneumatikos* man is the renewed man, born again of the spirit of God" [ATR: QV].

DOES NOT ACCEPT. A natural man (a man of the world) does not accept spiritual things - he cannot even discern them, and not discerning them he naturally rejects them. In Romans 8:7, Paul clearly states the inability of the mind of the flesh to receive the things of the Spirit. It is only through the Holy Spirit that it becomes possible for us to accept the things of the Spirit of God. Once we are saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit the things of the spirit no longer foolish to us as was once the case (1:23).

HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEM. It is amazing how many people there who think they understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ because they have read the Bible, or because they know some Bible stories. Though a lost person may take delight in debating theology with Christians, a natural (carnal) person cannot possibly understand spiritual truth. Readers of the Monroe, LA daily newspaper see this almost weekly as an educator uses letters to the editor as a forum for an ongoing debate with Christians. It is obvious that he thinks he is scoring some major points against narrowminded, bigoted Christians over Scripture and other matters of faith. The Bible clearly calls this man a fool. This man has blinded himself against the light to the point that he now seems totally blind to it. Sadly, he may see the light only after it is too late.

THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY APPRAISED. Paul and Luke are fond of this verb (used nowhere else in the New Testament). The word means "a sifting process to get at the truth by investigation as of a Judge" [ATR: QV]. In Acts 17:11, the Bereans examined Scripture daily to determine whether or not the things Paul preached were true. *Psuchikoi* men are incapable of rendering a decision for they are unable to recognize the facts. They judged by the *psuche* (animal nature rather than by *pneuma* (the renewed spirit).

2:15 - APPRAISES ALL THINGS. "But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one." Only the spiritual man is qualified to sift, to examine, to decide rightly, because he has the eyes of his heart enlightened (Eph. 1:18) and is no longer blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). Not only has the spiritual person been given the ability to sift all things and make judgments, he is the responsibility to do that daily as he interacts with the people and things of this world.

I have an NSA water filter on my faucet in the kitchen and ever drop of water I drink is filtered through that filter. We use filtered water in tea, coffee, and in cooking. Our beagle, Miss Mea (we are Andy Griffith fans) will pass up city water any time for the filtered water we pour into her bowl. We can test the water any time we choose, and we give it the taste test every day. When I run a cup of water at church and take a drink, I am reminded of why I use the filter. Chlorine is removed from our water at the point of use, so we have all the benefits of chlorinated water without the taste or

potential health problems some associate with it. To me it is primarily a matter of taste. The Bible is the filter through which I must run every thought, word, and deed. The world is filled with thoughts and philosophies which seem good and wholesome, but which are ungodly and even dangerous to individual. Many of those philosophies do not appear dangerous at all - until exposed to the perfect and inerrant Word of God. The Holy Spirit, the divine Author is the divine Illuminator Who enables me to discern what is true and what is false in light of the Word of God.

HE HIMSELF IS APPRAISED BY NO ONE. The spiritual person, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has practical insight into spiritual truth and the Christian life (cf. 1 John 2:27; 4:1). But the natural person (those who do not have the Holy Spirit) is not qualified to discern the internal workings of the Spirit in the Christian's life. Men will pass judgment on the believer, but the spiritual man refuses to accept the judgment and conclusions of carnal people. Polycarp preferred to be burnt at the stake rather than say "Lord Caesar" rather than Lord Jesus." He understood clearly what he was doing, but there is little doubt that a lot of witnesses thought he was a foolish fanatic.

2:16 - THE MIND OF THE LORD. *"For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ."* This quote is from Isaiah 40:13. In order to judge or discern the spiritual man the natural man must know "the mind of the Lord." But the natural, or carnal man does not know the mind of the Lord. He may think he does. He may teach classes in Comparative Religions in a university and feel that he is qualified to discern the differences between the religions of the world. He may write books of the subject and believe he is qualified to judge - he may even convince those in high places that he is an authority on the subject. I am amazed at how many times the media runs to some liberal professor in some secular university to ask a theological question. His comments may directly oppose the revealed truth of the Word of God, but the media accepts it as the "gospel," if only because he says what they want to hear.

THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM. Who knows the mind of God so well that he is able to set God straight by counseling Him. There is such a thing as using the absurd to illustrate the absurd and this is an ancient example of it.

WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST. "In the Isaiah passage quoted by Paul, the subject is Yahweh (translated "LORD"); but here the subject is 'Christ.' This affirms Christ's deity and unity with the Godhead" [NCWB]. Every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit - He is also called the Spirit of Christ in the New Testament (see also vs. 13; Rom. 8:9, 27). Through our union with Christ, we have access to the mind of Christ. We may know His thoughts. We are urged to let our mind be the same as the mind of Christ. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Paul and all spiritual believers have insights into the mind of Christ that no unsaved person can legitimately claim. Every believer can say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed."

This will not satisfy those who are constantly looking for one spiritual high (experience) after another, but in this verse we have the key to the spiritual life - "we have the mind of Christ." True spirituality far less to do with how high you jump as it does with how straight you walk when you come down.

True spirituality is reflected in decisions you make in your daily life - your behavior and your speech.

An optometrist told me about the lady who came in for her eye exam. She was spouting charismatic phrases right and left. On the surface she exuded spirituality through pious speech. What he did not know was that the lady's eyelashes were implants. He discovered that when he closed the examining apparatus and heard an explosion of profanity from the other side that "would make a sailor blush." He said, "Don't worry about a thing. I can replace them." He confided in me that he had never done it before, but he did it that day!

There is nothing wrong with saying, "Praise the Lord." As a matter of fact, if it is from the heart it is a wonderful sentiment or expression. But, as the saying does, "if you're going to talk the talk, you had better walk the walk." You have access to the mind of Christ when you are born again. Then you are commanded, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). When you begin to think like Jesus you begin to act in a manner consistent with His nature and character. True spirituality is simply this - having the mind of Christ. When you think like Christ you act like Christ. How can you improve on that?

C. The Results of Divisions (3:1 - 4:5).

1. Spiritual growth stunted (3:1-9).

3:1 - AS TO SPIRITUAL MEN. Paul continues, "*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.*" When he was with them he had been unable to communicate with them as mature, spiritual Christians, even though there were some among them who may well have been more spiritual than others.

BUT AS MEN OF FLESH. The KJV has "carnal." The word denotes materials of flesh (see also 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 7:16). In Rom. 7:14 Paul says, "I am of flesh (*sarkinos*) sold under sin," as if *sarkinos* represented the extreme power of the flesh. In 2 Cor. 3:3, the meaning is simply material of flesh. Paul was not able to treat them as spiritual men (*pneumatikos*) because of their seditions and immoralities.

We all live in the flesh (*en sarki*, Gal. 2:20), but we are not to live according to the flesh (*kata sarka*, Rom. 8:12). "It is one of the tragedies of the minister's life that he has to keep on speaking to the church members 'as unto babes in Christ' [ATR]. Paul's goal was for all infants to become adults (Col. 1:28).

3:2 - I GAVE YOU MILK. We should not forget here that the primary problem Paul is dealing with here is that of divisions in the church (Ch. 1), expressed in favoritism shown certain teachers. Paul was one of those teachers some of the members were championing, but he had to deal with them as infants in Christ - in contrast to those who are spiritually mature (Col. 1:18).

No doubt Paul taught them all the blessings that came to them as Christians, what Paul called **milk**. At that time their way of thinking and living was only beginning to be transformed (Rom. 12:2). They were still greatly influenced by worldly thinking and behavior—they were **infants in Christ** [BKC].

This must have been somewhat frustrating to the great missionary. When Paul was with them he had “to continually review the elementary principles of Christian doctrine, which prevented him from moving on to more complex truths (see Heb. 5:13, 14)” [NCWB]. A. T. Robertson was right, “Paul did not glory in making his sermons thin and watery. Simplicity does not require lack of ideas or dullness...” [ATR: QV].

The pastor is confronted with a dilemma every week as he prepares his sermons. He has been taught to preach so that a twelve year old child can understand what he is saying. That is good advice, but if no sermon ever rises above that level (emotionally, intellectually, and volitionally) how will mature believers be fed. If they are not fed how will they grow? At the same time, he must start where the people are, not where they are not. Through expository preaching, the people who are spiritually minded should mature in the faith and in doctrine to the point that they may be able to digest more than the “milk” of the Word. A good rule is to keep people reaching, but do not put it out reach. If that happens they may become discouraged when they cannot attain the truth. Force them to reach, but not too much.

3:3 - FOR YOU ARE STILL FLESHLY. The word for “fleshly” means adapted to, or fitted for the flesh and denotes one who lives according to the flesh. Paul uses *psuchikos* to describe the unregenerate man and *pneumatikos* the regenerate man. Both are made in flesh (*sarkinoi*), and both may be “fleshly” (or of the flesh, carnal), though the saved person (*pneumatikoi*) should not be. The redeemed persons (*pneumatikoi*) who continue to be carnal (*sarkinoi*) are still spiritual infants, not adults. The saved people who are still “fleshly” have given way to the flesh as if they were still unregenerate. The Corinthian church was filled with carnal Christians. The church that boasted of the spiritual gifts was filled with spiritual infants.

JEALOUSY AND STRIFE. Paul reasons, “...*For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?*” Jealousy is the translation of the word *zelos* which means to boil. Today, we might say that the jealous person is stewing over something. Strife (*eris*) is the wrangling that follows jealousy. These two sins are proof to Paul that the Corinthians are still “fleshly” (*carnal*) and walking according to men, not according to the Spirit of Christ. Indeed, those who are guilty of jealousy and strife are “walking like mere men” (the natural man, the carnal man).

The feelings, words, and actions of the Corinthians were all awry: jealousy had provoked quarrels which caused divisions among them (see Gal. 5:19, 20). Paul’s censure is more stern now than in his opening statements, and will become yet more severe before he has finished [NCWB].

3:4 - FOR WHEN ONE SAITH. “...When one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not mere men?” Each instance is a case in point and proof abundant of the divisions caused by jealousy and strife. Repetition (“are you not *mere* men?”) such as we have in verses 3 and 4 is not to be overlooked in Scripture. Carnal men were responsible for the strife and consequent divisions in Corinth. It still produces the same ungodly harvest in churches today.

3:5 - WHAT THEN. “What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.” Not who, but “what.” “Servants” (ministers) is from the Greek word *diakanoi* (from which we get deacon) - the root word denotes “raising dust by hastening.” The technical sense of deacon comes later (Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8, 12). Paul describes himself as a minister (Col. 1:23,25). But what the Apostle is asking here is, what intrinsic worth does he or any other “servant” have that the Corinthians should show him such favoritism? The Bible Knowledge Commentary summarizes 3:5-9:

Apollos and **Paul** were given their ministries by Christ (Eph. 4:11). They were the *means*, not the *cause*, whereby the Corinthians believed (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4-5). God alone produced results. **God made** the seed **grow** (3:6). Therefore God alone should get the credit (v. 7). As servants, Paul and Apollos were not competing against each other but were complementing each other’s ministries (v. 8). Their purpose was to bring the church to maturity, to Christlikeness (Eph. 4:12-13). In accord with their faithfulness to that task would come their reward (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2-5) [BKC].

3:6 - I PLANTED...APOLLOS WATERED. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.” Paul had been led of the Spirit to go to Corinth on the Second Missionary Journey to take the Gospel to them and to plant a church in the heart of pagan Corinth. Apollos was sent to Corinth at his own request to continue the work Paul had begun (Acts 18:27, 28).

GOD WAS CAUSING THE INCREASE. the Greek verbs used in describing the work of Paul and Apollos (planting and watering) denote completed action, whereas the verb concerning God’s work with the church (growth) is in the imperfect tense to indicate continuing activity. The significance of the imperfect tense is to show the continuous blessing of God on the work of both Paul and Apollos, co-laborers with God in His field (vs. 9). Reports of revivals sometimes give the glory to the evangelist. Paul gives the glory to God.

3:7 - GOD WHO CAUSES THE GROWTH. “So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.” In the Greek, the word “God” occupies “an emphatic position in the sentence: ‘He that gives the growth, (namely) God’ [NCWB]. All the servant can do is to plant or water. He cannot give the increase. Only God can do that and every servant or minister of the Word will do well to remember that - and every layperson, for that matter..

3:8 - ARE ONE. “Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.” By the metaphor, Paul shows how the planter and the waterer work together. Since Paul and Apollos were both working for God and toward the same goal, it was foolish for the Corinthians to try to “divert their energies into different channels, assuming, of course,

that the Corinthians had the same goals as their teachers [NCWB].

ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOR. God will reward each according to what his labor deserves. The self-seeking, self-glorifying servant can expect no blessing from the Lord, but those who do all they do for the glory of God and Him alone will be rewarded for their faithfulness.

3:9 - GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS. *“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”* God is the major partner, but He lets us work with him. It is a high honor to be a fellow worker with our Creator. The minister works under God (2 Cor. 5:20; 6:1).

GOD'S FIELD. Or, husbandry (garden or field). The farmer works with God in God’s field - Corinth, in this case. Paul and Apollos were in His field. The pastor commonly refers to “our church field,” or to “my field,” which terminology serves a practical purpose. However, he should never lose sight of the fact that it is God’s field in which we work, and that as God’s fellow worker he is still the servant. The pastor may ask, “How could I ever forget that?” When he is looking toward God he may never forget it, but when he is talking with fellow workers in the field, or when his eye is primarily on the field, there may be is a temptation to slip back into the “flesh.”

GOD'S BUILDING. The metaphor shifts from a field or garden to a building, which is fitting in light of this emphasis on teaching the Corinthians. God is the great Architect of the “building.” He is the grand Architect of the house of God. The building is His. We work under Him and carry out his plans.

2. Rewards will be lost (3:10 - 4:5)

3:10 - LIKE A WISE MASTER BUILDER. *“According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.”* By the grace of God Paul had laid a foundation for the work at Corinth, and Apollos had built on that foundation.

ANOTHER IS BUILDING ON IT. Paul’s successor did not have to lay a new foundation, but only to build on that which had already been laid. I have a friend who is a contractor. When he builds a house he calls in sub-contractors to do the wiring, plumbing, and painting. They are not in competition. They must worked together in order to complete the building. A minister who goes to a church is building on a foundation laid by someone else and he should be careful how he builds on it. Paul does not shirk his share of responsibility or work at Corinth. He absolves Apollos of responsibility for the divisions, and denies that he himself is to blame. In so doing he refutes the charges made by the Judaizers that he was the cause of the trouble at Corinth. There are times when a minister must defend himself, but caution is advised.

BE CAREFUL. This is practical advice for a carpenter. Here it is also a warning. It is critical for

pastors and other ministers, but it also applies to local church leaders. There is a saying in the military, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." A lot of people have caused a lot of trouble in local churches by trying to "fix what ain't broke."

3:11 - FOR NO MAN CAN LAY A FOUNDATION. *"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* Jesus, as head of the church, is the one foundation upon which the church is built. There is no room on the platform with Jesus for another savior (Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, etc.).

THAN THE ONE WHICH IS LAID. *Para* is alongside, so, "alongside the one laid." Paul clearly teaches that "on this one true foundation, Jesus Christ, one must build only what is in full harmony with the foundation which is Jesus Christ" [ATR]. In 2 Cor. 11:4, "another Jesus" in Greek (*allon*) implies another of the same kind; "hence, another Jesus would be the same Jesus 'cast in the mold of Judaistic teachings" [NCWB].

3:12 - GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STUBBLE. In verses 12-17, Paul described three kinds of builders or ministers: the expert (v. 14; cf. v. 10), the unwise (v. 15), and the destructive (v. 17). There are three durable materials and three perishable materials. A co-worker with God in this great temple should put in his very best effort, and he should use the best materials - whether building a great building or a mud hut.

3:13 - THE DAY. *"Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work."* "The day" is the Day of Judgement, as in 1 Thes. 5:4. The work of each person will be made manifest in the final judgment, and there is no escape from the final testing.

The judgment described in 3:11-17 is for Christians only and transpires immediately after the translation (rapture) of the church into heaven. In Rom. 14:10 and 2 Cor. 5:10, this judgment is labeled the bema (Gk.) or the "judgment seat" of Christ. Several important truths about that judgment are presented in this passage: (1) Only those who have the proper spiritual foundation upon which to construct a life will be able to appear at the bema. That foundation is Christ (v. 11). (2) Once the foundation has been laid, believers build a superstructure throughout the years that God allows. That superstructure may consist of the valuable and lasting -- gold, silver, precious stones; or the unworthy and fleeting -- wood, hay, straw (v. 12). (3) On the day of Christ's return, all works will be declared and "revealed by fire." This latter expression probably refers to the penetrating, purging, and discerning gaze of Jesus (cf. Rev. 1:14; 2:18). (4) Those Christian works which are of permanent value abide and become the basis for reward (v. 14). (5) Those works which are worthless in themselves or which are improperly motivated are destroyed in the fire of Christ's gaze. Consequently, reward may be limited, but the man himself is saved (v. 15). This judgment is not to determine salvation or eternal destiny but to determine rewards [BSB].

IT IS REVEALED BY FIRE. The metaphor of fire is used in the Old Testament (Dan. 7:9f; Mal. 4:1) and by John the Baptist in the New Testament (Matt. 3:12). This passage answers questions about the unfruitful branches being burned (John 15).

WILL TEST THE QUALITY OF EACH MAN'S WORK. The quality of one's works, not the quantity, will be the basis of this judgment. However, quality does not preclude quantity.

3:14 - REWARD. *“If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.”* “If any man” here is a condition of the first class, assumed to be true. Every person’s work is facing a fiery test. The Bible does teach rewards in Heaven for the faithful, just as it implies degrees of punishment for those who reject Jesus Christ. There is nothing wrong with our desiring rewards, but it is theological heresy to teach that works save (Eph. 2:8-10, Gal. 2:16). An appropriate reward (Matt. 20:8) will come to the one whose work stands this fiery test (gold, silver, precious stones will stand the test, wood hay and stubble will not). Salvation is a free gift from God but rewards for those who are saved go to the faithful who labor in the spirit, not in the flesh. The quality of our service (v. 13) is the criterion for the judgment of believers. “Rewards are often spoken of as crowns (cf. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10)” [RSB].

3:15 - SHALL BE BURNED. *“If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”* First class conditions again, assumed to be true. If one’s work is wood, hay, or stubble, it will indeed be burned (literally burned down).

HE SHALL SUFFER LOSS. In Matthew 16:26, the loss is stated to be the man’s soul. But here there is no such total loss as that. The man’s works are burned up, not his soul. A lot of the things modern Christians are most proud of will be burned up. How sad to think that we would live for fifty years after receiving Jesus Christ as Savior, and then stand before Him empty handed, with nothing of value to show for all those years of opportunities to produce the genuine works of repentance and to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

BUT HE HIMSELF SHALL BE SAVED. Eternal salvation - no purgatory here. His work is burned up completely, but he himself escapes destruction because he is saved, a real believer in Jesus Christ. This answers many questions people ask about the vine and the branches in John 15. He will be saved, “like a man pulled to safety through the smoke and flames of a burning house or apartment building - his salvation depends on God's grace, not on his own work.

God's salvation is without end. Those Christians who do not build wisely upon the foundation of Jesus Christ will not be rewarded for their flimsy works, but they will indeed be saved. This text teaches the eternal security of the believer. It also encourages cooperation within the church to build as well as possible for God [DSB].

YET SO AS THROUGH FIRE. The NIV has, “If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” What does he mean by the words,

“through fire?” Are we literally to be subjected to a judgment by flames of fire? Or is this used metaphorically - as in the NIV, “as one escaping through the flames? Clearly Paul means with his work burned down, but the soul salvaged. It is the tragedy of a fruitless life. His soul is saved but his life is wasted. “Must I go and empty handed...?” Why would any one want to stand before the judgement seat of God knowing that his works will all be burned when tested by fire. What believer wants to go to Heaven smelling like the fires of hell?

3:16 -- YOU ARE A TEMPLE OF GOD. “*Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*” Literally, a sanctuary (holy place, most holy place) of God. “God’s Spirit dwells in the elect, God’s temple. The elect must preserve their sacredness as God’s temple to escape the wrath of God’s destruction” [DSB]. In the New Testament, two different Greek words are translated “temple.” One word, *hieron*, refers to the entire temple complex. The other, *naos*, is the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies) in which God uniquely dwelt in the O.T. tabernacle and temple (dwelt, but never confined to the temple). In this verse, *naos* is used to refer to the local church. The local church is the unique dwelling place of the Spirit of God. In 1 Cor. 6:19, he will speak of each individual believer as a temple of the Holy Spirit of God.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU. The Spirit of God makes His home in the hearts of believers (the true New Testament church), not in temples made with hands (Acts 7:48; 17:24).

QUESTION: What makes the local church a temple of God? The Spirit of God dwelling in it. What makes your body a temple of God? It is simply this: the Spirit of God dwelling in you.

3:17 -- DESTROYS. “*If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.*” We will do well to remind ourselves that a church is not a building, but a body of baptized believers bound together by Jesus Himself for His service and for worship of the living God. The Spirit of God lives in that body, thus it is the temple of God. Verse 17 urges caution in the use one makes of this temple:

Dividing the local church (cf. v. 4) is the same as defilement of the sanctuary and calls forth the most serious response of judgment by God. As Paul is addressing a visible local congregation, the destruction threatened by God may be applied both to the discipline of genuine believers and to the eternal destruction of those in the church whose profession is insincere [BSB: QV].

The outward temple is merely the symbol of God’s presence, the Shechinah (the glory). God makes His home in the hearts of believers.

It is a grievous sin to be a temple destroyer (church wrecker). We are surely not stretching the point here to say that Paul is identifying the entire fellowship of believers as God’s temple? Since this is the case, this has serious implications for those who tear churches to pieces, humiliate other worshipers, offend other members, or cause splits in the fellowship.

HIM SHALL GOD DESTROY. Paul employs the condition of the first class, assumed to be

true. "The church-wrecker God will wreck" [ATR]. What does he mean by destroy? Does this mean here, or hereafter? We know it does not mean annihilation of the soul. Is there eternal punishment for those whose souls are saved? Or, does this simply mean that they will be devoid of rewards? That would, of course, be an eternal punishment. One thing is for sure, "If any man contributes to the collapse of a local church (whether a believer or a professing believer) he will be severely disciplined" [RSB].

HOLY. "The temple of God is holy," just as God is Holy. The word means to be set apart from ordinary things, to be set apart for the glory of God. It is not the building Paul speaks of as the sanctuary of God, but the spiritual organization or organism (which we are). The Corinthians themselves in this angry disputes had forgotten their holy heritage and calling.

3:18 - LET NO MAN DECEIVE HIMSELF. "*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise.*" It seems that some of them were guilty of doing just that. "Excited partisans can easily excite themselves to a pious frenzy, hypnotize themselves with their own supposed devotion to truth" [ATR].

THINKS THAT HE IS WISE IN THIS AGE. The conditions of the first class assumes the statement to be true - some actually did think this. Paul is not putting down wisdom and promoting folly. He claimed to be wise (verse 10) and desires all who claim to be wise to really be wise. False wisdom of the world (1:18-20,23; 2:14) and self-conceit has led, and will invariably lead, to strife and wrangling. They must cut it out! To stand for the truth of God is often to be viewed as foolish by the "enlightened" of the world. If you doubt this, study the materials produced by creation scientists and then mention some of their arguments to secular scientists and see what they think of your wisdom. For that matter, try it on some professing Christians. Let us go further than that - try it on some pastors and professors of religious studies in Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries.

3:19 - THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD. "*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, 'He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness.'*" In recent months there have been many reports of major archeological and astronomical discoveries that tell us that man was making stone tools one million years ago, or that life once existed on Mars, but given enough time, Earth will some day look just like Mars. The "wisdom of the world" thinks nothing of spending hundreds of millions of dollars in an effort to learn something about our origin, but rejects out of hand the Genesis account of creation and Noah's Flood.

Secular science has judged the changeless Bible by changing (often fickle) science and found it wanting. They prefer the "thus reasoneth the mind of man" to the "thus saith the Word of the Lord." God's people, however, must judge science, history, psychology, and sociology by the Word of God.

3:20 - USELESS. "*THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS.*" Both the NKJV and the NIV render the word "futile." The quote is from Psalms 94:11. The word translated "futile" is literally vanity, insignificant, like a breath. Paul is stressing here that "The

greatest human intellectual achievements are insignificant in comparison to God's wisdom. Only fools take so much pride in their knowledge and intelligence that they ignore God, His purposes, and commands” [DSB].

3:21 - LET NO ONE BOAST. *“So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you.”* There are no grounds for boasting for any human being. There is especially no basis for boasting by the believer, as Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph.2:8-9).

3:22 - ALL THINGS BELONG TO YOU. Paul continues, *“whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you.”* Paul is addressing the Lord - all things belong to God. My grandfather once visited during the noon hour with an acquaintance at the plant where he worked. The man, having received permission to show him around, took him on a tour of the plant, explaining all the machinery and showed him the various steps in production. He seemed proud of his knowledge and his boastful manner suggested an authority beyond his position. As they completed the tour they returned to the entrance where his superiors were lounging during their break. My grandfather asked, “Now when you take over, what about these men who are sitting down on the job?” The acquaintance stammered and stuttered until he was out of sight of his bosses. Behind the owner’s back he might have boasted, but in his presence he was well aware of who the owner was. Believers must never forget that God is the owner of all things.

3:23 - AND YOU BELONG TO CHRIST; AND CHRIST BELONGS TO GOD. Not only does Christ own the physical universe, he owns all true believers. You are bought and paid for - Jesus paid the price at Calvary. See also the prologue to the Gospel According to John.

4:1 - LET A MAN REGARD US. *“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”* This shows the way ministers should be looked upon - servants, not party leaders. We must remember to view this in the context we have already seen in earlier chapters. Paul is trying to dissuade those who were dividing the church with their loyalty to their favorite leaders, Paul, Apollos, and Simon Peter.

MINISTERS OF CHRIST. The word translated ministers(servants, attendants) (*hypeôretas*) differs from that used in 3:5 (*diakonoi*), denoting subordination and responsibility to a superior. Literally, it is “attendants of Christ” (under-rowers of Christ). Paul and all ministers of the New Covenant (I Cor. 3:5) are subordinate (attendants) of Christ.

STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD. The steward, or house manager, was a slave under his lord, but a master over the other slaves in the house. Hence, the under-rower of Christ has a position of great dignity as stewards of the mysteries of God. The ministry is more than a mere profession or trade. It is a calling from God for stewardship. The “mysteries of God” - the secret

things of God - denotes the wisdom of God, the message of the Cross known only by the Spirit's revelation (2:7-10).

4:2 - IN THIS CASE. "In this case moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. What does he mean by "this case?" With only this verse in mind it would seem that he is talking about the Corinthian situation. A more literal rendering of the Greek might be "here" rather than "in this case." Here on this earth seems to be demanded by "moreover." The NIV has "Now it is required," while the NKJV follows the KJV in not translating the word at all" "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."

IT IS REQUIRED. It is demanded. This part of the verse is not in question. What he is about to say is not an option.

THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL. Fidelity is the essential requirement in all relationships. "The Corinthians were showing partiality toward one teacher or another because of their particular *gifts*. But it is 'faithfulness,' not 'giftedness,' that is required of God's stewards" [NCWB].

4:3 - BUT WITH ME. "*But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.*" Paul uses the ethical dative of personal relation and interest - "as I look at my own case." He loved them but says, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you." Paul does not oppose public opinion, but he denies the competency of this tribunal in Corinth, if it may be called that, to pass on his credentials with Christ as his Lord.

MAN'S JUDGEMENT. Literally, it is "human day" - that is, by a human day, in contrast to the "day of the Lord"(1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5), which points to God's great Judgment Day. Paul is not worried about a "human day" - man's judgment in the day when his (man's) courts are in session. There is a far greater judgment coming, and that is the one that concerns Him.

YEA, I JUDGE NOT MINE OWN SELF. Paul does not even set himself up as a judge of himself. That is good advice for all of us. Who can judge himself infallibly.

4:4 - FOR I KNOW NOTHING AGAINST MYSELF. Robertson says this is not a statement of fact, but "an hypothesis to show the unreliability of mere complacent self-satisfaction" [ATR]. Paul is not claiming sinless perfection here, so this cannot be claimed as a proof text by groups who do insist they "live above sin." The subject here is not sinless perfection, but the attitude of members of the church toward their leaders. Paul is saying that he knows of nothing that would disqualify him from the Lord's service, the ministry to which he was called.

AM I NOT HEREBY JUSTIFIED. Failure to be conscious of one's own sins does not mean that he is innocent. Conscience is no more an infallible guide than one's personal feelings - in fact, they may often be indistinguishable at times. He continues, "but he that judgeth me is the Lord." The Lord Himself would have to decide whether or not Paul's work was acceptable.

4:5 - JUDGE NOTHING. “Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God.” Paul actually says that they must not go on passing judgement on one another or other groups. That is, stop criticizing as they were doing. This habit was doing serious damage to the Corinthian church.

BEFORE THE TIME. The day of the Lord (3:13). “The title ‘Lord’ fits the analogy of the master of the household for whom the servants work; for the Christian, the master is Jesus Christ, who will reward his workers as they deserve when he comes again” [NCWB]. Any present judgement must be partial, premature and incomplete.

UNTIL THE LORD COME. The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus as Judge is held as a glorious hope for all believers. There are some problems in this world that we are not going to be able to solve. They will only be solved when Jesus comes again. Do anyone really think man is going to solve racial problems, eliminate poverty, of stamp out greed? I seriously wonder if Communism will ever be defeated before the return of the Lord. Satan has never gotten as much mileage out of anything as he has Communism, and that includes Nazism.

WHO WILL BOTH BRING TO LIGHT. To turn the light on hidden things of darkness is the idea. The Light of the World is coming again, not as the Suffering Servant, but as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. When He returns he will expose the things that are hidden in darkness.

AND MAKE MANIFEST. By turning on the light, the counsels of all hearts stand revealed. He will examine not only the outward deeds, but also the inner motives.

HIS PRAISE. The praise due “each man” from God (Romans 2:29) will come to him (“*then shall each man have his praise from God*”), but not until the Lord returns. Meanwhile, Paul will carry on his work and wait for praise from the Lord.

D. The Example of Paul (4:6 - 21).

4:6 - FIGURATIVELY APPLIED TO MYSELF. “*Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.*” Robertson has, “I have in a figure transferred...” [ATR]. The word was used for changing the form of a thing. Paul has applied this to himself figuratively, though clearly others are the guilty ones. He transfers the guilt figuratively to himself to make a point. He has in mind the false apostles who were posing as apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13-15), and of Satan as an angel of light.

THAT IN US YE MAY LEARN. Paul points to himself and Apollos as object lessons. There is wisdom in what he is doing. This way he does not have to name the guilty parties - he may not have

known all of the ones involved, but they know who they are. Paul may not have known all their names, but the principle applies to any one who is guilty.

NOT TO GO BEYOND THE THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN. Do not go beyond what is written - stay with the Book. We do not need a Mormon Bible or a Jehovah's Witness Bible. And we do not need extra-biblical revelations. We had better be very careful of subjective experiences and extra-biblical revelations. They may speak volumes to the one who experiences them but they are not verifiable. How can we search the "experience" to tell if one is telling the truth? How do we argue with one's subjective feelings? We can, however, search the Scriptures.

ARROGANT. It is God's will and purpose that "no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. " The KJV has "That ye be not puffed up" - a vivid picture of self-conceit. Human nature is proud of achievements, accomplishments, and possessions, but God is the source of all our blessings. An awareness of that will keep us from being arrogant. The Lord Himself eliminates all basis for pride and arrogance.

IN BEHALF OF ONE AGAINST THE OTHER. The divisions they had caused at Corinth were without any justification at all. Their ungodly attitudes had turned one against another. There are people who will deliberately try to turn one against another in a church to serve their own purpose or to serve their agenda. There are others who do so without premeditation even without thinking. In either case the results do not glorify the Lord.

4:7 - WHO REGARDS YOU AS SUPERIOR? *"What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"* He asks them, what distinguishes you or sets you apart from others? You did not lift yourself up by your own boot strap. You did nothing to earn God's blessings and you what you received from God you received the same way other believers received it. "All self-conceit rests on the notion of superiority of gifts and graces as if they were self-bestowed or self-acquired (ATR)." Why is it that some of us are so driven to find something in which we feel justified in looking down on the rest of us?

AS IF YOU DID NOT RECEIVE IT. Whatever the gift, the possession, the position, the honor, you receive it all from the Lord. Pride of intellect, race, country, denomination or religion is ruled out. Boasting is one of the most unchristian exercises of which any Christian can engage. It is ludicrous because it is without basis. But that has never stopped some in any age.

4:8 - YOU ARE ALREADY FILLED. *"You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you."* This note of sarcasm implies that they were satisfied. Self-satisfaction is a dangerous thing, leading to boasting and to reliance on one's own merit. In verses 8-13, Paul, with biting irony, "contrasts the imagined exaltation of the Corinthians with the degradation and distress that were the apostles' daily lot" [RSB].

YOU HAVE ALREADY BECOME RICH. The aorist tense is used instead of the perfect,

implying “indecent haste” [ATR]. The health/wealth gospel proclaimed by some televangelists will find no support in Scripture, certainly not in the Corinthian epistles.

YOU HAVE BECOME KINGS WITHOUT US. This may be rightly called withering sarcasm. In 2 Timothy 2:12 we find, “if we endure, we shall reign with him.” Some of the Corinthians, however, in terms of “over realized eschatology (cf. 15:12; II Thes. 2:2; II Tim. 2:18) were speaking and acting as if they had already attained the kingdom and the glory simultaneously with the gift of the Spirit” [Bruce:].

I WISH THAT YOU HAD BECOME KINGS. With biting sarcasm Paul says, “I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.” He is using absurdity to illustrate the absurd.

4:9 - HATH SET FORTH US THE APOSTLES LAST. *“For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.”* The apostles had been personally appointed by Jesus Christ. Who had trained them and sent them out. On the surface one would think that the Lord would protect them from all harm, but upon closer examination of Scripture we see that He had warned them of the price they would pay. He promised to be with them always, but He never promised that they would avoid the persecution and suffering to which He Himself had been subjected. Those who think servants of the Lord should be immune to opposition, trials, and attacks by the enemy simply do not understand that the world is at enmity with God and that the prince of this world cannot, and will not, overlook anyone who seeks to advance the cause of Christ. After all, the cause of Christ includes the total defeat and destruction of Satan and all that follow him.

AS MEN DOOMED TO DIE. In contrast to the kingly Messianic pretensions of the Corinthians, the apostles were destined to suffer for the cause of Christ..

A SPECTACLE. Early word means the place of the show. Then it means the spectacle shown there. And here it is the man exhibited as the show. Sometimes it refers to spectators. The word might be used of gladiator contests or to a triumphant procession of a Roman general parading captured soldiers to the arena for a celebration. Paul’s point is that the apostles were in the arena of the world, fighting to the death for the cause of Christ.

4:10 - FOOLS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. *“We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.”* Paul begins to pile up antithesis between the apostles and the Corinthian Christians. Contrast the attitude of the apostles, who were laying their life on the line each day for the cause of Christ, with the Corinthians who were boasting of their spiritual gifts and their spiritual superiority. Paul was no fool - he may have appeared a fool to the world, but he did not relish the suffering, the persecution, the deprivation.

He wished they were right. But they weren't. The apostles followed the path of Christ's humiliation. As He

marched a parade route to His death, so did they (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14). As Christ had suffered deprivation and defamation, so did His servants, and in His Spirit they endured and responded with grace (Luke 23:34). The apostles lived out the message of the Cross. But the Corinthians were complacent and secure with their “theology of the palace” (cf. Amos 6:1-7) [BKC].

4:11 - EVEN UNTO THIS PRESENT HOUR. Ten words and four participles from 4:11-13 give a graphic picture of Paul's circumstances (and that of his associates) in Ephesus as he was writing this epistle. In this verse he says, *“To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless...”* This does not imply minor inconveniences, but deprivation and suffering for the cause of their Lord.

During the Clinton Administration in America it was discovered that masses of people, including professing Christians, were willing to overlook immorality of the most shocking kind in the highest office in the country, tolerate lying on serious issues, reject justice, approve of representatives in the Senate and House who perverted the constitution, abused the court system, accepted bribes from Chinese Communists who were both seeking treaties and committing espionage to enable them to leap a generation in preparation for nuclear war against America - all that and more because “the economy was good.”

A cause is that which produces a given effect. It is something that can be demonstrated over and over again. There is no one cause behind the mess we have in America today. Kids killing kids, mothers killing their own unborn babies, serious problems in education, corruption in government, immorality of every kind rampant, and young women parading around in public places dressed (shall we say undressed) in a manner that might have caused a temple prostitute in Corinth to blush. There are many factors involved in the moral and spiritual decline witnessed in America in the past two generations.

Just as there is no one cause - other than sin - there is no cause that prevents a revival - that is, apart from sin. There are many factors for each individual, many more for the nation. But I am convinced that there is one common factor that should be addressed. Affluence. As long as God's witnesses exhaust themselves in the pursuit of and the maintenance of possessions, I doubt that we will ever see another genuine revival - a spiritual awakening that reaches communities across the country.

We used to hear the adage, “You can't take it with you.” Today, even Christians are investing so much and going into debt to the point that I seriously wonder if they are planning to go anywhere. While there is nothing wrong with possessing things, it is idolatrous to be possessed by things, whether houses, cars, bank accounts, stocks and bonds, or real estate.

Paul, like Jesus, had no place to lay his head, yet he was used by God to bless more people than any other single individual in the history of Christianity. Again possession of material things is not, in itself, bad. It is one's attitude and attachment to those things which may make it evil.

4:12 - WE TOIL. *“...And we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure.”* The word denotes weariness in toil, exhaustion on behalf of his

Lord. What most Christians have in mind when they speak of working for the Lord would hardly qualify here. This points to intense, tiring labor.

WORKING WITH OUR OWN HANDS. Paul worked with his own hands as a tentmaker, not only for himself, but also for Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 20:34). Greeks, it is said, despised manual labor; Paul glories in it.

WHILE BEING REVEILED WE BLESS. Peter, writing about Jesus, said, "...while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.(I Peter 2:23). Christians must not seek vengeance. Paul wrote in Romans 12:19, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord."

Rather than seeking revenge, "we should identify with those who suffer. We should leave vindication and punishment to God. In living the Christian life, peace is our goal, not justice, as we deal with our enemies. Seeking peace may involve submission to political authorities whose views stand in stark contrast to ours (13:1-14)" [DSB].

BEING PERSECUTED WE ENDURE. This is exactly what the faithful do. They endure. We read in James 1:2-4: "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." The NKJV has "patience;" the NIV, "perseverance."

Paul's experiences were similar in many ways to those experienced by Jesus Christ while He was on earth - yet very different from those experienced by the believers at Corinth. He will give an expanded list of the things he had endured in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians:

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; *in* journeyings often, *in* perils of rivers, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils from *my* countrymen, *in* perils from the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; *in* labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (2 Cor. 11:23-27).

4:13 - WHEN WE ARE SLANDERED. Continuing, he says, "*When we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.*" The Greeks thought it was a sign of weakness, even cowardice, to return good for evil, or kindness for rebuke. There have always been those who thought this was a sign of weakness. To fail to react with violence to certain offenses in the old west was to risk losing the respect of one's neighbors, and in many cases, to lose the respect of one's neighbors might have meant that the individual would have

to move from the area. Would the Scriptural response have worked in the old west? Absolutely! Who knows how much earlier the west might have been evangelized if there had been more Christians living by these principles?

Here Paul is opening his heart now after the penetrating irony above. Again, how like our Lord is the Thirteenth Apostle - and why not, since this is the Word of God and not the word of Saul of Tarsus. That which Jesus expressed it in the Beatitudes Paul applies it here in everyday situations.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:9-12).

THE SCUM OF THE WORLD. No one needs to explain the word "scum" to us, nor dregs, for that matter. Literally, it means sweepings, dust that is swept from the floor. Apparently, the Apostle Paul knew very little about pop-psychology. It would be interesting to know what he would have done with the self-worth, self-esteem, self-love gospel preached by many in our churches in the few decades. He knew what others thought of him, but he was more concerned with what his Lord thought of him. High Christ-esteem will put self-esteem in perspective.

4:14 - TO SHAME YOU. The harsh tone has change, now, "*I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.*" With these words Paul reveals his attitude toward the church at Corinth, as well as his love for the members. He is writing to them as spiritual father who would both reveal God's love for them, and warn them against things that were divisive and destructive in the church.

Paul has no desire to brow-beat the saints at Corinth, but he was under a divine mandate to admonish them. Yet, in admonishing them he would do it as a father admonishing his children. The preacher must never compromise the Gospel, but he always be compassionate in proclaiming the Word of God. The faithful preacher will warn the people of the consequences of their sin, but he will not gloat over their punishment.

4:15 - TUTORS. "*For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.*" The Greek word used here is not the word for a "teacher," but an attendant, a custodian, or a guardian. In Galatians 3:24, the word is used of a slave whose job it was to prepare the child for school, accompany to the teacher, and help train and discipline him. The law, Paul explained to the Galatians, was such a tutor to guide and direct the people until Christ, the Teacher, came (see notes by this writer on Galatians 3:24). So, the Corinthians had had a number of tutors - guides or attendants who trained and instructed them. "The church needs respected, faithful leaders whom other members may imitate confidently. Too many guardians or teachers (Greek *paidagogos*) lead people to jealousy and

quarreling (3:2) instead of to Christ” [DSB].

IN CHRIST JESUS I BECAME YOUR FATHER THROUGH THE GOSPEL. Paul is not condemning these tutors, they rendered an important service. But Paul had a unique relationship with these believers. He is not, however, violating the command set down by Jesus in Matthew 23:9, “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.” There we are warned not to usurp the role of the Father in heaven. We must be very careful what connotation we assign the word, “father.” In this case, Paul simply means that he founded the church, and as such is their spiritual father. He is not their priestly father who replaces Jesus as the Mediator between God and man.

4:16 - BE IMITATORS OF ME. Literally, he invites them to “keep on becoming imitators of me.” Paul is urging the Corinthian Christians to learn by imitating him as all children learn by imitating their parents. “There seems to have been no discrepancy between Paul’s preaching and his personal conduct” [NCWB].

4:17 - HAVE I SENT TO YOU TIMOTHY. *“For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.”* Timothy had probably already gone to Corinth (16:10f). Apparently he came back to Ephesus and was sent on to Macedonia before the uproar in Ephesus (Acts 19:22). Titus was probably then sent to Corinth, also before the trouble in Ephesus. The absence of Timothy’s name in the salutation suggests that he had already set out on his journey (Bruce).

Paul sent Timothy to Corinth so that he could serve as an example for the Christians to imitate in Paul’s absence. Furthermore, through long and close association with Paul, Timothy was familiar with his instructions and suggestions to other churches and could continue to teach them in Paul’s place. Paul had a great deal of confidence and affection vested in Timothy (see 1 Cor. 16:10; 2 Tim. 1:2) [NCWB].

IN EVERY CHURCH. Paul expects his teachings to be followed in every church. (14:33). There may be many differences in churches, based on theology, Socio-economic, racial, cultural, and even emotional differences. But there are certain things which must remain the same in every church. All are under a divine imperative to evangelize the world and disciple believers. Basic doctrines must not vary from church to church. Holiness should characterize the members of every church.

4:18 - SOME HAVE BECOME ARROGANT. *“Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.”* See verse 6. The KJV has “puffed up.” They had become arrogant, thinking that while Paul might send Timothy or Titus, he would not come and deal with them personally. He had apostolic authority to do just that, but he has been away from them for many months and apparently some interpreted this as meaning that he did not have the courage to deal with these issues face to face..

4:19 - IF THE LORD WILL. *“But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.”* This is a condition of the third class -

he may come and he may not. If it was God's will he would come. James wrote, "...You ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that" (James 4:15). This should represent one's constant attitude. However, it does not always have to be proclaimed aloud.

I SHALL FIND OUT. If he did visit them, he would find out, not just what these people were saying, but whether or not those words were supported by the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. The arrogant Judaizers did a lot of talking in Paul's absence. If he comes he will find out their real strength. We see in II Corinthians that Paul was sensitive to their talk about his inconsistencies and cowardice. It will become plain later that Timothy failed on his mission but Titus succeeded.

4:20 - THE KINGDOM OF GOD...POWER. *"For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power."* Paul was not interested in the natural abilities, talents and influences of these dissidents in the Corinthian church. He did want to see evidence that God was changing their lives and that they were serving in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5). There is a great contrast between talk and power. The Interfaith Witness Department of the Southern Baptist Convention teaches that one reason many young people get involved with the occult is that they have seen so little power in the church. Unfortunately, daily claims and exhibitions by tel-evangelists may have added to the problem for some. These programs offer testimonies of people who have experienced miraculous healing, died and returned, or been blessed with a visit by Jesus or an angel. Then the young person goes to church and does not see these things happen and he wonders why.

We must be able to point out to our children and young people how God's power is manifested in this age. God certainly demonstrated His awesome power in Creation "in the beginning." There is no more creation going on today so His power is not being demonstrated in Creation. It is, however, being demonstrated in His sustaining (maintaining) all He created. It is also demonstrated in salvation as one who is dead in sin is regenerated. It is evident in the daily walk of every believer who walks with God in the spirit. Those who walk in the spirit are aware of the amazing power that comes with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation. The risen Lord promised, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

4:21 - SHALL I COME? *"What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?"* Paul gives them a choice. They can have him as their spiritual father who will minister to them in love and gentleness, but he had apostolic power to deal with them with the rod of discipline.

WITH A ROD. We are reminded of the shepherd's rod. If he had to deal with them with the rod, he would use his apostolic authority and power to deal with the trouble makers.

III. MORAL DISORDERS IN THE CHURCH (5:1 - 6:20).

A. The Case of Incest (5:1-13).

1. The problem stated (5:1-2).

5:1 - IT IS ACTUALLY REPORTED. In the previous verse - and there were no chapter/verse divisions in the original - Paul had told them he could deal with them in love and gentleness, or with a rod. This they should remember as they read this section.

Remember that Paul in this epistle is answering questions and dealing with problems that have been brought to his attention. At this point he moves on to a new subject, which he introduces with these words, "*It is actually reported,*" (one can sense the incredulity in his mind as he begins). He goes on to repeat what he has heard: "*that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.*" We have two serious problems here: sexual immorality, and the failure of the church in the important responsibility of church discipline. A case of incest was being tolerated in the church! This is not a sin someone had committed and then repented, but an on going situation about which they knew and they were tolerating it. How shocking! At least it would be if there were not so many examples in so many churches today in which Christians are afraid to take action. Members are afraid of the consequences if they bring it up. They do not fear God, they fear other people. They fear more what others will say about them than they do God, and what He can do about their failure.

IT IS REPORTED. Literally, it is heard. Paul is saying that he has heard credible evidence that "Fornication is heard among you." This report probably came from the household of Chloe. (1:1).

AND SUCH A KIND. This points to the revolting character of this particular case of illicit sex, without being too graphic. There is a time and place for all things, including a discussion of sexual sins. These discussions can be handled in such a way that adults will understand the issue without explicit details that may give some members a problem and may confuse children. Television, movies, and music are so graphic about immorality that if any one today is shocked by a discussion on the subject it might well be the senior adults.

This openness is not necessarily good, regardless of what some liberal thinkers are telling us. Discussions of sexual issues may easily plant fantasies in the minds of young people, especially boys, and some of those young people may act on those at a later time. There can also be a cumulative effect, as they hear more and more about sexual sins. Another problem is that these graphic discussions can create lust in the hearts and minds of adults. We must deal with these issues, but we do not have to be too graphic in doing so.

AS IS NOT EVEN AMONG THE GENTILES. This was the height of scorn. The Corinthian Christians were actually trying to win the pagans to Christ while living more loosely than the Corinthian heathens among whom the word "Corinthianize" meant to live in sexual wantonness and

license.

THAT ONE OF YOU HATH HIS FATHER'S WIFE. This was an ongoing situation. It was probably a permanent union (concubine or mistress) of some kind without formal marriage like John 4:8. The woman probably was not the offender's mother (probably his step-mother). Some have suggested that the father may have been dead or divorced. Whatever the relationship was, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to stress the evil nature of the sin. This was so blatant that no one could have viewed it as innocent. The Jewish law prescribed stoning for this crime (Lev. 18:8; Deut. 22:30; 27:20). Paul urged expulsion for such offenders in 2 Thes. 3:6. It has been suggested that some of the rabbis had invented a subterfuge in the case of a proselyte to permit such a relationship. Perhaps the Corinthians had learned how to juggle moral values so as to condone this sin.

5:2 - YOU HAVE BECOME ARROGANT. What had been their response to this horrible sin? *"You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst."* The KJV has, "ye have become puffed up," a graphic term for arrogance. Obviously, Those of the same factions as this reprobate justified his sinful relationship.

DID NOT RATHER MOURN. Their guilt is compounded - the very least that they could have done was to mourn for shame. Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." If they that mourn over sinful conditions are blessed, what does this say for those who do not mourn over such gross immorality. It is one thing to be comforted, yet another to be too comfortable (at ease in Zion). Failure to mourn over a situation like this in the Lord's church should be considered a sign of an unhealthy church, an apathetic membership.

REMOVED FROM YOUR MIDST. Love for God and His church, and a sense of moral decency would have demanded instant expulsion of the man instead of pride in his filthy lifestyle. If they tolerate such sin, they also have a sin problem. Why would they tolerate this kind of sin? Some hypothetical situations might be:

- 1) The man owns a big business and most members depend upon him for their living.
- 2) His tithes and offerings keep the church in the black.
- 3) He is a powerful politician and can grant or deny favors.
- 4) He is a famous, or popular person and people are in awe of him.
- 5) He might sue the church, or individuals bringing charges against him.
- 6) The local TV stations may report the action and make members look like prudes.

Of course, they had no TV, but we do today - and who wants to be labeled a puritan, a bigot, or intolerant? Considering any of the reasons listed above, what is the real problem? They fear man rather than God. They do not love God as much as they love themselves and others.

2. Punishment prescribed (5:3-13).

5:3 - FOR I, ON MY PART. This is an emphatic statement of Paul's own attitude of indignation. The NKJV has, "For I indeed." His response had been immediate and emphatic.

HAVE ALREADY JUDGED. *“For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.”* To answer anyone who might object to his criticism on the grounds that he is not present, he responds, “Yes, I know I am not present, but I have heard enough to have judged already what should be done. I have already judged, as though present.”

5:4 - IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS. In His name, and only in His name, should the church take action. Paul wrote, *“In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus.”* In the Bible, the phrase, “in the name of” carries more weight than it does in English. I might ask my son, an attorney, to take some action in my name. At some point, we let each of our sons sign a card at the bank which would allow them to sign a check on our account so that they could make purchases at a local store for us. One may give a family member or friend the power of attorney to act in his behalf.

To take action “in the name of our Lord Jesus” means more than saying we are taking action in His behalf. It means that and more. In the Bible, to take action in one’s name was to take action consistent with his character and nature. To act in a manner consistent with the nature and character of Jesus Christ the church must practice discipline in situations like the one here. But what about the people we elect to serve as teachers, officers, deacons, and committee members in the local Church?

WHEN YOU ARE ASSEMBLED. He would be with them “in spirit,” but they must take action in a regular assembly of the church. This is to be a church action, not some behind-the-scenes power play. God’s people must handle His business orderly, openly, and honestly. Anything less leaves the church open to ridicule in the lost community. They are already looking for reasons to justify their rejection of Jesus and His church. God’s people must not provide those reasons.

WITH THE POWER OF OUR LORD JESUS. Paul does not assume full responsibility himself. He expects them to take action. But he did not have such power in, and of himself. The power was that of Jesus Christ, but the apostle was given the authority and right to use that power, just as he used the power of his Lord against Elymus (Acts 13:8ff), and as Peter did against Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1ff).

5:5 - I HAVE DECIDED. Paul continues, *“I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”* On the basis of his apostolic authority, he had made a judgment. From time to time one hears of people who have quoted this verse to justify some rash decision about another person. Often times it is quoted out of context and without sympathy.

TO DELIVER SUCH A ONE TO SATAN. This is as shocking as it is amazing. How do we do that? We have the same idiom in 1 Tim. 1:20 used of Hymenius and Alexander. This might simply his expulsion from the community that confessed Jesus as Lord into the realm which was dominated by “the god of this world,” but the language implies more than that. Something more serious than sickness or affliction may be indicated by the strong word, “destruction.” The notes in

the Believer's Study Bible offer a good summary of views:

Two very different interpretations have been advocated with regard to this admittedly difficult passage: (1) The delivery unto Satan has reference to the ban or excommunication, and the "destruction of the flesh" is to be understood as the destruction of the fleshly nature of the sinner. (2) The delivery unto Satan involves something of an apostolic judgment which would result in actual physical malady and perhaps even death. Support for this position might be marshalled from 1 Tim. 1:20, in which Paul delivers Hymenaeus and Alexander unto Satan, and from the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. Certainly the passage as a whole establishes the certainty of the first interpretation, but this does not eliminate the truthfulness of the second one. The necessity of such grave action arises out of the inevitable result of a little leaven in a lump of dough. The whole lump is soon leavened (v. 6). The effect of grave sin tolerated within the church would eventually be a widespread loss of purity [BSB].

It is a simple fact that the physical body is temporal and the soul, (spirit) is eternal. God expects us to take care of the body - after all, he has written that it is the "temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:17). But the body simply houses the real person and it would be far better to destroy the body than to see the spirit perish. In the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus said,

"If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matt. 5:29-30).

FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH. While this is not an easy verse to understand or explain, two things are obvious. First, the church was expected to take some disciplinary action in a case like this. Second, the physical body was in imminent peril.

THAT THE SPIRIT MAY BE SAVED. The ultimate purpose of the expulsion was discipline. Note that the spirit (*pneuma*) is in contrast with flesh (*sarx*) as the seat of personality (3-.15). Paul's motive is not merely vindictive, but the reformation of the offender who is not named here or in II Cor. 2:5-11 (if the same person is intended - which is doubtful). The final salvation of the man in the day of Christ is the goal and this is to be attained not by condoning his sin.

In 2 Cor. 12:7, Paul speaks of his own physical suffering as a messenger (*aggelos*) of Satan. Paul certainly expulsion from the church (verse 2) and regarding him as outside of the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2: 11f) . Of course, no congregational action could have taken away his salvation if he had genuinely trusted Jesus.

5:6 - NOT GOOD. *"Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the*

whole lump of dough?” The efforts of one faction to defend the actions of one of its members was not good. The word denotes that which is unbecoming and inappropriate. This sin was like a plague or a cancer in the church. They needed a surgical operation at once instead of boasting and pride.

President Bill Clinton is a long-time Southern Baptist who, regardless of that fact, persistently brought shame and disgrace to the Kingdom of God through a lifestyle that is grossly immoral and ungodly. Many Americans were shocked to learn that one of his immoral encounters with a young intern occurred in the White House on an Easter Sunday afternoon. That same day all the evening news programs (shows) showed Clinton standing with his wife and daughter, smiling with Bible in hand, on the steps of a Washington church. Many thought that his home church should have taken disciplinary action against him, but no action was ever taken. Reasons, or excuses, may be made, but how do you make them in light of this Scripture? Is it possible that the reason we do not hear more about it is that too many other churches are tolerating those who live an immoral lifestyle? Or, are people afraid of the media? Of course, one can claim that he has apologized for his behavior, but in reality, all he did is say other presidents did it first, and then blame his political opponents.

Americans were subjected to the shame of a president who offered responses like, “That depends on what the definition of sex is.” Then he had trouble trying to determine what “is” is. I am not simply picking on his church or his pastor. A number of America’s best known ministers visited the president and before they went in to see him, they agreed that they would not bring up anything that would embarrass him. One said later that if they had brought up the issue of his immorality, they might not have been invited back. I mentioned this to a friend in a letter and he replied that he understood their explanation, because they would not have been invited back and would have had no moral influence on the administration. I wrote back, “I might accept that explanation, but then I thought of certain names: Nathan, Elijah, Amos, Jeremiah, John the Baptist.” An answered, “You are right.”

A LITTLE LEAVEN. Leaven is a symbol of impurity (see Matt. 13:33). Jesus said, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough...” Perhaps some argued that one such case did not affect the whole church. Paul answers this excuse for neglecting their responsibilities. The emphasis here is “little.” Compare the pervasiveness of germs of diseases in the body as they spread. How much filth would it take to pollute a glass of water you are about to drink? On the other hand, how much pure water would you have to add to a cup of bacteria-filled sewage before you would drink it?

5:7 - PURGE OUT. *“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”* The word for “purge” means to clean completely. The aorist tense of urgency is used - do it now and do it effectively before the whole church is contaminated. The Jews cleared out all the old leaven before the Passover so that a completely fresh start may be made with the new year’s grain (Ex. 1-1:15; 13:6ff). Leaven in the Bible typifies the presence of evil in the Christian community or the church.

A NEW LUMP. The First Century Jews understood what he was saying. At Passover they not only purged out the old leaven, but started over with the new year’s grain. What the Scripture calls for here is a fresh start as a new community with the contamination removed.

UNLEAVENED. Christians are, positionally, unleavened - without impurities or evil - because they have been born again. They are now in the world, but not of the world. They are spiritual and not carnal. Paul appeals to these saints to make purity and godliness a reality in their every day life. Being “unleavened” is the normal and ideal state of all Christians.

What we must not read into this is a parallel between the taste of unleavened bread and the attitudes and actions of believers. We are not to be bland and tasteless! The metaphor is not to be stretched to mean that. It should mean today what it did to the First Century Jew - without impurities.

FOR OUR PASSOVER ALSO HATH BEEN SACRIFICED, EVEN CHRIST. Here we have a reference to the death of Christ on the cross as the Paschal Lamb (used in Mark 14:12; Luke-22:7). The figure was used by John the Baptist (John 1:29). “As the firstborn of the Israelites were saved from the stroke of the angel of death at the first Passover by the blood of a lamb (cf. Ex. 12:21-23), so salvation is now offered through the blood of Christ, who died at Passover as the Passover Lamb (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19)” [BSB]. Paul means that the Lamb was already slain on Calvary and yet you have not gotten rid of the leaven. They knew to purge out the old and start anew in Judaism, but they had not made that transition in their thinking toward the Cross.

5:8 - WHEREFORE LET US KEEP UP THE FEAST. He is referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Ex. 12:15-20; 13:1-10). He is saying, Let us keep on having the feast, a perpetual feast and keep the leaven out.

WITH THE LEAVEN OF MALICE AND WICKEDNESS. Paul exhorts the Corinthian saints, “Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” “Leaven of malice and wickedness” denotes a wicked disposition and evil deeds.

BUT WITH THE UNLEAVENED BREAD OF SINCERITY AND TRUTH. This is applied Christianity, or as James would say, being a doer of the Word, and not a hearer only.” Sincerity and truth are hallmarks of the life in Christ.

5:9 - I WROTE UNTO YOU IN MY EPISTLE. The reference is to a prior epistle Paul had written to the Corinthians, obviously a personal letter which was not inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore never intended to be a part of the New Testament Canon. It is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit inspired Scripture He could not preserve. Three phenomenal works of the Holy Spirit are associated with Scripture - inspiration, preservation, and illumination. He inspired the early writers to record God’s Word, He miraculously preserved it, and He illuminates the hearts of those in whom He dwells so that they might understand it.

TO HAVE NO COMPANY WITH FORNICATORS. “*I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people...*” It is important to understand what the Scripture says on this issue, for some will be quick to say, “Well, if you don’t associate with lost people, how can you reach them

for the Lord?" Christians are in daily contact with immoral, or otherwise ungodly people - it is absolutely unavoidable for most Christians. We must not, however associate with them in such a way as to imply that we condone the way they are living, and it just is important that we are not identified with their behavior. While it is impossible to avoid all contact with ungodly people, we must not compromise the Gospel we profess.

The church lives and ministers in a hostile world. To carry out the commission of Christ, the church must remain in the world showing the power of Christ by living by His standards. When church members reflect the practices of those who refuse to repent, we lose the power to proclaim the gospel. The local church must maintain moral discipline within its membership [DSB].

This message must be preached today. We must not in any way suggest or imply that we approve of impurity among Christian friends through social contact, business, and recreation. Another thing the believer must watch is his speech. Lewd humor, suggestive comments, and off-color jokes can easily call one's witness into question. We do not want to encourage the carnal saint, and we do not want to mislead lost people.

5:10 - IT NOT AT ALL MEAN. Paul adds a qualifier: *"I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world."* He puts a limitation on his prohibition and confines it to members of the church. He has no jurisdiction over outsiders. The church can take disciplinary action against one of its members, but no such action can be taken against lost persons.

THE COVETOUS. Old word for the overreachers, those with an insatiable desire for more. There is a reason that one of the Ten Commandments prohibits covetousness. It lies at the root of so many other sins. If you avoid covetousness you should be able to avoid other sins - from lying, to stealing, to adultery.

SWINDLERS. This is a general word for crooks. Swindlers may work in many different ways to steal, manipulate. Cheat, and devour others. The NIV has, "extortioners." The front page of the Monroe, LA daily newspaper on May 10, 2000 carried the story of the conviction of former governor Edwin Edwards on distortion charges. He had an opportunity to plea bargain in 1997 and serve one year in jail for extorting millions of dollars from the gambling industry. He refused, believing (as the paper stated) that no Louisiana jury would ever convict him. As governor he has swindled millions of dollars from these merchants of misery when they were trying to get a foot-hold in Louisiana.

IDOLATERS. Here again we find one of sins covered in the Ten Commandments. Specifically, the word denotes one who worships idols. An idolater is one who worships idols, or false gods through their representative idols. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5).

5:11 - BUT NOW I WRITE TO YOU. *“But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one.”* Robertson notes that this is an epistolary aorsit referring to this epistle and not to the earlier personal letter (verse 9).

NOT TO ASSOCIATE. You may not be able to avoid contact, but you can be sure that you do not associate with a person who professes to be a Christian, but refuses to abstain from evil. This is dealing with one who says that he is saved., but persists in living as “an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler...” You must withdraw from that person for God’s sake, for your sake, and for his. If he interprets your association as approval of his lifestyle he will be encouraged in his sin. If you withdraw in such a way as to let him know that Christians should not conduct themselves in that manner he may come under conviction and repent.

There is another problem. If the immoral person can get you to associate with him while he is living in sin, he may try to get you to participate in the sin. If you think misery loves company, just watch the backslider operate. The principle is stated from both the positive side and the negative side in Psalm 1:

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore ***the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*** For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish (emphasis added).

IF ANY MAN. Condition of the third class, a supposable case - he may, or he may not practice these sins. There will always be some who will conduct themselves in this manner. No church is free of individuals who fall into this category at some time or another, so these principle are applicable in every age and in every place.

WITH SUCH A ONE, NO, NOT TO EAT. They were not even to eat with them. This means that Christians are to disassociate themselves from drunkards and immoral people in the social arena in such away that we will not encourage such behavior, we will not be influenced by it, and we will not be identified with it. We must avoid such social functions that will identify us with the world. Christians must be very careful about where they eat, theaters they attend, movies they rent, magazines they read, places that serve alcoholic beverages, and Sunday recreation.

Suppose you know a person who professes to be a Christian who goes to a gambling facility. He wants you to go with him, even if you do not gamble. So you decide you will go and enjoy a good meal at a low price in the restaurant at he casino. As you enter or leave together, a neighbor sees you and knows that your friend goes there to gamble. What is he going to conclude about you? George

Temple, a deacon in an outstanding Baptist church in Meridian, Mississippi, was asked by a friend to go with him to a casino on an Indian reservation where he had a maintenance contract. He had run into some kind of dilemma and needed some advice on how to clean chandeliers without the residue falling onto the tables - which were in constant use. George said, "I'll go with you if you'll get me one of those badges like you are wearing that will identify me with your company." He was able to suggest something that solved the problem and as he started to leave friend who knew him from church spotted him. She exclaimed, "George, I didn't expect to see you here!" He pointed to the badge he was wearing and replied, "I am not here for the reason most people are. I came to help work out a problem."

I listened with interest as someone talked about relatives who owned a fleet of buses. The people are identified with Christian causes, including Gospel music. One of their enterprises involves taking bus loads of gamblers to various casinos throughout a number of states. It would seem to me that if this is to be a lucrative business, they must actively promote their work, which means actively recruiting people to go to these places to gamble. Can one justify himself by saying that he never gambles, he just drives the bus? If the Christian recruits people to sin, how far would he have to go before we would condemn his behavior? Suppose he recruits a bus load of people to go to a club where they will drink alcoholic beverages and be entertained in vulgar manner? What would we say if a member of our church recruited a bus load of people to go to Reno to a house of prostitution?

Some Christians may say, "I would never do what my friend is doing, but I will drive to the casino to have lunch with him. After all, no restaurant in the area can match their prices." Now go back and read Psalm 1 again and see if it has an application in a real life situation.

5:12 - WHAT HAVE I TO DO? For what is it to me to judge those without? Those intended here are those who are outside the church and not within Paul's jurisdiction. They are not covered by his apostolic authority. "Those outside the circle of saving faith are judged by God Himself. See note on Rev 20:11-15. The church needs to keep its own fellowship pure and to refrain from assuming God's role as Judge of the world. The command not to judge one another (Ro 14:10-12) is not to be construed so as to allow immorality and wickedness to remain within the church" [DSB].

5:13 - REMOVE THE WICKED MAN. *"But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES."* The quotation is from Deuteronomy 17:7. This is Scriptural authority for the expulsion of the persistent offender. When churches practiced expulsion there was some abuse. There were some busybodies who brought charges against others members out of sense of self-righteousness. Others did so in retaliation for some real, or imagined, slight or wrong. And there have always been what someone called church buzzards, they just love anything that smells. Some people were unforgiving. Whatever the reason, family members were often hurt by the action.

Now, churches tolerate almost anything and church discipline is about the only thing to experience expulsion today. With the large mega-churches today, few people may know how another member lives unless he makes the evening news. But according to Scripture, we are neither to associate with

evil people, nor are we to tolerate them in the church. If they do not repent, they must be expelled so that God may deal with them, so that Christians may deal with them, and so that the lost in the community do not judge the church by their standards.

God has delegated responsibility to the church to exercise discipline within the church; He will judge those who are outside the church. In the expulsion the method of discipline should conform to the approach described in Matthew 8:15-17. The ban should be the decree of the whole church together (v. 4). A study of the New Testament reveals a number of habitual, visible acts which clearly call for church discipline for those who are unrepentant. They are: (1) sexual immorality, (2) covetousness, (3) idolatry, (4) reviling, (5) drunkenness, (6) extortion (1 Cor. 5:11), (7) disorderliness/laziness (2 Thess. 3:6-12), (8) false teaching (1 Tim. 1:18-20), (9) divisiveness (Titus 3:10, 11).

B. The Problem of Litigation in Heathen Courts (6:1-8)

We have now come to that part of the epistle which has a very definite local background and application. The conditions at Corinth created some peculiar difficulties with which the apostle must now deal. This chapter had a specific Corinthian application. It also reveals the important and abiding truths for the church of God at all times.

6:1 - DOES ANY OF YOU. *“Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?”* The NKJV reads, “Dare any of you.” In other words, does any one of you dare do this? Dare? The very word is a challenge. Apparently Paul has an actual case in as in chapter 5.

One of the many causes for scandal concerning the Corinthian church was that one Christian was suing another in the pagan law courts. Paul takes up this topic in 6:1-11. The problem was not simply that the Christians should have been able to resolve their differences in a spirit of love, but that it was considered a disgrace for Christians to bring lawsuits before heathen courts. As with the Jews, who referred their disputes to Jewish arbitrators, Christians should have settled their own differences among themselves [NCWB].

BEFORE THE UNRIGHTEOUS. The Jews believed that to bring a lawsuit before a court of idolaters was blasphemy against the Law. The Greeks, on the other hand, were fond of lawsuits involving heated debates (disputes) with each other. Great orators were highly honored among them. The problem here was probably that Greek Christians were bringing cases before pagan judges, since the Jews tried to avoid Gentile courts. They were subjecting the righteous to the unrighteous. In chapter 5 we have the principle which should have been their guide - Christians dealing with issues in the church and leaving those outside the church to God. We might add that authority for the state to deal with crimes is ordained of God.

6:2 - OR DO YOU NOT KNOW. *“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?”* Here we find the first of six “do you not know” phrases in this chapter (cf. vv. 3, 9, 15-16, 19), this one concerning the role of saints in judging (cf. John 5:22; Rev. 3:21). From the repeated use of

the phrase it might be safe to infer that Paul had taught them concerning this matter when he was in Corinth on the Second Missionary Journey. He had spent eighteen months there in the process of founding the church and training believers.

JUDGE THE WORLD. In that great and terrible Day of the Lord the saints will judge the world (Matthew 19:29; Luke 22:30). Here Paul asks, “Are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?” How is it that if Christians are to sit in judgment on the world someday, these Corinthians believers did not consider themselves competent to set up a small tribunal to resolve such things as those to which Paul refers? This has an application today, even though there are many Christian lawyers and judges in America. When a Christian sues another Christian in our judicial system, there still may be any number of lost people who will be involved in the case, either as participants, or spectators, and many others who will follow it through the newspapers and the electronic media. The cause of Christ can be hindered by such suits.

There are many Christians involved in the judicial system in America. At times Christians are forced to go to court to defend themselves or to give their testimony. If summoned the believer should go and perform his duty. However, the believer must be very careful in instigating a lawsuit that wreaks more of covetousness than a desire for justice. He should also avoid suits designed to that would hurt, deprive, or embarrass others.

6:3 - WE SHALL JUDGE ANGELS. This will probably come as a surprise to the first time reader, and even the mature Christians may be puzzled by the statement. The NCWB makes the point that “Though it is often speculated that fallen angels are referred to here, Paul did not identify the group. He simply indicated that a person who is destined to rule over angels should be able to cope with the disputes of this life” [NCWB].

HOW MUCH MORE MATTERS OF THIS LIFE? “How much” here demands a negative answer, it “need I so much as say?” Today one might say, “Do I really have to say this?”, or “Need I say more?” The question demands the answer, “No.” Even today, how well qualified is the average court to really understand “this life?” The average judge might understand the drives, motives, and habits of the lost person or the carnal believers, but if he is not a spiritual believer, how can he possibly understand the deeper things of this life?

6:4 - LAW COURTS. “*So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?*” The “law courts” denotes civil courts, in this case a pagan court in a totally pagan culture. “This life” is the Christian life. The wisdom of this world is at enmity with God and with “this life.” While this has an application any where, at any time, we must remember the context in which we find this. The church at Corinth was God’s instrument of evangelism in this pagan city. A civil law suit, especially a frivolous suit would compromise their witness to the heathen people of the city.

JUDGES WHO ARE OF NO ACCOUNT IN THE CHURCH. This is a very interesting! All commentaries do not agree as to whom Paul is referring. For example, the NCWB has, “Even the

least esteemed among the Christians should be capable of judging disputes concerning such secondary concerns as property rights and the like” [NCWB]. The Bible Knowledge Commentary has:

The form of the Greek word (*kathizete*, **appoint**) may be a statement (indicative) or a command (imper.). The NIV has taken it as a command, making the difficult phrase **men of little account** refer to those in the church not too highly esteemed for their “wisdom”; but Paul considered them more than adequate for the task.

“Appoint” may be indicative, which seems more likely in view of verse 5. If so, the participle translated “men of little account” would be better rendered “men who have no standing” **in the church**, that is, non-Christians. The sad refrain of verse 1 to which Paul would refer yet a third time in verse 6 was thus heard again [BKC].

It is possible that Paul meant that were going to court before pagan judges who had no standing (esteem) in the church. If he means the least esteemed members, then his language is very harsh. But of course, it wouldn't be the first time.

6:5 - ONE WISE MAN. *“I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren.”* Paul employs a little sarcasm in making his point. The solution to church problems should be settled within the church. They deserved to be shamed. That was especially true of problems involving members of a church in a pagan city like Corinth. We must be careful in modern America, but churches around the world in lands dominated by Hindu, Islamic, or other pagan cultures must be especially careful to avoid hindering the ministry of the church by telling the pagan world that Christians can no better settle conflicts in the church than pagans can in the world.

TO DECIDE BETWEEN HIS BRETHREN. The use of “brethren” (*adelphos*) reflects sharply on them for their going to heathen judges to settle disputes between brothers in Christ. Paul directs his rebuke at two aspects of the Corinthians’ behavior. First there is their conceited sense of spirituality, and then there is their pride in their wisdom (see 5:2). The question is, “Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you?”

—The Jews called each rabbi in the Jewish councils a “wise man.” The Christians demeaned themselves before both Jew and Gentile because they took their quarrels to the heathen courts to be settled, and did not consider that any Christian was as capable as one of the Jewish arbitrators. This shows what their “wisdom” really amounted to [NCWB].

6:6 - BROTHER GOES TO LAW WITH BROTHER. This is bad for all concerned. It flies in the face of Christian brotherhood. It flies in the face of a loving God. It flies in the face of all the other principles governing Christian fellowship before the situation reaches a court of law. It violates the Golden Rule, the Second Great Commandment (the royal law, James 2:8) and the very spirit of the last six of the Ten Commandments. This cannot be pleasing to God.

AND THAT BEFORE UNBELIEVERS? Paul is incredulous. That there should be disputes is bad; that Christians should go to a court of law with Christians is worse; that Christians should do this before unbelievers is worst of all. There is little wonder that some lost people in the legal community are cynical toward Christianity.

6:7 - ALREADY A DEFEAT FOR YOU. *“Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?”* Paul stresses that which should have been obvious to them. Already (from the beginning of the conflict) - before any question of heathen involvement - “it is already a defeat for you.” You have lost something when there are lawsuits between Christians, especially before the unsaved. There is already a failure of love and forgiveness (Col. 3:13).

WHY NOT RATHER BE WRONGED? It is better to suffer a loss or to suffer a wrong than to suffer defeat in the matter of love and forgiveness of a brother. Human pride does not glorify God. There are many examples of Christians who have suffered a loss rather than to demand their rights in every situation. There are also many examples of believers who will bring shame to the Kingdom of God before they will “lose face” or suffer a loss.

The “I don’t believing forgiving, I believe in getting even” philosophy stands in marked contrast to the Scripture. There will be times when the lost person may well take advantage of the Christian and the Christian’s only recourse that will preserve his testimony is to suffer a loss. Sometimes the loss that really hurts fallen humanity is not the loss of money, but a perceived loss of esteem or popularity.

Most Christian boys have had to learn to deal with lost students who would entertain their friends at the expense of the believer, while reminded him that as a Christian he is supposed to turn the other cheek. He has to learn to deal with that. I attended a Forestry Week at Leroy Percy State park in Mississippi. After we checked in and went to orientation we were served an evening meal and then sent to the barracks. I was a Junior in high school. There were two rows of bunks with a wide aisle between them running the length of the building. My cot was near the door and as I pulled out my sheets to get my bunk ready I observed a commotion about half way down the building. Several of the older boys were mocking a small thin boy because he had brought his Bible to camp. There was no adult in the building at the time so there was no one to stop the harassment. I waited a few minutes and they stopped picking at this boy and moved on to other things, so I did not intervene. However, after about thirty minutes I walked down and introduced myself to the boy and ask, “May I borrow your Bible for a few minutes?” I received a few surprised looks but no one said anything to me. Furthermore, they did not say anything else to the younger boy the rest of the week. I had to be willing to suffer the same type harassment if they had chose to transfer it to me. Fortunately, they did not. For one thing, they might have called him a sissy, but there is no way they would have considered me a sissy. I was a farm boy and look it.

WHY NOT RATHER BE DEFRAUDED? Allow yourself to be deprived (robbed) rather than go before pagan courts against brethren. Today, each believer will have to prayerfully seek an

application of this. There may be a time when one would have to go to court to get a restraining order to protect a brother. If one is summoned to appear in court, he must go but this still has an application and it is up to the individual believer to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in finding that application.

6:8 - YOU YOURSELVES WRONG AND DEFRAUD. Illustrating the contradiction between Christian principles and their practice, Paul says “*On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.*” Rather than being willing to be defrauded, vs. 7), you yourselves wrong and defraud. *You do this even to your brethren.*” Rather than being willing to be wronged and robbed - you do the wronging and the robbing - and if that were not bad enough, you do that against “your brethren.” The very depth of wrong-doing is to stoop to do this against one's brother in Christ. It is far better to be wronged than to wrong another, especially another Christian. It would be bad enough to commit this offense against pagans, but they did it against fellow believers. There is no way we can pray the Model Prayer (The Lord's Prayer) with this attitude, because it begins with the words, “Our Father.” We have a special relationship in the Father.

Because their greed dishonored God, Paul concluded that the important issue was lost before the case had begun. He therefore said that mundane loss was preferable to the spiritual loss which the **lawsuits** produced. As it was, the Corinthian lawsuits seemed not to have been so much a matter of redressing wrong or seeing justice served as a means for personal gratification at the expense of fellow believers. This was “body life” at its worst! [BKC].

After my mother had surgery to remove a brain tumor, others had to run her store until she finally had to close it. We were amazed to discover some of the things she had been doing for a lot of different people. We were also amazed at the response of different people. Some came in immediately and paid their bill, saying, “I'm sure you are going to need this now.” There were a few, however, who took her illness as an excuse to simply forget their debt. Mother did not want anyone to send them a bill, so very few bills were mailed. To some, it seemed that if she was not going to be there to extend credit when they were a little short of money, they would not pay what they already owed her.

I found their attitude rather incredible - let's face it, I was offended for my mother. She, however, never complained and did not want any action taken against them, and none was. When I looked at the books and saw what she had been doing for others I was overwhelmed. She was making a car payment for a lady so she could visit her mother in a nursing home. She gave someone work to help her qualify for social Security. She was the Treasurer of her church and when the bank called to teller they had a check someone had given to the church returned for insufficient funds, she went next door to the bank and gave them the money and picked up the check and destroyed it so no one would be embarrassed. This was the kind of person who was being defrauded and abandoned by some who were supposed to be friends. I commented to my wife, “It bothers me to think someone would treat my mother like that, but it would bother me a lot more if I thought my mother had done that to them.”

Mother died eight years later - the last few years were really bad ones. Twelve years after her death I preached a revival in my hometown and was overwhelmed by comments people were still making about my mother's character and her faith. She was one of those rare believers who seemed to define the very word "Christian."

C. Warning Against Moral Laxity (6:9-20)

6:9 - THE UNRIGHTEOUS. *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals..."* This message was needed in pagan first century Corinth, but it is needed as much in this post-Christian era in America, with post-modern values and situation ethics. This message is timeless

Paul's third reminder (**Do you not know...** cf. vv. 2-3) was probably meant to complement the thought of verse 4, but it also illustrated the gap which existed between the Corinthians' future position and their present practice. **The wicked** would have no share in God's future **kingdom** because they were not related to Christ, the Heir (cf. Mark 12:7). The wicked would one day be judged by the saints (1 Cor. 6:2) on the basis of their works (Rev. 20:13) which would condemn them. Yet the saints were acting no differently [BKC].

THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The Kingdom of God is not "pie in the sky bye and bye" as Lenin and other Marxists claimed. The Kingdom of God is made up of all those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord - and be sure of this one thing, He never offers to be anyone's Savior without being that person's Lord. The Kingdom of God is made up of all those in whom the will of God is done here and now as it is in Heaven.

DO NOT BE DECEIVED. Do not be deceived by plausible talk to cover up sin as mere animal behaviorism. Do not buy the argument that the homosexual was "born that way," or, that sex is natural and what two consenting adults do is none of anyone else's business. Paul has two lists in verses 9-10, one with the repetition of "neither" and the other with "nor." The unrighteous may deceive themselves and they may deceive many of their friends and neighbors, but they will never deceive God. There is a similar warning in Galatians 6:7-8:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

NEITHER FORNICATORS. *"Neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate (the passive homosexual), homosexuals...will inherit the kingdom of God" (9b).* The word translated

“effeminate” is the rendered male prostitutes in the NIV (sodomites”in 1 Tim. 1:10). Both words - “effeminate, nor homosexuals” - are expressions that refer to homosexuals,

the first to those who allow themselves to be used unnaturally and the second to active homosexuals. Paul's warning is given against the background of incest, homosexuality, pederasty, and other unnatural sexual vices that were prevalent among the Greeks and Romans. Socrates and 14 of the first 15 Roman emperors practiced homosexuality. Paul did not want Christianity confused with sects that permitted such things [RSB].

It was said of Julius Caesar that he was every man's woman and every woman's man. Roman generals, we are told, kept young boys in their tents. This is shocking, but it is also shocking when you see the highest elected officials in America actively “courting” homosexuals for their political support. It is even more disturbing when a pastor of other church leader speaks in favor of homosexuality on the grounds that “they were born that way” and cannot help themselves. Anyone who opposes homosexuality is homophobic. Well, I guess you can call me homophobic, but not to worry - I was born that way and I cannot help myself!

Gross immorality prevailed in the ancient world, but, in light of the fact that this was once a Christian nation, how could their behavior have been much more shocking than that the licentiousness and wantonness “sixties” generation thrust upon the American scene? Every form of promiscuity has been paraded before the American people via the entertainment industry, and affirmed by many in higher education and politics. Suddenly right became wrong and wrong became right. Shocking behavior was discovered in places no one would have expected to find it a generation earlier - everything from the “make love, not war” people to the “free love” groups, to the organization that advocates sexual relationships between men and boys.

This very day I heard that the gay pride flag is flying over the city hall in San Francisco. President Bill Clinton has proclaimed a “gay and lesbian pride month,” Vice President Al Gore and his wife host homosexual groups, and the comedians and talk-show hosts tell us it is nobody's business what consenting adults do as long as they do not hurt anyone else. President Clinton narrowly escaped being forced out of office by Congress and masses philosophized, “It's only about sex.” Of course the congressional hearings were not just about sex, they were about lying under oath in an effort to obstruct justice. Amazingly, millions of Americans do not mind what the leader of the free world has done “as long as the economy is good.” Interestingly, the economy had been good when God sent Amos to warn ancient Israel of the impending judgment they were facing if they did not repent.

Many of the same people who approved Clinton's lecherous behavior were livid when they heard that Congress was considering a bill to place a copy of the Ten Commandments on display in public school classrooms. To illustrate the anti-Christian bias in America, Rush Limbaugh has proposed rewording the Ten Commandments in such a way as to sound less religious to see how those same people would react to them. For example, one commandment, instead of reading, “Thou shalt not kill,” would read, “You must not kill another person in this school.”

A congresswoman is under attack at this time for proposing a bill that would make adultery illegal. The fact that many states already have laws against adultery. They are just not being enforced.

6:10 - NOR THIEVES. Paul continues, “*nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.*” The commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” covers a multitude of offenses, from simple misdemeanors to serious crimes. There are forms of thievery, all of which are sinful. The burglar, the robber, the embezzler, the forger, and all thieves will stand before an omniscient, omnipotent, and holy Judge. The consequences are going to be serious.

COVETOUS. The commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” covers a multitude of sins, because it is the source of so many other sins. When a covetous person acts on his covetousness, he is guilty of other sins (stealing, adultery, et. al.). No one is exempt from the temptation to covet, yet we hear very little about it compared to the attention given to the sins associated with it. This is understandable when you realize that the FBI cannot release statistics on covetousness like it does on burglaries, robberies, and muggings. Yet, behind every one of these crimes is the sin of covetousness.

DRUNKARDS. Alcohol abuse is, and always has been a serious problem in most places in the world, and America is no exception. I once sat in the hospital at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, visiting with Kenny Wagner, the most notorious criminal in the history of that state - and possibly the most colorful as well. Kenny Wagner had killed a number of people, in the past, but he had gained the trust of officials and had been given the job of training bloodhounds and using them to capture escapees. He was arguably without peer in this field - until he betrayed their trust and escaped himself. Some twenty years later, facing serious health problems, he turned himself in and was hospitalized with the condition (I think it was his heart) that would kill him eight days after our visit.

I told Kenny Wagner that I had recently read that alcohol was a factor in 94.6 per cent of the cases in which a person was convicted of a crime and sent to prison. I asked, “Do you believe it is that high?” He said, “It’s higher than that. It is involved in almost every case.” Today we would have to include other drugs, but alcohol is still a very serious problem. We are warned in the Scriptures:

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise (Pro. 20:1).

Those who linger long over wine, Those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it goes down smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent And stings like a viper (Pro. 23:30-33).

Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink, Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them! (Is. 5:11).

To be sure, drunkenness, while a serious sin, is not the only sin that will keep one out of the Kingdom

of God . “Being a drunkard or alcoholic is not the unforgivable sin. It does involve sin of which one must repent to be part of God's kingdom just as we must repent of all other sin. Sinful habits are not part of the Christian life” [DSB].

During my Junior and Senior years at Mississippi College I led a BSU (Baptist Student Union) group on a mission trip to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson each Thursday afternoon. Part of that time I was also going to the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman early each Sunday morning before going preaching at the Dockery Baptist Church, Cleveland, MS where I was a student pastor. I visited various camps and on a few occasions I found poems printed in large print on the wall where each prisoner would see it every day. One such poem I copied was entitled “The Bar.” The author was listed as unknown.

THE BAR

The name of each saloon is bar,
The fittest of its names by far.
A bar to Heaven, a door to hell;
Whoever named it, named it well.
A bar to manliness and wealth,
A door to want and broken health.
A bar to honor, pride, and fame,
A door to grief, sin, and shame.
A bar to hopes, a bar to prayers,
A door to darkness and despair.
A bar to honored, useful life,
A door to brawling, senseless strife.
A bar to all that's true and brave,
A door to every drunkard's grave.
A bar to joy that home imparts,
A door to tears and aching hearts.
A bar to Heaven, a door to hell,
Whoever named it named it well.

While looking for the above poem I came across the following piece entitled, “Is Drinking a Disease?” Modern social sciences would probably have a field day with it, but it is worth considering.

IS DRINKING A DISEASE?

If alcoholism is a disease:

1. It is the only disease that is contracted by an act of the will.
2. It is the only disease that requires a license to propagate it.

3. It is the only disease that is bottled and sold.
4. It is the only disease that requires outlets to spread it.
5. It is the only disease that produces revenue for the government.
6. It is the only disease that provokes crime.
7. It is the only disease that is habit forming.
8. It is the only disease that is spread by advertising.
9. It is the only disease without a germ or virus cause, and for which there is not human corrective medicine.

(From The Bible Illustrator)

Again, I found no author listed, and there was no date. However, it was obviously written before drug and gambling addiction became a major problem in America. Oh, what a price Americans are paying for letting our country slip into the post-Christian period in our history!

REVILERS. The Greek word is *loidoros*, probably from *loidos* (mischief). It denotes one who is abusive, a railer, reviler.

SWINDLERS. A swindler is an extortionist. This sin involves covetousness, lying, and thievery, thus violating three of the Ten Commandments. Those whose lifestyles exhibit this sin (and others mentioned here), rather than the fruit of the spirit, show they are unsaved and will, therefore, not inherit the kingdom of God.

6:11 - SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU. Paul continues in the same vein, “*Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*” The phrase, “and such were some of you” is literally, “and these things were ye (some of you).” Some were recent converts from paganism. Many were guilty of many of the most degrading of these sins (9-10).

BUT YOU WERE WASHED. This points to their own voluntary act in baptism which was the outward expression of the previous act of God in cleansing the heart. They were justified and sanctified before the act of baptism - at least the sanctification process had begun. These twin concepts of the Christian faith in its beginning appear commonly in the reverse order. The outward expression is often mentioned before the inward change which precedes it. Here the Trinity appear as in the baptismal command in Matthew 28:19.

The Greek middle voice expresses, “You have had yourselves washed,” referring to the act of baptism (see Acts 22:16) as well as perhaps to the washing of regeneration (Tit. 3:5). **ye are sanctified**—set apart to God, made holy (see 1 Pet. 1:2). **ye are justified**—made right with God by faith in Christ (see Rom. 1:17). **in the name of the Lord Jesus** [add “Christ” according to the best manuscripts], **and by the Spirit**—rather, “in the Spirit,” i.e., by his indwelling. Both phrases belong to the three actions—“washed, sanctified, and justified” [NCWB].

6:12 - ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME. Here we find one of the great claims which characterizes the Pauline ethic and philosophy: “*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are*

profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.” He may have been quoting a slogan some of the members of the church were using to justify their sins. It has been suggested that some of the Jews, freed from legalism with its petty rules and regulations, may have interpreted their freedom as a license to sin. If that sounds far-fetched all you have to do is listen to some Baptists and Presbyterians who hide behind the doctrine of Security of Believers - “I believe in once saved, always saved, so I can do anything I want to and I will still be saved.” The fail to recognize the fact that when you are saved one of the things that gets converted is your “want to.”

LAWFUL. Possibly Paul had used this proverb when he was in Corinth (it is repeated in 10:23), but not in the sense now used by his antagonists. Obviously, the “all things” do not include such things as those condemned in 6:1-11. He obviously limits this to things not immoral. He is dealing with life-style and personal habits, but even here liberty should not be confused with license. “Many things, harmless in themselves in the abstract, do harm others in the concrete”[ATR]. We live in a world of social relations that often override personal rights- and liberties.

I WILL NOT BE MASTERED. What a healthy attitude! To paraphrase it, he says, “But I will not be brought under the power of anything.” Paul is determined not to be a slave to anything - even if it is harmless. Video games today demand an application of this principle for some people, as do certain reading material, television, dress, language, and places people frequent.

In my youth and through my young adult years my primary hobbies were hunting and fishing. I loved athletic competition, and still do. I see hunting and fishing, baseball and football, and various other sports as healthy and wholesome. But I discovered that I loved them so much that I had to guard my time and my thoughts to keep from letting them become too important to me. I never missed a worship service for them, but I did let them invade my thoughts when there were more important things which should have occupied my time, energy, and thoughts. Good things can master us - even going to Grandma’s house! Many families put family reunions and regular visits to various family members ahead of worship and service to the Lord. That is sin.

6:13 - FOOD IS FOR THE STOMACH. Here Paul uses another proverb about food which had apparently been used by in Corinth to justify sexual license: “*Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.*” These Gentiles mixed matters not alike, like comparing apples and oranges. This is an example of worldly thinking left to run its course without restraint. We have traces of moral confusion in the circumstances in the letter James wrote expressing the opinions of the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:23-29). Things that seem wholly different are combined, as we see from the directions about meats to be avoided and a toleration of fornication. Some of the people were apparently saying that just as food and the stomach necessarily go together, so the body and sexual indulgence go together. Paul refutes this idea in no uncertain terms - your body is not your own; it should always glorify the Lord. This also answers the pro-abortionists who argue, “It’s the woman’s body and no one can tell her what to do with her body.” God created the body and we are going to answer to Him for what we do with it.

“Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food,” may have been a slogan adopted by some of the Corinthians to justify their immorality, but it was a destructive attitude. They reasoned that “food” was both pleasurable and necessary. When their stomachs signaled hunger, food was taken to satisfy them.

So too, they argued, sex was pleasurable and necessary. When their bodies signaled sexual desire, they needed to be satisfied. But Paul drew a sharp line between the stomach and the **body**. The body (*soōma*) in this context (cf. 2 Cor. 12:3) meant more than the physical frame; it referred to the whole person, composed of flesh (the material) and spirit (the immaterial; cf. 2 Cor. 2:13 with 7:5). The “body,” therefore, was not perishable but eternal (1 Cor. 6:14), and it was **not meant for sexual immorality** (*porneia*) but for union with the Lord (vv. 15-17), which is reciprocal (cf. Eph. 1:23) [BKC].

THE BODY IS NOT FOR IMMORALITY. Paul’s responds to their wrong and destructive attitude: *“but the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body...”* Immorality has always been a serious social problem, and it is understandable that it would be in a pagan society. But the great tragedy of this age is what has happened since America entered the post-Christian era in its history.

A graph will show a sharp increase in immorality among teens, beginning in 1962-1963 when the U. S. Supreme Court took prayer and Bible reading out of public schools. The horizontal line on a graph produced by David Barton of WallBuilders (video tape, *America’s Godly Heritage*) runs almost straight, with slight variations from years to year until 1963, when then escalates at an alarming angle. It has been high ever since. Pregnancies in the pre-teen and early teen years jumped 533 percent [DAVID BARTON].

Is there a connection between immorality and prayer and Bible reading in public schools? There is an undeniable correlation but those who want Christianity out of the public arena would certainly argue against any conclusion that prayer and Bible reading were major factors. If, however, we see the correlation we must recognize the fact that these statistics would affirm the truth of this verse.

6:14 - GOD...WILL ALSO RAISE US. *“Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.”* The bodies of the saints are destined for a resurrection and the resurrection of the body gives added weight to the argument that the body should not be used for immorality. The point here is that the power of God which raised Jesus from the dead is the same power which will raise us from the dead in the resurrection - the same God, the same power. The resurrection of Jesus the assurance of our resurrection. *“This same power of God operates in us in conversion, or the new birth. This is why the gospel is more than a philosophy: it brings the power of God into the life of the believer”* [DSB].

6:15 - MEMBERS OF CHRIST. Continuing along the same line, he says, *“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make*

them members of a prostitute? May it never be!” The Stoics held the body to be common with animals and only the reason like the gods. The teaching of evolution has contributed immeasurably to the licentious views of animalistic sex indulgence, though the best teachers of biology show that in the higher animals monogamy is more the rule. Paul reasons here that the believer’s body is a part of the body of Christ, in vital union with Him. How then, he asks, can the believer involve his Savior in a sin He loathes? The answer is simple. The true believer - the spiritual believer cannot. Only a carnal believer would entertain such a thought, and the carnal believer needs to repent. If, as we have seen, you are the temple of God, and if His Spirit dwells in you, how could you commit fornication, take drugs, drink alcoholic beverages, go to dances, smoke cigarettes, or abuse your body (a temple of God). The same principle applies to gluttony or by doing anything else that threatens the destruction of the body? There is a difference between taking something into you body which is addictive (alcohol and drugs) and things that are necessary (food and water), but a bad diet can have a devastating effect on the body/

How can a child of God drag the temple of God through a sewer? The very thought compromises the Holy Spirit. The Christian should be very careful where he takes “a temple of God.” I am amazed at all the professed believers who go to gambling boats and cassinos to eat because they have good food and “it’s cheap.” If we profess to be in the heart of the Kingdom of God, why do we want to hang out on the borderline. Why would we risk being identified with those on the other side?

SHALL I THEN TAKE AWAY. The original means to lift up, carry away, or to snatch, carry off like Latin *rapio* (rape). The picture is a strong one. It portrays one snatching a limb from a body and carrying it away. “The horror of deliberately taking members of the body of Christ and making them members of a harlot in an actual union staggers Paul and should stagger us” [ATR].

MAY IT NEVER BE! The KJV has, “God forbid,” but the word “God” is not there. The KJV translators obviously assumed God to be the Subject.

6:16 - OR DO YOU NOT KNOW. Apparently, they should have known - possibly Paul had taught them this himself. “*Do you not know,*” he asks, “*that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH”* (caps in NAS). All believers should know this, whether lost people do or not. Adultery creates a union in which the two “become one flesh.” This is not conjecture, Paul is not hypothesizing. In a sexual union two become one flesh. Therefore, “the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her.” For further study, see Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5f.

People may differ over whether or not a man is disqualified to be a deacon because he has been divorced, but never stop to consider that a man who is currently married to his first wife may have actually become “one flesh” with any number of people before he was ever married. In which case, a moral divorced man who has remarried may be rejected while a man known for gross immorality may be accepted because “he has been forgiven.” In the latter case, the church should, at the very least, observe this person for a considerable time before ordaining him as a deacon.

6:17 - THE ONE WHO JOINS HIMSELF TO THE LORD. *“But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”* This points to the inner spiritual union with the Lord Jesus Christ, a fact stressed throughout the New Testament. Jesus Himself made the point in His High Priestly prayer (John 17).

6:18 - FLEE IMMORALITY. *“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”* The believer, rather than flaunting immorality as some of the Greeks did, should flee every form of immorality. Actually, what the Scripture says here is that the Christian should make it a habit to flee immorality habitually, continually flee immorality. There is a time to fight and a time for flight. Flight is, if not the only safeguard against this temptation, often the best safeguard (cf. Gen. 39:12; Job 31:1-4, 9-12). Debating the definition of sex and differentiating between various forms of sexual activity flies in the face of this command. The saint should flee all forms of immorality, just as Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:12).

OUTSIDE THE BODY. Paul continues, **“Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”** Even gluttony and drunkenness and the use of drugs are sins wrought on the body, not “within the body” in the same sense as fornication. Robertson says, “Perhaps the dominant idea of Paul is that fornication, as already shown, breaks the mystic band between the body and Christ, and hence the fornicator sins against his own body in a sense not true of other dreadful sins” [ATR]. The fornicator takes his body which belongs to Christ and unites it with a harlot. Fornication may cause one’s own body to contract a horrible disease (gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, AIDS), but the sin “against the body” has implications far beyond that.. Sexual immorality has a marked effect upon the body. “The sole purpose of this sin is the gratification of lust; and, therefore, it is probably the most selfish of all sins. The internal spiritual sensitivities are wrecked by this sin” [BSB].

6:19 - YOUR BODY IS A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. In chapter three we saw that the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Here Paul has in mind the individual believer when he says, *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”* Ryrie rightly observes that there is a “sharp contrast to the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth where the priestesses were prostitutes” [RSB].

The Holy Spirit lives in holy people. God gave the Spirit to Christians, and He lives in each member of the church as in a temple. See note on 3:16 for the whole church as God's temple. The Christian as a temple indwelt by the Spirit must not do anything that would be unthinkable in public worship. It is unspeakably wrong for a Christian to commit sexual immorality (vv -12-18).

We were slaves to sin, but God bought us with the death of His Son on the cross (1 Ti 2:6; Tit 2:14). Thus, we belong to God and should serve Him.

The Christian should honor and care for his body as the very sanctuary of God. We no

longer belong to ourselves, but to God, who purchased us as a prized possession through the gracious giving of His Son [DSB].

In 3:17 Paul used a plural expression (“which temple ye are”) to make the point that all Christians together make up the temple of God. Here the singular is used to show that the individual Christian’s body is in microcosm the temple of God as well as being a part of the collective “body of Christ.” The word here translated “temple” is the Greek word *naos*, which represents the most sacred portion of the Jewish temple enclosure, i.e., the sanctuary [NCWB].

WHO IS IN YOU. In the Jewish Tabernacle the Shekinah glory served as a visible reminder of God’s presence among his people. Each Christian now has God’s Spirit living in him individually and the Holy Spirit will manifest His presence in that person’s life if He is permitted to fill that person’s life.

6:20 - YOU HAVE BEEN BOUGHT WITH A PRICE. Since, as the Bible teaches, “*you have been bought with a price,*” you are not your own, “*therefore glorify God in your body.*” The price with which you were bought was that paid by Jesus Christ paid on Calvary’s cross. There he poured out His life’s blood for you and me. Your salvation is free, but it is not cheap. It cost God the most precious thing He had - His Son. If you are a Christian, “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.” Our spirit dwells in our body and the Holy Spirit dwells in our heart (spirit). This means that God lives in you. The question is, is He comfortable there, or do your actions cause Him some problems?

The body of the Christian disciple is the temple of God--the dwelling place of God. God bought and paid for you on the cross. You belong to God. You, the disciple, must serve the God who purchased and indwells you. You have a heavy responsibility to keep your body as the temple of God, fit for His dwelling” [BSB].

GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY. How do we glorify God in our bodies? If asked for examples, there might be as many answers as there were respondents. But whatever anyone might say, there is one thing we can be sure of - it means that we must show God’s character in our bodies. A. T. Robertson saw in these words a “Passionate conclusion to his powerful argument against sexual uncleanness” [ATR].

IV. DIVISION ABOUT MARRIAGE (7:1 -40)

A. Marriage and Celibacy (7:1-9)

Morgan notes that this chapter concludes the corrective section of this letter. He has dealt with the carnalities in the church at Corinth and divisions in the church reported to him by the household of Chloe. He has dealt with a case of serious moral dereliction. Not only was one of the members living in incest, the church was tolerating it and that toleration was hurting the church. Now Paul begins to

answer the letter they had written to him. He devoted six chapters to other matters before dealing with those they asked about in their letter. The transition from chapter 6 to 7 illustrates the necessity of Paul's waging a campaign on two fronts. In chapter 6, he dealt with the libertines. In chapter 7 he deals with ascetics. Morgan outlines chapters 7 - II:

1. Marriages - chapter 7.
2. Things sacrificed to idols - 8:1 - 11:1
3. Women - 1:2-16
4. Lord's Supper - 11:17-34
5. In 11:34, Paul states that he will deal with the rest when he arrived personally.
6. Spiritualities - 12:1

7:1 - NOW CONCERNING THE THINGS WHEREOF YE WROTE. The church had written him a letter in which a number of specific problems about marriage were raised. One must understand the question (which is not recorded) in order to understand the reply. The first question is whether celibacy is wrong. Paul answered pointedly, "No, it is not wrong, but good." One can get a one-sided view of Paul's teachings on marriage unless he maintains a proper perspective. Remember that Paul uses marriage as a metaphor of our relationship to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; 7:4 Ephesians 5:28-33). He is not opposing marriage, he is simply saying that celibacy is good in certain cases.

IT IS GOOD FOR A MAN NOT TO TOUCH A WOMAN. At the beginning of this discussion, we need to have a clear understanding as to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through his human instrument, Saul of Tarsus. Without a doubt, this brilliant, dedicated, courageous - however maligned and persecuted - was the greatest theologian in the history of Christianity. I have both read and heard people say they thought Carl F. H. Henry was the greatest theologian of the Twentieth Century. Others say that Francis Shaeffer was the greatest Christian philosopher of the century - either statement would draw a strong reaction from those on the opposite side of the theological aisle. But how could anyone seriously challenge the statement that Paul was the greatest theologian of all time?

That, however, is not the primary issue here. While the epistle before us is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit, this missionary had a unique relationship with the church at Corinth. He was their founder, their mentor, their minister and spiritual father. Furthermore, they had asked him in a letter the question that prompted this response. So, it helps to remember as we read this that Paul is not writing a treatise on marriage in this chapter, but answering their questions. We have only Paul's side of the correspondence - he does not repeat the question, but as we read the chapter we can ascertain the question.

The Corinthians, or some of them, seem to have indicated to Paul that, in view of all the trouble to which sex leads, the best course is total abstinence: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Paul's answer is that this does not sufficiently take into serious consideration the strength of the natural desires. Alternatively, if v. 1 gives Paul's own words, we must not infer that Paul believed it wrong for a man "to touch a

woman." Each has his own gift (v. 7), and whether one possesses the gift of celibacy or that of marriage, the gift should be viewed as a blessing [BSB].

It is clear that Paul favored celibacy (vv. 1, 7, 8, 9, 27, 38), though he approved marriage (vv. 2, 27, 28). For more complete NT teaching concerning marriage, see John 2:1-11; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Tim. 5:14; Heb. 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7. it is good . . . Probably a position taken by some at Corinth. Paul grants its validity but states that marriage is better for those who might be overcome by the practices of the evil society in which they live (v. 2) [RSB].

Bear in mind here that Paul is providing guidelines both for the unmarried person who is considering a life of celibacy over marriage, and the married person who might decide that celibacy within marriage is more spiritual (7:2ff). There may have been some married persons in the Corinthian church who were advocating celibacy within marriage as more pleasing to God. Possibly, some believed that sex, even within marriage, was only for procreation. Paul addresses that in the next verse.

7:2 - BUT BECAUSE OF IMMORALITIES. *“But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.”* Because of the temptation to commit sexual immorality, Paul writes that each couple should have a monogamous relationship. This is not the only reason for marriage, but it is a very real one, especially in a place like Corinth. A much higher reason for marriage is love - and children. The family is the basis of all civilization, the first and primary institution.

Husband and wife share mutual responsibility for the sexual fulfillment of the marriage partner. Christians cannot claim private possession of their own bodies since in the one-flesh relationship husband and wife belong to each other. This is a distinct advance over the older concept of the wife as property rather than partner or the wife as only satisfying the husband's needs. Sexual needs are part of human nature created by God. The marriage relationship is the only relationship in which sexual needs can be truly satisfied [DSB].

7:3 - FULFILL HIS DUTY. Continuing the answer, Paul writes, *“The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.”* Sexual fulfillment within marriage is not simply not wrong, but for many it is a duty! Both husbands and wives have a mutual obligation to the other. Clearly, however, sexual fulfillment is restricted to one's "own" spouse. This pronouncement defends sex within marriage against legalists and fanatics, just as that of verse one commends celibacy against sensualists.

7:4 - THE HUSBAND MUST. Paul is inspired to write, in answer to their questions, *“The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.”* Remember that these saints live in a city where temple prostitutes plied their trade in their temple for the benefit of their religion, to satisfy the lusts of pagans, to stimulate their gods, and no doubt for the profit of their

leaders. Possibly some of the women in this church had served as a prostitute in the pagan temple and were reminded of the gross evil of this practice every time they looked up to the temple mount which overlooked the city.

The husband has a duty to the wife and the wife to the husband. It does not matter which is mentioned first, the equality of the sexes in marriage is clearly presented as the way to keep the marriage undefiled (Hebrews 13:4). In wedlock separate ownership of one's body ceases. This, however, denotes a voluntary relationship. No one can justify the use of force within marriage on the basis of what Paul is saying in this verse. Nor, should one spouse deprive the other as we see in the next verse.

7:5 - STOP DEPRIVING ONE ANOTHER. Some husbands and wives had apparently decided upon abstinence without involving their spouse in the decision. Paul says that they should stop doing that, *“except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”* If a wife decided, without the agreement of her husband, to become celibate, there might be a strong temptation to fulfill his sexual drive elsewhere. The same thing applies to the husband.

EXCEPT BY AGREEMENT FOR A TIME. An agreement in marriage is not arrived at by one party, but by both husband and wife. There might be a time - a time fasting or prayer - when they might agree to abstain from sexual intercourse for a given period of time that they might commit themselves to prayer, but there should be a limit placed on this agreement.

The word “agreement” implies communication. A lack of communication in marriage often leads to trouble. The communication here should be between husband and wife. There may be times when one spouse or the other may feel the need to talk with a friend or a counselor about marital problems, but when it comes to sexual problems extreme caution should be the rule. It may be very risky, for example, for a wife to talk with a male friend about a sexual problem, or for a man to talk with a female friend. Even trained counselors have become involved with a “friend” under those circumstances. The husband and wife should talk with each other, the problem develops when one spouse wants to talk about a problem and the other refuses to talk. “Agreement” means communication.

SO THAT SATAN WILL NOT TEMPT YOU. In his age-old warfare against God, Satan has been more successful in seducing human beings through sexual temptations and covetousness than any other temptations. Just think how many other sins are related to these two. There is a reason Paul writes this warning - “because of your lack of self-control.” Did that apply only to those in the church at Corinth? Certainly not. This has an application to any believer of any age. A lot of people who end up committing adultery did not “set out” to do so.

Some pastors make it a point to move from behind their desk and sit near a visitor, especially if it is a friend. But when it comes to counseling a woman, he would be well advised to remain behind his desk. He should have a box of tissue ready when the tears come, as often they do. It is not wise to

get up and go around the desk and put an arm around the heartbroken woman, no matter how innocent it might seem at the moment. A transfer of affection can take place in a second.

Satan knows how to use sexual temptations for his purpose. Those who were defending President Clinton during impeachment hearings often exclaimed, "It was only sex!" A post-Christian culture would reject biblical morality in favor of postmodern ethics - what is right is determined by a majority of one. In the case of President Clinton, the news networks ran the news, then polled chosen respondents and then reported that the approval rate of the president was still very high. They did report that there were eleven conservative states in which they ran no polls, and that when they reached a Christian they determined to be a "right-winged fundamentalist" they stopped the interview.

Satan uses movies, television, music, the Internet, popular dress, dances, and even business to take advantage of one's "lack of self-control" in the moral arena. A sophisticated ratings system was supposed to protect children from sexually explicit material, but the ratings system has left a lot to be desired. Sex is used in television commercials to sell everything from toothpaste to lawn mowers. Even Christian young people on dates sit and watch movies which Satan uses to tempt them, and their parents permit it.

Years ago, a father who was on a church staff made the statement to me that his daughter went to dances. But, he said, "They don't do slow dances. They just jump up and down and make a monkey of themselves." I thought, "How naive!" Does he not know that those movements can provoke lust? A man told me that he had gone to a teenage center regularly when he was a teenager. Sponsors of the center told parents and church members who expressed concern that they just did the modern dances - "They don't even touch. This man confided, "But we did touch, and we knew exactly what we were doing and where we were touching."

For more than a generation many young girls and women have been wearing clothes which must have been designed by Satan to trip up those who lack self-control. One wonders what would have happened if one of those temple prostitutes in Corinth had been seen in public wearing a swimsuit like many young girls from Christian homes wear today. And their parents buy them! Have their parents forgotten what tempted them when they were the same age? Or do they say, "Oh no, not my daughter," or "not my son." Teenage pregnancies are very high today, and have been since 1962-1963 when prayer and Bible reading were taken out of public schools. But if Satan can take advantage of a young person's lack of self-control in such a way that a girl becomes pregnant, he has a ready solution - murder the innocent unborn baby and pat the guilty on the back for finding a way out of "a difficult situation."

We must conclude from what Paul writes in this verse that as a general rule, that neither husband nor wife has the right to refuse the physical relationship of marriage. "There is one possible exception, when three conditions are all fulfilled. Sexual abstinence is permissible by agreement, for a set time, and for the purpose of special prayer. God's way is a holy freedom between husband and wife [BSB].

7:6 - BUT THIS I SAY. Paul expresses a view, “*by way of concession, not of command.*” He is making a distinction between his own personal views and that which was commanded by the Lord. Does he have in mind that which Jesus taught during His earthly ministry, or what the Holy Spirit might have inspired him to write? Note that he has not inserted a parenthetical opinion that was not an inspired part of this epistle. Read verses 10 and 12 where we find similar statements. “Paul does not intend the Corinthians to understand that he is departing from apostolic authority and from inspired writing in order to propose an opinion of his own. A careful reading of v. 10 in comparison will show that though Paul is saying we have no word directly from Jesus, he nevertheless speaks “by permission,” or under the direction of the Holy Spirit, in v. 6 and v. 12. In v. 10 definite reference is made to a saying of Jesus (cf. Mark 10:1-9)” [BSB].

He declared what he thought when he had no certain word from God. He explained in regard to marriage what was revealed to him from Christ and what was his best personal opinion (9:8). Paul was convinced God's Spirit was leading him to make his judgments. The early church confirmed his conviction the Spirit had inspired him by following God's direction and including this passage in the collection of inspired Scriptures [DSB].

7:7 - YET I WISH. Here Paul expresses his wish “*that all men were even as I myself am,*” meaning celibate. This is Paul's personal preference under present conditions (7:26). This answers the question as to whether or not Paul was married. This clearly shows that Paul was not married and possibly confirmed by 9:5. Some have held that he had been married, and base it on their interpretation of Acts 16:10, I have heard people say that he must have been married at one time because he was a member of the Sanhedrin. The fact that he appeared before the Sanhedrin does not mean that he was a member of that august body.

HOWEVER. Under the circumstance of the believer in the early church, and considering the fact that they anticipated the imminent return of the Lord, it is understandable that Paul would wish that all were as he (single), but “*each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner (celibate), and another in that (married).*”

7:8 - I SAY TO THE UNMARRIED AND TO WIDOWS. “*But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.*” It is possible that by the “unmarried” Paul meant men since widows are added and since virgins receive special treatment later.

THAT IT IS GOOD FOR THEM IF THEY REMAIN EVEN AS I. There is no doubt that Paul is unmarried at the time of this writing and there is no proof that he had ever been married. His missionary work would not have prevented his getting married if he had chosen to do so, and if there had been an opportunity. Simon Peter's wife traveled with him. However, it is more likely that from the time the Lord Called him he understood that his mission would preclude marriage.

After discussion marital relations in verses 2-7, he returns to the original question in verse 1. He does not say it better to be unmarried, but only it is good for them to remain unmarried. A single person

may devote more time to God's work.

The question of priorities was basic in Paul's advice to widows and other unmarried persons to remain single if they were not subject to intensive sexual desire. Paul favored singleness as a religious commitment freeing persons to give full time to preparing people for Christ's coming, whereas marriage naturally placed other demands on time. Paul did not have a negative attitude toward marriage, but vocationally he believed singleness was preferable during the crisis times ahead. He instructed younger widows to marry rather than become dependent on the church for support (1 Ti 5:11-14). Vocational priorities and personal gifts thus should determine a person's decision to marry [DSB].

7:9 - IF THEY DO NOT HAVE SELF-CONTROL. Paul recommends the single life for those who are committed to serving the Lord under those trying circumstances if they have the self-control to maintain a life of celibacy. If not, he says, "*let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*" A life of celibacy requires a great measure of self-control. Paul understood that as well as anyone because he lived a life of celibacy himself.

TO BURN WITH PASSION. What does he mean by this? Two explanations have been offered: In the first place, the statement may be penal, in which case the idea is that lust leads to divine judgment. Secondly, it could mean that if one discovers that he does not have the gift of celibacy, it is preferable for him to marry rather than to seethe inwardly with destructive lusts. The latter seems more likely to be the meaning here. The italicized NKJV text "with passion" supports this latter interpretation.

B. Marriage and Divorce (7:10 - 24)

7:10 - TO THE MARRIED. Moving on to a new subject, Paul says, "*But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband...*" When he says, "I give instructions," he is not implying that this part of the epistle is not inspired. He says that this teaching is from Jesus Himself. He does not, however tell us if this refers to the spoken words of Jesus while he was on earth or a special revelation Paul had received from the risen, ascended Lord prior to the writing of this epistle.

THE WIFE SHOULD NOT LEAVE HER HUSBAND. Divorce by the wife was unusual in the Jewish society (exception - Salome and Herodias), but it was common in Rome. This word of instruction was important because he was writing to a church in a Gentile city - in the Roman empire. Paul has a very high view of the home, and of the wedding vows.

7:11 - BUT IF SHE DOES LEAVE. That is, if the wife should leave her husband, "*she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.*" Everything that applies to the wife applies to the husband. If, in spite of Christ's clear

prohibition, she leaves her husband, “she must remain unmarried.” Paul here makes no allowance for remarriage of the innocent party as Jesus does by implication. Marriage was instituted by God to be a permanence relationship. Divorce must not be seen as an easy option to escape problems. Christians married to one another should commit themselves to each other and to working out problems in the relationship. To do otherwise goes against God’s Word.

7:12 - TO THE REST. *“But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.”* Paul now moves on to a new question. Verses 12 and 13 deal with intermarriage between Christians and non-Christians. Specifically here, marriages in which either the husband or the wife becomes a believer after the marriage.

I SAY, NOT THE LORD. Jesus did not give any instruction concerning spiritually mixed marriages while on earth, but Paul does, and his teaching is from the Lord. Paul has no word about marriage from Jesus beyond the problem of divorce. Such spiritually mixed marriages are to stay together if at all possible. Again, “I say” is not a disclaimer of inspiration.

A WIFE WHO IS AN UNBELIEVER. This was a new problem, resulting from work among Gentiles, that did not arise during Jesus’ earthly ministry - as far as the Gospels reveal. Paul had to deal with mixed marriages just as missionaries do today. Again, it may be inferred here that the brother had become a believer after their marriage but his wife had not. Unfortunately, this is a common thing even today. Countless young women who have always wanted a Christian home begin dating an unsaved person, but because he will go to church services with her while they are dating she assumes that it will be just a matter of time before he is saved. She is absolutely sure he will be saved after they are married, not understanding that he will do a lot of things to impress her while they are dating that he is not going to do after they are married.

Saved young people have no business dating lost people, or marrying them. But the problem here concerns a marriage in which both people are lost when they get married, but after they are married one of them becomes a believer. Should the saved person divorce his lost spouse?

AND SHE CONSENTS. Paul’s answer is just what we would expect: if any man has a wife who is an unbeliever, and “she is willing to live with him” (NKJV), he must not divorce her. The Greek word for “consent” means “to be pleased together with.” In that day, if a man adopted a new religion the wife was likely to follow his lead - much more so than today.

7:13 - A WOMAN WHO HAS AN UNBELIEVING HUSBAND. The same instructions given in the previous verse to the husband is now applied to the wife: *“And he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.”* There might have been a greater risk of divorce if the unsaved spouse had a man whose wife had become a convert to a new religion than the other way around. Paul is being fair in stating both sides of the problem of mixed marriages. Contrary to

feminist claims, Paul was not a sexist, and the Bible is not a sexist book.

7:14 - SANCTIFIED THROUGH HIS WIFE. We need to follow the Scripture closely and keep what he is saying in context. In this verse we are given some interesting information: *“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”* Paul does not mean that the unbelieving husband is saved by the faith of the believing wife. The very presence of a Christian in a home sets that home apart as a home with a Christian influence. In this sense, the marriage is sanctified so that there is no need of a divorce.

Any number of comments can be found on this verse. The situation Paul addresses now is that of two non-Christians who married and then one was converted. The new Christian, knowing that the a believer should not marry a unbeliever, wonders whether or not the relationship with his unconverted partner makes him unacceptable to God (i.e., “unclean”).

The answer is that God still honors the marriage for the sake of the believing partner. In a ritualistic sense, the believer's "cleanness" overpowers the unbeliever's "uncleanness," and the relationship can continue. Of course, the non-Christian still needs to be saved (v. 16). Thus "sanctification" does not refer to the personal standing of the unbelieving partner but to the sanctity of the marriage, and to the fact that the unbelieving spouse (as well as the children) has been "set apart" for a unique and constant gospel witness [BSB].

YOUR CHILDREN. If the relations of the parents be holy, the child's birth must be holy also (not illegitimate). As already noted, the very presence of a believer in the home sets that home apart from a home with no Christian influence. “A believing partner, therefore, should stay with the unbeliever. However, this does not mean that children born into such a home are automatically Christians. They are holy in the sense of being set apart by the presence of one believing parent” [RSB].

7:15 - IS NOT UNDER BONDAGE. *“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”* “The believing husband or wife is not at liberty to separate, unless the disbeliever or pagan insists on it. Luther argued that the Christian might marry again. But this is by no means clear, unless the unbeliever marries first” [ATR]. If the unbelieving spouse chooses to leave, the believing spouse must let him/her go, but the believing spouse should do everything possible to prevent the separation.

We live in a time in America in which divorce and remarriage is common, even among believers. When I was called into the Gospel ministry, the divorced Christian was the exception, today it is very common. My wife, Becky, has taught in public schools for more than twenty-five years. I remember when she told me that when she started teaching at one particular school, there might have been two children in her class from a non-traditional family - single adult as head of the family, for example. Within less than ten years there were as many children from non-traditional families as traditional families. Sometimes the number of children from non-traditional families outnumber those from

traditional families. When you add those whose parents are divorced, families in which the parents are separated, or children living with a single parent who has never married, children living with a mother, step-father, and stepbrothers and step-sisters, and various “live-in” situations, you can readily see how much our society has changed.

While Christians should hate what divorce does to people, they must show genuine compassion to victims of divorce. Many churches have classes for divorced (single-again) individuals. There are many people all around us who are hurting because of family problems, and we must reach out to them in Christian love. We must seek ways to minister to them. We must also teach our children (and their’s) what God’s plan is for the family. The answer to many social, psychological, ethical, and crime problems in our society can be traced to the home. Divorce reaches its tentacles into every area of the life of those who are its victims. The broken hearts of our society cry for a return to a Scriptural view of marriage and divorce.

7:16 - FOR HOW DO YOU KNOW. Addressing both husband and wife, he asks. *“How do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”* When one marriage partner is saved that person should immediately seek the salvation of the lost spouse. Sometimes this not easy to do. In fact, it can really be frustrating at times. There are wives who have prayed for the salvation of their husbands for twenty years or longer. They must never give up, but there may come a time when the only thing the saved partner can do is to pray for the unsaved partner and live the Christ-life before them as a daily witness to the grace of God.

7:17 - IN THIS MANNER. *“Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.”* The principle of remaining in one’s marital relationship is consistent with God’s will in other things. Christians are to continue in the activities and relationships to which God has led them, and to be consistent, Paul will direct all churches to do the same thing. The principle is set down in verse 24: *“In everything the Christian is to remain in his calling, unless it is immoral.”*

7:18 - CALLED WHEN. Consistent with the previous verse, Paul writes, *“Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.”* In other words, Gentiles who were saved did not have to become proselytes to Judaism, and the Jews did not have to reject their race, heritage, or nationality when they became a Christian. A Jew is to a Jew and a Gentile is to remain a Gentile. “A general principle is given to place a limitation to what he has said. There is to be no compulsory slavery between believers. On the other hand, there is to be no abuse of this liberty” [ATR].

7:19 - KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD. *“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.”* Paul is answering questions that had been sent to him, so there must have been some confusion about the matter of circumcision. Paul’s answer addressed their particular question and sets forth an important principle for the believer in any age. It is obedience to the will of God that counts, not the mark of

circumcision, or the lack of it. The same principle may be applied to baptism, church membership, creeds or sacraments. Sadly, if you ask some people if they believe in Jesus Christ, they will respond, "Yes, I was baptized when I was twelve years old," they equate baptism (the symbol) with being born again (the substance).

7:20 - EACH MAN MUST REMAIN. Each person must remain "*in that condition in which he was called.*" Being converted does not change one's race, nationality, sex, or socioeconomic circumstances. When God saves an individual that person he should praise Him for it. However, but the saved person, more often than not, will continue in the same social and economic circumstances.

This does not prohibit one from improving his circumstances when he has the opportunity. But we are subjected to the same laws as before. The plant custodian will not automatically be promoted to plant manager as soon as he is saved, but his new life with different values and priorities, may well lead to those promotions.

7:21 - DO NOT WORRY ABOUT IT. Paul amplifies the point he has just made: "*Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.*" If he was a slave, there was nothing he could do about it - unless he could escape. It was usually a fixed condition and a slave could be a faithful Christian, even with heathen masters. Many times the witness of a slave led to the salvation of the master. Stories are told of European Christians who were captured and enslaved by the Vikings whose faithful witness led their masters to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

I had the distinct privilege of leading a number of men in a county jail or state prison to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. At no time did I suggest to any of them that the state would pardon them because they had been saved. They had been set free by the grace of God, but they were still behind bars. While it might seem pointless to tell a man who is serving a life sentence for murder to stay where he was, there is a practical application to this. One man to whom I had witnessed in the Hinds County Jail in Jackson had been saved and then sentenced to life at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. One morning after I had preached at what was Camp 4 at that time, this prisoner stopped to speak with me. He told me that his faith in Jesus Christ was as strong as ever and, he added, "When I get out of here I want to serve the Lord." I assured him that he would never find a place where there was a greater need for a witness than where he was. This passage would tell a man under those circumstances that he should not expect God to release him just because he had been saved. Begin where you are and if God decides to intervene and change those circumstances He can do it.

The Twentieth Century has taken its place in history as the bloodiest century in the history of the world. Millions of people have been killed by their own governments, millions more through ethnic and religious "cleansing." During the days of the Soviet Empire, when Christians were being persecuted and slain for their faith, there were groups in the free world who were working for their release, and rightly so. We should try to aid and encourage those who are suffering for the cause of Christ. However, the nearest thing the world has seen to New Testament Christianity since early church days may well have been the life, the witness, and the price paid by the suffering saints behind

the Iron Curtain - we might include the Bamboo Curtain, as well.

There is little doubt that the Lord did help some escape, but as a general rule He left his children there as a witness to that lost, humanistic, evolutionary, atheistic society. He had helped them all escape there would have been no witness left in the USSR for all those millions of lost souls.

When the Iron Curtain did fall, along with the Berlin Wall (Millions remember when President Ronald Regan exclaimed, "Mr. Gorbachev, Tear down that wall!"), we discovered that there were countless thousands, even millions of Baptist and Pentecostal believers. Millions were hungry for the Word of God.

7:22 - FOR HE WHO WAS CALLED. The person who was saved "*while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.*" This is a profound statement. All believers are slaves, yet all believers are free! William Johnson was a free black man living in Natchez until his murder sometime after 1850. Johnson, a black slave owner, kept a diary. He often noted to status of his business, loans, farm work, newspaper headlines, conversations, and human interest stories. At times he noted something that was either questionable, or something incredible he had heard and then he would add, "Enough said." We might quote Johnson here - "Enough said."

Jesus Christ is now the owner of the Christian. Paul called himself a slave of Jesus Christ. But Christ set us free from sin by paying the ransom of his life on the Cross. Paul is not defending the institution of slavery, but recognizing the fact of it and offering suggestion for both the slave owner and the slave master.

7:23 - YOU WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE. "*You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.*" This is the "bottom line." You were bought with a price, and that price was blood Jesus Christ poured out on the Cross. It cost God the most precious thing He had - His only begotten Son - to save one sinner. It cost Jesus the most precious thing one has on this earth - His very life - to save one sinner. That is the greatest price ever paid for anything. That price is so great for one ever to "become slaves of men" again. Whether bond or free, you have but one eternal Master.

7:24 - REMAIN WITH GOD. Married or single, bond or free, "*each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.*" We must be sure we understand what Paul is saying here. He is not saying that if one is living in sin, he should continue in the sin. What he is saying is that our physical circumstances may not change when one is saved. Sometimes they will - if one is a slave to alcohol, drugs, gambling, or sexual immorality he must look to God to free him of that bondage. But if he is serving time in jail for a crime when he is saved, the judicial system is not going to release him on his profession of faith. They have seen too many "jailhouse" conversions. On the other hand, when one is saved in prison, his new life in Christ can do a number of things for him. First, God will make the time more bearable; second, his time may be reduced for good behavior; and third, he may be an effective witness for the Lord.

C. Marriage and Christian Service - (7:25-38)

7:25 - NOW CONCERNING VIRGINS. Paul continues to answer questions they had asked in an earlier letter. He has dealt with a question about celibacy between married persons, and with the slave/master relationship, and with a question about whether a new convert should leave a spouse who remained a pagan. Now he goes on to the next question. Should a virgin remain a virgin for the rest of her life? Should she remain single? There is no question that if she remains unmarried she should remain celibate. But the question is, should she remain single or would marriage be permissible in First Century Corinth? Remember that in some of the fertility cults young girls were expected to prostitute themselves for their gods. Sexual immorality was rampant in those societies. Now that some of these young girls were being converted, should they abstain from sex even to the point of refusing to marry? Paul answers, *“I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.”*

He did have a direct command from the Lord (Verse 10: “But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord”). It was possible for Paul to know this command of Jesus as he did other sayings of Jesus (Acts 20:35), even if he had, as yet, no access to a written Gospel, or if he had received no revelation on this subject from Jesus (1 Cor. 11:23). Paul had no specific word from Jesus on the subject of virgins, however, every word he is writing is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In critical times, marriage may become a distraction to service. Yet, it must be clearly understood that neither celibacy nor marriage is necessarily better than the other as a life-style for serving God. A person's situation and needs provide criteria for determining whether to marry. The ultimate criterion is the ability to serve God [DSB].

BUT I GIVE AN OPINION. The Holy Spirit inspired him to write this opinion, as he did that about mixed marriages (12-16). Paul had the word from Jesus concerning divorce to guide him, but here he has nothing from Jesus at all, only an “opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy” based on his knowledge of the situation. Robertson held this to be “an express claim to help from the Lord in the forming of this duly considered judgment, which is in no sense a command, but an inspired opinion” [ATR].

7:26 - I THINK. Paul proceeds to express the previously mentioned judgement and calls it his opinion (not a command, but advice). As Robertson said, “an inspired opinion.”

THE PRESENT DISTRESS. *“I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.”* By “distress” he probably alludes to some particular situation at Corinth at that time. The word for “present” occurs in 2 Thes. 2:2 of the advent of Christ as not “present.” Whether Paul has in mind the hoped for Second Coming of Jesus, we do not know for sure. If so, he means for one to remain as he is whether married or unmarried because of the

expected return of the Lord.

7:27 -DO NOT SEEK A WIFE. Under “*the present distress, (vs 27), “Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.”* The times and place in which they lived helped shape this advice. There are countries in the world where an unmarried minister or missionary may well be more effective than a married servant. It was not easy to “put down roots” in the midst of persecution by pagans. Because difficulties or persecution may come (v. 28), stay either married (v. 27a) or single (v. 27b); however, if one marries, it is not sin.

7:28 - BUT IF. In spite of his inspired opinion, he adds, “*If you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.*” “If” is a condition of the third class, undetermined with prospect of being determined - you may, or you may not. Some might get married in spite of Paul’s advice to the contrary. Bachelors as well as widowers are included. Whether he held to this opinion later we do not know. In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul gives a noble view of marriage.

7:29 - BUT THIS I SAY, BRETHREN. He is continuing to express an inspired opinion to his “brethren.” He remembers, and would have them to remember that he is their brother in Christ. He says, “*the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none.*” A new turn is here given to the argument about the present distress.

THE TIME IS SHORTENED . This term is used only twice in the New Testament (here and in Acts 5:6) is this term used. Calvin thought this meant the shortness of human life, but apparently Paul pictures the shortening of time (opportunity) because of the possible nearness of and hope for the imminent return of Christ. But in Philippians, Paul faces death as his fate (Phil. 1:21-26), though still looking for the Second Coming of Christ (3:20).

Some interpreters believe Paul referred to the time until the second coming. Thus Paul would have meant that the necessary prelude for the age to come is the passing away of the world in its present form. In its place will dawn the new age. Each generation must live in the conviction that time is short. Whether the point of termination be death or Christ's return, the time is short for all persons. See note on Mt 12:32. Others believe Paul saw an immediate threat of severe persecution and recommended waiting until the "crisis" (v 26) passed to participate in life's normal activities [DSB].

7:30 - THOSE WHO WEEP. “And those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess...” The principles and attitudes just expressed are amplified here.

AS THOUGH THEY DID NOT POSSESS. Paul means that all earthly relations are to be viewed in light of the Second Coming.

7:31 - PASSING AWAY. “And those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of

it; for the form of this world is passing away.” The world in which we live is “passing away.” It will give way shortly to a new world, a new way of life. Paul lived his life as though the world was about to come to an end, and encouraged others to do so. We do not know when they will pass away, but we know it is. The physical world is running down, deteriorating, and waiting to be redeemed (Rom. 8:18-25). The Christian world view is that “the form of this world is passing away.” The present world in which we live has much more to offer than gratification of the fleshly desires.

7:32 - FREE FROM CONCERN. Paul continues to elaborate on the single life as an opportunity for Christians who would “*be free from concern*” about the things of the world, “because *“one who is unmarried is (ideally) concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord.”* This is the ideal, however, many times unmarried Christian lets the cares of the world override his interest in the Word of God (Mark 4:19). The simple fact that one is unmarried does not always mean that they will be more committed to the cause of Christ than one who is married, but they have the opportunity to invest more of their time in His work.

As a husband and father, I praise the Lord for a godly wife and two godly sons. I thank God for a close relationship with each. I thank Him for their love and for the privilege of loving them. But, I do know that throughout my ministry, there are times when I had to take a child to the doctor, or to get his braces checked, when I might otherwise have been in my study of making a call. I tried to make it a point to be home when Becky had a meal ready. A single person does not have to be concerned with the schedule of other family members, ball games, 4-H Club projects, and a lot of school functions. He does not have to be concerned with college costs, nor does he have to take those calls that begin with, “Daddy, I have a problem.”

On the other hand, my sons and my wife have shared in my ministry. They have made calls with me, visited people for me, and saved me a lot of steps along the way. Having my sons to help me has been like having another staff member at times. I would not have wanted it any other way. But When I think of what some single Christians have done in the Lord’s service, I can appreciate what Paul is saying. Other than Paul, himself, I can think of no better illustration than the great missionary, Lottie Moon, whose life and ministry have been both an example and a challenge to millions. Each year Southern Baptists raise something like 100 million dollars for international missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

I met Mavis Allen through her mother, Mrs. Irma Allen of Bastrop, Louisiana. I was Mrs. Allen’s pastor for thirteen years, and only a few months ago had her funeral. Almost three years ago I received a call asking if I could deliver the message for Mavis’ funeral service. Because of recent surgery at the time I was unable to do so, but I remember Mavis. She was editor of the *Outreach* magazine for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) when she asked me to write some articles for the magazine. She made a number of pictures of my sons and from time to time those pictures were used for illustrations in the magazine.

At the time of her death, Mavis had retired from the Sunday School Board and was making trips to Russia to train people to teach the Bible. A lot of people were giving money to send Bibles to Russia at the time, but she was going over there to teach the people how to use them. She was able to serve

the Lord throughout her life without having to be concerned with many of the cares that claim the time of a married person.

7:33 - ONE WHO IS MARRIED. There is a lot of difference between a single person and a married person. Paul points out the obvious, *“But one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.”* As a rule this is true, however many unmarried people actually waste more time than some married people. The principle, especial in a time of “distress” or trials, is certainly valid. As he points out about the married person in 7:34a, “his interests are divided.”

7:34 - CONCERNED. This needs no commentary, because it is the commentary on the point he is making: *“The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”* Paul is not holding one life style up as superior, he is simply pointing out the differences in their obligations which will effect their opportunities to serve the Lord. Once a person is married, it is God’s will for the husband and wife to meet the needs of the other. After all, the two are now one.

7:35 - THIS I SAY. This, Paul says, this is *“for your own benefit”* in two ways. First, it is *“not to put a restraint upon you;”* and second, it is *“to promote what is appropriate and to secure.”* The word for restraint is also the word for a snare, a noose or slip-knot used for lassoing animals. Paul does not want to capture (trap) the Corinthians by lassoing them and compelling them to do what they do not wish about getting married.

UNDISTRACTED DEVOTION TO THE LORD. Undistracted devotion to the Lord is the ideal for every believer, whether married or single. What better picture can we find than that of Mary, the sister of Martha sitting at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10-39).

7:36 - VIRGIN DAUGHTER. “But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.” This verse, on the surface is fraught with difficulties - at least in the English translation. A look at the difference between the NIV translation and the interpretations by various scholars in the NIV footnotes illustrate the difficulty. The NIV text describes a couple who either are trying to decide whether or not to get married. In the footnote, the text assumes a father's decision concerning giving his daughter in marriage.

The NIV assumes the engaged couple is meant and that Paul was giving permission to marry if sexual desire is becoming too strong. He still encouraged singleness in light of the times but approved marriage as right if it is desired. The woman's needs are an important criteria here. All priorities must be taken into account as a couple considers marriage. The needs of both partners deserve equal consideration.

Compare those comments with the following notes:

Some translations understand any man to refer to the bridegroom, but it is better to understand it as the father, since the verb in verse 38 usually means "to give in marriage," and bridegrooms do not do that, fathers do. if she is past her youth. I.e., if a virgin daughter is getting beyond marriageable age, then her father may arrange a marriage if it must be so [RSB].

(vv. 36,37) These verses are apparently addressed to the father of a virgin daughter of marriageable age (or virgin daughter, v. 36). The "flower of youth" refers to full sexual maturity. Since fathers in most ancient societies had control over the marital plans of their daughters, they had the right to withhold a daughter from marriage. If such action created a potentially improper, i.e. unfitting, situation, then Paul assures the father that his original intent should not hinder him from giving her in marriage if "thus it must be" [BSB].

PAST HER YOUTH. The NKJV has "if she is past the flower of youth." Apparently the Corinthians had asked Paul about the duty of a father his daughter who is old enough to marry. The father would, no doubt, have a concern that she will one day left alone without a husband or sons to care for her in her old age, if he could not arrange a suitable marriage for her.

IF IT MUST BE SO. Paul has already discussed the problem of marriage for virgins an the grounds of expediency. Now he faces the question when the daughter wishes to marry and there is no serious objection to it. The father is advised to consent. Roman and Greek fathers had the control of the marriage of their daughters.

7:37 - TO KEEP HIS OWN VIRGIN DAUGHTER. *"But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well."* This seems to mean a situation in which the virgin daughter does not wish to marry the father agrees with her.

7:38 - SO THEN BOTH. To answer their question, either decision is acceptable: *"he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better."* Paul commends the father who gives his daughter in marriage - he does well.

DO BETTER. In light of the "present distress" (7:26), and since the time is shortened (7:29), the father who does not give his virgin daughter in marriage does better. Whether he has in mind persecution or the expected return of the Lord will be debated by scholars. In the *Left Behind* books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins seek to capture the trauma to which individuals and families, especially pregnant women, babies, and children are subjected in the Tribulation. Even in the normal trials that come to all believers, some practical decisions must be made concerning marriage and security.

D. Marriage and Remarriage (7:39-40)

7:39 - A WIFE IS BOUND. *“A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”* This is God’s will - one man and one woman for life. At the death of one spouse the other is free to remarry, or to remain single. In that day, the only security a woman had was in her relationship to a man - her father until she was married, then her husband as long as he lived, and then to a son or possibly a brother if she had no son. Fortunately, circumstances in America today offer much more security to most women. Many women work, save, invest in a retirement program and Social Security, and many own property. At her husband’s death the insurance may provide security for the rest of her life. This was not the case in the First Century.

Sadly, today we must emphasize the biblical marriage is a marriage between one man and one woman - absolutely not between two people of the same sex. That is a perversion of God’s purpose for men and women. The subject of homosexuality is debated across America as homosexuals today have not only come out of the closet, they insinuate themselves into politics, business, and the social infrastructure of society. There may be questions in politics, education, and social, civic, and service organizations but there is never a question in the Bible about homosexuality. Bill Clinton may have had a problem defining “sex,” “alone,” and “is” but Paul never had a problem with his definitions. More recently Clinton reportedly said that, based on his definition of “wrong” he didn’t do anything wrong! That flies in the face of Scripture.

ONLY IN THE LORD. If her husband dies, the wife is free to remarry, but “only in the Lord,” which means that she must marry another Christian.

7:40 - IN MY OPINION. In Paul’s inspired opinion the widow will be *“happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.”* Remarriage for a widow or widower is not prohibited, but many have made mistakes in marrying because of loneliness, concern for security, or fear of being alone as health deteriorates, only to find that they have little in common. Often major adjustments have to be made by his family and her family. In many of these cases, the individual would have been happier if he/she had not remarried - but certainly not all cases.

In many cases children would have been much happier if the surviving parent had not remarried. A neglected child, and abused child, or a child that cannot compete with a step-brother or sister for the attention of his parents is in for a miserable life. Many parents discover it only after it is too late.

I THINK. Paul is expressing his opinion, but he insists that he has “the Spirit of God” in the expression of his inspired judgement on this difficult, complicated, tangled problem of marriage and remarriage. He has given his advice. Each person will have to decide for himself, but he must be sure to examine all the Scripture on the subject. There is nothing here that will contradict the teachings of our Lord. Marriage is the first, the primary, and the most sacred of human contracts and should never be violated by infidelity.

President Bill Clinton's widely publicized infidelity to his marriage vow shocked many Americans. Many others who had followed his career when he was Attorney General and then Governor of Arkansas expected no better of him. Perhaps the most shocking - and exasperating - aspect has been the approval he maintained among so many Americans. We are now reaping the consequences of our having entered into the post-Christian era in America in the middle of the Twentieth Century. The prophet Isaiah wrote:

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight! (Is. 5:20-21).

V. DISCUSSION CONCERNING FOOD OFFERED TO IDOLS (8:1 - 11:1)

A. Paul Deals With Questions About Food Consecrated to a Pagan God (8:1-13).

Chapter 8 - principles are given to guide the Christian in his daily walk with the Lord.

9:1 - 10:13 - Paul illustrates those principles in other realms.

10:14 - 11:1 - Paul applies those principles.

8:1 - NOW. With the word "now" he moves on to this new area. "*Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.*" Paul moves on to the next subject about which the Corinthians had written to him, things sacrificed to idols. All through this epistle we have seen that it is importance to reading this material against the unique Corinthian background, and that is especially true here.

THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS. Only a portion of sacrificial animals were sacrificed on heathen altars. What remainders of animals that had been sacrificed to heathen idols was used. If it was a private offering the part not sacrificed was returned to the one making the offering. If it was a public offering, the remains were sold in the market. The Corinthians had asked at least three questions.' (1) Should a Christian buy meat that had been sacrificed to a false god? (2) Should he eat the meat if it was served at a pagan banquet? (3) Should he eat it in a pagan temple?

We need to remember that these First Century Christians lived in a polytheistic world, where people believed in many gods. "The teaching here is that these gods are only empty ideas, the creation of sinful human imagination. There is only one God, whom we know as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" [DSB].

It is clear that the Corinthians had asked about this problem in their letter to Paul (7:1). This problem

was mentioned in the opinion of the Jerusalem Conference and written by James to be read before the churches on the mission field (Acts 15:29; 21:25). The connection between idolatry and impurity was very close, especially in Corinth. The meat in question, as already noted, was the portion of the flesh left over after the heathen sacrifices. This leftover part “was either eaten sacrificially or taken home for private meals, or sold in the market” [ATR]. What were Christians to do about eating such portions either buying it in the market or eating it in the home of another? There was a difference of opinion on the subject among Corinthian Christians. Aspects of the problem surfaced which were not touched on in the Jerusalem Conference. Paul does not mention them here, but he does in Galatians 2-1-10. Paul will discuss all three of the issues they had raised concerning meat sacrificed to idols..

WE ALL HAVE KNOWLEDGE. This may seem rather abrupt, and indeed it would be somewhat disconnected - unless this is a quotation from their letter. Since their conversion to Christ, they knew the emptiness of idolatry. Paul acknowledges that they have this knowledge, but this problem cannot be solved by human knowledge. The RSV has “all of us possess knowledge.” “Bruce says this is rightly punctuated because it is a quotation from the letter Paul received from the Corinthians” [RSB]. Paul follows with a principle worthy of our consideration: “Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.” There are intelligent people who are not arrogant, but there are not many arrogant people who are, in their own opinion, possessed of knowledge. Love precludes arrogance. Godly love builds up the individual and the body of Christ.

The area of knowledge behind the arrogance of some may be very shallow and very narrow, but that never discouraged an arrogant person from advertising his knowledge. There is an old adage that goes:

He who knows not and knows not that he knows not is a fool, shun him.
He who knows not and knows that he knows not is awake, teach him.
He who knows and knows not that he knows is asleep, wake him.
He who knows and knows that he knows is wise, follow him.

8:2 - IF ANYONE SUPPOSES. He seems blunt, “*If anyone supposes that he knows anything...*” This is the condition of the first class, assumed to be true. Some of them did indeed assume that they possessed knowledge of these things. What he is dealing with here is arrogance. Pride in one’s knowledge produces arrogance, but arrogance never produces edification. It and never honors God, and it is never blessed by God..

HE HAS NOT YET KNOWN. “*He has not yet known as he ought to know.*” Most of those who think they have arrived, have not. A good part of those who have pride in their knowledge have a lot to learn. Not only is this a summary statement of our ignorance, it is an acknowledgment that the really wise man knows his ignorance of what lies beyond. “Undisciplined human intellect can lead to pride and self-exaltation. When the love of God tempers human knowledge, we can know and serve God and experience true knowledge and life” [DSB].

8:3 - BUT IF ANYONE LOVES GOD. If any person knows God redemptively, and loves Him, “*he is known by Him.*” To know God is to love Him. In fact, no one knows God who does not love Him (I John 4-8). God sets the seal of His favor on the one who loves Him, but that is not the point of this verse. The point is that “if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.” As Paul wrote to Timothy: “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness” (2 Tim. 2:19).

8:4 - EATING OF THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS. “Therefore” bridges the gap between what he has said and what he is about to say. Some of the members think they have knowledge, but their knowledge is faulty. If they love God, He knows them and will instruct them. He now moves on to the problem: “*concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.*”

THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS. Corinth was a pagan city and while there were Jewish believers in the church, most of the Christians of the members were converted from paganism. When a pagan was converted to Christianity, he might be ostracized by family, friends, and society. On the other hand, in a polytheistic society, the individual might avoid ostracism, and even persecution if he participated in family banquets and various social functions. The problem was that these banquets might be held in a pagan temple, at which time toasts were drunk to various pagan gods. They would offer a sacrifice to pagan gods and then roast the part of the animal that was not sacrificed on the altar and eat it at their banquet.

In other cases, large numbers of animals would be offered in public worship. The remains from these animals would then be sold in the market place. Any time a shopper purchased meat in the public market he might wonder if that meat had first been offered to some pagan god before being taken to the market.

What these Corinthian believers wanted to know was, Is it a sin to eat meat that had been offered to a pagan god before it was served at the meal? Their caution is commendable, but their theology was, as yet, undeveloped.

NO SUCH THING. What does he mean when he says, “there is no such thing as an idol in the world?” If there are no idols, why does the Scripture condemn idolatry so strongly? The point he is making is that the idol was a mere picture or symbol of a god. If the god does not exist, the idol is meaningless.

THERE IS NO GOD BUT ONE. We cannot proclaim this too often, or too loudly - God is one and there is no god beside Him. The sin at the center of the rebellion of Israel against their God throughout the Old Testament period was idolatry. It took the Babylonian Captivity to purge Israel of that horrible sin. Throughout the Inter-biblical Period the Jews were often persecuted when they refused to worship false gods, but at the time of this writing they were strongly monotheistic. They knew there was only one God. The new Gentile converts to Christianity embraced this belief as strongly as the Jews.

To answer the charge that Christians worship three separate gods, it should be stressed that our God one. There can be but one uncaused Cause. But here is something pagan religions can neither explain, fathom, nor duplicate. When they add a new person to their godhead they become polytheistic. The one true God is indeed One in essence, yet He reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - One in essence, three in Person. We worship God the Father through Jesus the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit - God in three Persons, blessed Trinity. Yet, God is One, and there is no other beside Him. It was the worship of Mary the Mother of Jesus that gave Mohammed his cry, "Allah is One." Moslems still believe Christians worship three Gods, but they fail to understand the Trinity.

Francis Shaeffer said at one point that it had not been for the Doctrine of the Trinity, he might still be an agnostic. Why would anyone make a statement like that? For one thing it helps answer the question, why did God create man? There are two points we should keep in mind. If God had to create man in order to have an intelligent being with whom He might have a relationship (fellowship), then God was deficient. Furthermore, if this is the only kind of relationship He could have with another spiritual, intelligent being, that relationship would have been vertical - there would still have been no horizontal relationship. But our God has never been incomplete in any way. He has always had a meaningful relationship and that relationship was horizontal within the Trinity.

8:5 - SO-CALLED GODS. *"For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords."* There are no real gods in the world, but there are many "so-called gods." Paul here acknowledges that fact, and shows that these gods do not really exist and held that those who worshiped idols (non-entities) in reality worshiped demons, agents of Satan (I Cor. 10:19-21).

8:6 - ONE GOD. *Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."* There is but one God. There can be but one uncaused Cause, and God is the Cause behind all that exists. As a matter of fact a Hebrew scholar explained to me once that the Covenant name for God, I AM (Yahweh) implies not only His self-existence, but all so the fact that He is the cause of our existence. If we accept this doctrine, other doctrines will fall into place. If you do not have Genesis 1 you do not need John 1, and if you do not have Genesis 3 (the Fall) you do not need John 3 (a Savior). Failure to appreciate this point has led some to criticize Paul for his famous sermon on Mars Hill because he pointed to the Creator rather than beginning with the Gospel he had always preached in Jewish Synagogues.

Well meaning critics have pointed out that Paul had been successful in every city where he used Old Testament messianic passages to proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth the Savior (the Anointed One, the Messiah). They insist that in all those previous cities he had been successful in planting churches, but in Athens he departed from the Scripture and, as a result, failed. When he did it God's way, they reason, he was successful, but when he let his ego get in the way and tried to debate the philosophers of Athens, he experienced his first failure.

His critics are wrong. His was a carefully worked-out method of operation. He followed the major Roman highways to the major cities of the empire, and there went every Sabbath Day to the local synagogue, where he was invited to deliver a message, or teach a Bible lesson. He took advantage of this opportunity to open the Old Testament Scriptures to them to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. He continued in the Synagogue until the Jews rejected his message and turned him away. Then, with both Jews and Gentiles who accepted Jesus as the Christ, he started a church and reached out to Gentiles. In Athens, there was no Jewish congregation. The Old Testament Scriptures would have been meaningless to them. He started at the logical place - the Creation. He first proclaimed God to be the Creator and Jesus Christ as the Agent of creation. Read his sermon from Acts 17.

So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children (Acts 17:22-28).

WE EXIST FOR HIM. You are not your own, you are bought with a price. If you are a Christian you belong to Jesus Christ. But even if you are not a Christian, you are accountable to Him because you were created for Him and you exist for Him. Every person who is too busy with his own affairs to worship, serve, and witness for the Lord is going to discover on that Great Judgment Day the ultimate purpose of his existence.

I was standing at the door between the mess hall and the lobby between two large common rooms in which prisoners at the Mississippi State Penitentiary slept. I had just preached and was speaking to the men as they filed past me to go back through the lobby, through the door where they would "count off" to be sure the same number went back into the dorm that had left the room. I was saddened to see a tattoo on a man's arm that proclaimed, "Born to Go to Hell." I have seen other tattoos that read, "Born to Lose." I thank God that I can tell men and women today that no one was born to lose, and no man was born to go to hell. And no one was created to live a life without Jesus Christ. No one was born to waste his life in sin and rebellion against the Lord.

ONE LORD, JESUS CHRIST. Jesus is Lord. We used to hear it all the time. To the average Christian, there was no problem with this statement. However, in this New Age, or postmodern era, you must be very specific when you use the word God. America found out in wake of the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado that the media does not mind printing, or for that matter, speaking the name "God." What they have an aversion to is the name, Jesus Christ. It has been reported that

some newspapers have adopted a new policy - they will never use the two words, “Jesus” and “Christ,” together because that would be a commentary. There are others, however, who will use the name “Jesus” or “Christ,” but you had better check carefully to be sure just what “Jesus” they have in mind. Jesus Christ is our “one Lord.” He is the one “by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”

Here Paul calls Jesus Lord (*Kurois*), rather than God (*theos*) the Father, though he does apply that word to him in Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Col. 2:9; Acts 20-28. Paul commonly refers to Jesus as Lord in his epistles. He is not saying that the Father is not Lord, he is saying that Jesus is Lord. There is no unitary theory of God in the Pauline epistles. The Father and Son are One, and both the Father and the Son should be addressed as “Lord.”

The lordship of Jesus Christ denotes His sovereignty over the lives of all believers. The sovereignty of Jesus Christ proclaims His right to reign in the heart of each Christian. It is not just a cliché to say that if Jesus is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.

8:7 - HOWEVER NOT ALL MEN HAVE THIS KNOWLEDGE. Knowledge has to do with inheritance and environment, education, prejudice, fear, and many other hindrances. “However” points the great gap between those who know there is but one God and those who do not. That line has been terribly blurred by New Age, Post-modern Pantheism and Monism. Christians must be very sure we communicate the right message when dealing with Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers who have been influenced by every one from Disney (Lion King, Pocahontas) to liberal university professors, to the media.

ACCUSTOMED TO THE IDOL. He says, “*but some (some of the Gentile converts), being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol...*” Some of the members were apparently going to banquets or sharing meals with pagans in which the meat was first dedicated to some idol and then eaten. In appearance, if not in reality, they were participants in this idolatry. God knows the difference in the reality of the heart and appearance, but to the less than omniscient, appearance is everything. The gambling boats and casinos advertize their restaurants and to the discerning believer the message is that they will serve the best rib-eye steak in the area for the lowest cost in an effort to get people onto the premises. Once they get the gamblers inside they do not want them to leave for a meal elsewhere. Many believers go for the meal and do not gamble. They feel that they have not done anything wrong. But if they compromise their witness, they have paid a great price. Let me stress this - even if you do not practice sharing your faith and have no desire to do so, you are paying a great price. Believers are not given a choice about being a witness, they are commissioned as witnesses and they are accountable to God as witnesses. If anyone is led astray through our example, we are going to have to answer to God for it.

THEIR CONSCIENCE BEING WEAK IS DEFILED. Their conscience is defiled, “not by partaking of polluted food, for food cannot pollute (Mark 7:18f), but by the doing of something which the unenlightened conscience does not allow” [ATR].

When a person's moral consciousness is weak or underdeveloped, innocent acts can

appear wrong. If such a person commits that act, it has become a sin for that person and he or she is guilty. The act although innocent to others, was done with the belief that it was wrong and, thus, was an act of rebellion or disobedience against the conscience. However, it does not follow that an act disobedient to Scripture is justifiable whether or not anyone believes it to be correct. Christians must accept one another's moral feelings, study Scripture together to determine God's teachings, and tolerate differences in love [DSB].

8:8 - FOOD WILL NOT COMMEND US TO GOD. Jesus removed food restrictions during His earthly ministry (Mark 7:18ff). The food does not contaminate us, and it does not “bring us near to God” (NIV). “*We are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.*” Paul here disposes of the pride of knowledge (the enlightened one, vs. 9) and the pride of prejudice (the unenlightened ones). Each looked down the other with scorn, one in scorn of the other’s ignorance, the another in horror of the others heresy.

8:9 - TAKE CARE. *But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.* This is a warning to the one who feels that he is enlightened. There is not word in the Bible that is not there for a purpose, and none to be taken lightly. It would be easy to skim over such an admonition as “take care,” but if we do so we are not allowing the Holy Spirit to direct our thoughts.

THIS LIBERTY OF YOURS. Be careful that “the exercise of your freedom” (NIV) does not become a stumbling block for others. Personal liberty may become the battle cry of those who wish to indulge their own and appetites regardless of the effects upon others. The Christian has liberty, having been set free from the bondage of legalism (Gal. 5:1), but sometimes, for the benefit of others, he will refrain from using his freedom.

All during the day yesterday, May 23, 2000, the media carried the news that the US Supreme Court ruled against an action by Congress that would have required cable companies to scramble X-rated programming during the hours normally considered family hours, when children would be watching. The Supreme Court ruled that parents would have to find other ways to protect their children that would not infringe on free speech. The Supreme Court has for many years been re-interpreting the Constitution, overriding the Executive and Legislative branches in such a way as to do what it is prohibited from doing by the Constitution - making laws.

Network television is filled with filth, profanity, and anti-Christian programming that the spiritually sensitive Christians must understand that when the Bible says that the world is at enmity with God, it includes the entertainment industry which began gradually increasing the amount of profanity as it decreased the amount of clothes people wore. Since the change overlapped generations, the younger generation thinks nothing of being entertained by that which would have shocked their grandparents, if not their parents.

I am a pastor with about forty-five years experience in the ministry. I read, I study, I preach, I have

meeting at church, and I attend associational, state, and national meetings. My children are grown and I am awaiting the birth of my first granddaughter at this time. So, what do I know about children today? My wife and I talk regularly about children and she does have first-hand knowledge of children, having taught for some thirty years. She still enjoys teaching sixth grade children, but she says that the children today talk freely about things that would have shocked her first students, assuming that they would have know that about which they were speaking.

A STUMBLING BLOCK TO THE WEAK. “Stumbling block” really needs no commentary, for everyone knows that it refers to an obstacle upon which the foot strikes, something which trips us. This principle applies to all social relations in matters of law, of health, of morals. If the enlightened one has no respect for the welfare of the unenlightened - if he causes a weaker one to stumble - he cannot have Christian love.

Who are the weak? Are they the ignorant people who spout religious cliches, quote Scripture out of context, and apply it when and where it suits their purpose? What about the new Christians who is still a babe in Christ? They would certainly be included. But what about the children? It is amazing how many times politicians tell us they are doing something “for the children.” It is amazing how often those who are trying to clean up the air we breathe are the very ones who are polluting the airwaves and corrupting the minds of children/

Vice President Al Gore profess a faith in Christ, yet in the early stages of his bid for the presidency when he became concerned that presidential candidate Bill Bradley was gaining in popularity, hired a man to help him with his candidacy for the presidency. The man he hired directed his campaign for the senate, a man who had most recently directed a public relations campaign for tobacco companies which was successful in turning back legislation in congress that would have placed added restrictions on sales of tobacco products. Upon announcing this news, popular but controversial radio host Rush Limbaugh played a portion of a speech the vice-president made at a national Democratic Convention. In the speech, with all the emotions he could muster, Gore declared, with broken voice, with hesitation as though he was overwrought, “I will fight - with all - my heart - and soul - to protect - the children - - from the threat of tobacco interests!”

Parents, grandparents, and neighbors need to be very careful around children, because they are very impressionable and we never know the ultimate consequences of a word or deed, or even a negative attitude upon the innocent child. The parents and grandparents who love their child so much they have to do “family things” every week-end may be leading a precious child to hell. Fathers who convey the attitude that church is all right for women and children may expect to see their sons follow in their footsteps.

8:10 - DINING IN AN IDOL'S TEMPLE. This probably means an official function, like a banquet in “an idol’s temple.” This may seem very remote for the modern believer in America, but in ancient Corinth, the believer would have frequent opportunities to join family and friends in eating in a pagan temple. But Paul says, “*For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?*” He pictures here the enlightened brother exercising his “liberty” by eating in the idol’s temple. Later he

will discuss the danger to this man (10:14-22), but here he considers only the effects of such conduct on the unenlightened or weak brother. This bravado at a sacrificial banquet in a pagan temple is in itself idolatrous. The weaker brother will be encouraged to go on and do what he still believes to be wrong.

8:11 - HE WHO IS WEAK IS RUINED. *For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.* Literally, it is “in your knowledge.” This is an inferior way to apply superior knowledge. Functioning in full knowledge that there is but one God, the believer goes on to the idol’s temple” where he participates in the festivities in the full knowledge of the fact that a weaker believer might be negatively influenced by his behavior. The NIV renders it, “is destroyed by your knowledge;” and the NKJV renders the verse, “And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?”

CHRIST DIED. Jesus died for the weak brother just as surely as He died for the enlightened brother. The appeal to the death of Christ should clinch Paul’s case. Mrs. L. M. Street was the mother of my very good friend, Luther. We were students together at Mississippi College. Mr. And Mrs. Street had shown a lot of interest in my ministry and my education. During the summer Luther and I worked for the Quitman County (MS) ASCS, where we plotted cotton fields on aerial photographs, commonly called maps. In the vernacular, we were measuring cotton because we had to make a lot of measurements in order to plot the field on the photograph so that someone in the office could planimeter the field to determine if the farmer had planted within his allotted acreage.

If I did not stop by for lunch with the Streets once ever week or so, whether Luther was home or not, Mr. And Mrs. Street would begin asking Luther, “What’s happened to Johnny? We have seen him in several days.” I enjoyed the visits - Mrs. Street was a good cook, and they were both good conversationalists. Once, and I do not remember how the subject came up, though I will never forget her comment, Mrs. Street said, “Any time I am tempted to gossip about someone else, I stop to remind myself that God created that person just like He created me, and He loves that person just as He loves me. That eliminates the desire to spread the gossip.”

This same guideline should be followed in all our behavior before a weaker believer. My fishing partner and I stopped at our old bait shop one morning only to discover that there had been a change in management. Beer and liquor signs were everywhere out front and the various beverages were prominently shelved in the building. I was very uncomfortable, and it definitely bothered me that someone would see us leaving that place and wonder why we were there - even though we had the shiners and crickets with us. When I commented on this, my friend said, “I don’t care what anybody says.” That is the attitude Paul is addressing here - as children of God we must care.

8:12 - BY SINNING. *And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.* Eating the meal might not have been sinful, and one might have argued that eating it in a pagan temple was not sinful, because there is no other god but our God. But if you doing that knowing that you may be doing injury to the fragile conscience of a weaker believer, then that is a sin. To sin against your brother is to sin against Jesus Christ. This is a

fact they were overlooking. Jesus had said to Saul that he was persecuting him when he persecuted his disciples (Acts 9.-5). See Matt. 24:40.

There is always the possibility of wounding the conscience of a brother or sister in Christ. This wounding does not mean offending another's feelings, but inducing someone into an act the person believes is wrong. Although the act is not sinful as such, a possible result is a faith burdened with excessive and damaging guilt. The sin against one's fellow Christian is against Christ because His Spirit indwells His people [DSB].

8:13 - I WILL NOT CAUSE MY BROTHER TO STUMBLE. *Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.* “Here is the great principle that regulates conduct in morally indifferent matters. It is the principle of love voluntarily regulating liberty (Gal. 5:13)” [RSB]. I will not eat anything that will cause my brother to stumble. I will not drink anything that will cause my brother to stumble. I will not frequent a place that will cause my brother to stumble. I do not shop on the Lord’s day because my brother might stumble. I have not gone to a movie theater in years because, if I go to a “G” movie, they might show previews of and “R” movie. I was very careful what TV programs we watched when my sons were growing up, because I did not want them to stumble. I was also aware of the fact that wherever parents stand on any given issue, their children, by the very nature of things, will probably adopt a view to the left of theirs. When they have children of their own, they may return to the position of their parents, but there is also the possibility that our actions will cause someone to stumble. There is the great principle that should regulate our conduct in morally indifferent matters (where no line is clearly drawn). It is the principle of love voluntarily regulating liberty (Gal. 5:13).

I WILL NEVER EAT MEAT AGAIN. He did not say, “I will no longer eat meat in my hometown.” He did not say, “*I will not eat meat until the weaker believer matures.*” What he said, was “I will never eat meat again” if eating it would cause a weaker brother to stumble. This is a strong double negative, and when you see this in the Bible you had better pay attention to it.). This is Paul’s principle of love. This principle applies to dress, recreation, even work. Should, for example, a Christian make money off the weakness of others - gambling, alcohol, pornography, indecent T-shirts, rental of “R” and “X” rated movies, or music that glorifies Satan far more than Jesus Christ?.

B. The Example of Paul (9:1-27)

1. Paul's rights (9:1-14)

This chapter is a part of Paul's answer to the questions the Corinthians had raised concerning things sacrificed to idols. Morgan notes that there does not seem to be very much in this passage on the subject, but as we proceed we see the reason for the omission. In the last analysis, the whole question

must be considered in the light of Christian liberty and its limitations. Paul stated his philosophy in chapter 6, “all things are lawful for me; but, not all things are expedient ...” He states it again in 10:23. He is still dealing with the question of things sacrificed to idols. He has stated the principle in chapter eight (love). He illustrates the principle in 9:1 - 10:13 as he gives an illustration from his own life of the principle of 8:13. He had rights as an apostle but he did not take advantage of them when he was with them.

In 9:15, the word “but” marks the natural division of the chapter. In 1-14, Paul deals with his rights. Then in the second part of the chapter we see what he does with his rights.

There is no doubt that some of these Corinthian believers complained about Paul’s answers when this letter was read in their church. It was too long. They expected a cut and dried answer. Why did he not say what he thought? Why was he beating around the bush? He was too blunt! There were people there who would have accepted some of these instruction had they come the pen of Peter or Appolos, but not from Paul. Remember the divisions in the church (Chs. 1ff). The same complaints are heard today. Only the really spiritual among them understood, but Paul was inspired to write this epistle to them and the words were from God - they did not originate with the apostle. However, he loved them enough to want to help prepare them to deal with these issues themselves. Of course the priesthood of individuals involves individual responsibility in finding God’s will for one’s self.

There are some very sincere pastors who may deal with things from the pulpit that would be better dealt with in private. When he does so he may even boast of his courage - I have heard it. It often takes more courage to deal with some issues in private. In all things the minister should set an example in love. How can a loving pastor hold a member up to public ridicule while others gloat over it? It does happen, thankfully not often. This does not excuse one who would stretch this principle so far that he hides behind rhetoric and confuses people. The preacher must take a stand. But there are times when he must care enough to try to communicate to people fundamental principles by which they may find answers for themselves.

9:1 - AM I NOT FREE? *“Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?”* As a Christian, Paul is saying that he was free from Mosaic ceremonialism, ritualism, and legalism (9:19), yet he adapts his moral independence to the principle of considerate love in 8:13. There are four questions in verses 1 and 2. The questions were all rhetorical and demanded an affirmative response, though some among the Corinthians may have denied one or all of them.

AM I NOT AN APOSTLE? Apostolic authority is implied here. As an apostle with a special appointment from Jesus Christ, he was given the same apostolic authority as the other apostles. He will go on to say that he has a right to receive support from the churches and yet he foregoes that privilege.

Vocational church leaders have the right to be paid as do people in any other vocation. They do not have a right to demand payment or do anything that would “hinder the gospel of Christ” (v 12). Paul often worked as a tentmaker (Ac 18:3) to

avoid burdening the churches, but he also accepted a monetary gift gratefully (Php 4:10-19). Compare Ac 20:34; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:7-10; 1 Ti 5:18 [DSB].

More to the point, when he writes he is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and this epistle carries the full authority of God. It is, in fact, the Word of God.

HAVE I NOT SEEN OUR LORD? This is proof that he had the qualification of an apostle (15:8; Acts 9:17, 27; 18:9; 22:14, 17f.; 2 Corinthians 12:1ff.), though not one of the twelve. He had met the Lord on the road to Damascus and had been appointed to the office by the risen Lord. He has the qualification of an apostle (Acts 1:22). Robertson points out the strong form of the negative (*ouchi*) here, meaning that all these questions expect an affirmative answer [ATR: QV].

Jesus' appearance to Paul was not a mere vision, but an actual bodily presence, so that Paul saw Jesus in the flesh just as did the other apostles (see Acts 9:7, 17). Paul refers to this experience as personal confirmation that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead (15:8). To witness to Jesus' resurrection was a major responsibility of an apostle [NCWB].

ARE NOT YOU NOT MY WORK IN THE LORD? They were themselves proof of his apostleship. All these questions anticipate an affirmative answer.

The third and fourth questions seem directly related to apostolic authority, but apparently Paul believed that the fourth one was more significant than the third. In the course of an extended defense of his **apostleship** in 2 Corinthians he never mentioned seeing the **Lord** (cf. Acts 1:21) but he returned repeatedly to the theme of this verse (1 Cor. 9:2) that the Corinthians themselves were his vindication (2 Cor. 3:1-3; 5:12; 7:14-16; 8:24) [BKC].

9:2 - IF TO OTHERS ... TO YOU. *“If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”* This is a strong appeal for their support, based upon their past experience with him. They, as born-again believers, were the confirmation of his apostleship. The Holy Spirit had affirmed his apostleship. Possibly, he means that those who were in the church during his eighteen month ministry with them were the seal of his apostleship, even if others who had come into the church later did not know him, or did not accept his apostleship. The Judaizers challenged his apostleship in Galatia and they may have followed him to Corinth. It is possible that his enemies here may have been Jews who had arrived later and opposed Paul on grounds that were somewhat different from the Judaizers. The Judaizers were concerned with circumcision - these people may have only been concerned with authority or power.

9:3 - MY DEFENSE. *“This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.”* The word he uses (*apologia*) means defense, not in the modern sense of apologizing, but offering a logical defense, or explanation of one's position. He refers to what precedes and to what will follow as illustrations of the point he has just made in 8:13 (concerning causing another to stumble).

Paul's **defense** looked forward (to vv. 4-23) and not back (to vv. 1-2, which guaranteed a right he had willingly forfeited). Paul's defense, then, was an explanation of why he refused to be maintained at the church's expense even though he had a fight to such support (vv. 1-2). This served also as a positive example of his counsel to the knowledgeable brother who was concerned about his rights (chap. 8) [BKC].

THOSE WHO SIT IN JUDGMENT. Critics were examining him closely to try to find fault. Who were those critics? Some were no doubt aligned with the various divisions in the church. Others may have come into the church during Paul's absence, but some may have been faithful at one time, but in his absence they had been swayed by others to question the missionary leader. If a minister pleases everyone in a church, he either has not been there very long, or he has not taken a strong stand on moral and social issues, and he may not be dealing with the basic doctrines of the faith.

Pastors face the same scrutiny today by those members (and non-members) in the community who keep him under a microscope. He and his family live in a fish bowl at all times, constantly under the watchful eye of neighbors. It is both a wonderful opportunity for a witness to the lost community, and an opportunity to set a good example for younger believers. But there is a downside, and that is that when criticism comes - and if he is doing his job he must expect criticism - people begin to "put things together" in such a way as to build a case against him. I stopped at a business once where a lost man was offering critical comments on a local church. What was his complaint? They had a preacher there once who had made some personal long-distance calls on the church telephone. Since he was not a member and had probably not been inside the building in years one might wonder where he got his information. I can answer that question! He got it from church members who cannot control their tongue. Whether the pastor had done what this man accused him of doing or not, the church member who spread the gossip hurt his church, hindered the work of pastors who would follow the accused, and dishonored the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

I will always appreciate Lavelle Hammett. Mr. Hammett was principal of the Forest High School, Forest, LA, for twenty-five years and I was his pastor for fifteen years. After I resigned as his pastor, but before I moved, Mr. Hammett came by the house for a visit, and as he started to leave he paused, turned and made a statement that, while I cannot recall it verbatim, I will never forget what it meant to me. As I remember it, he said, "You often hear criticism of pastors because of the behavior of their children. I just want to tell you that during the time you have been here (fifteen years) your sons have never conducted themselves in such a way as to give anyone an opportunity to criticize you. If they had I would have heard about it." Now, he didn't say anything about my wife (Becky), but I have always been amazed at the respect church members have had for her. But, again, if she had given anyone an opportunity, some would have attacked her and they would have attacked me because of her.

Let me be quick to add that I have never known, or even heard of many pastor's wives who ever invited criticism because of a moral lapse. Then what are the mistakes the pastor's wife might make that will invite attacks against her husband? They may not be "mistakes" at all - just a failure to

reckon with fallen human nature. For example, Becky has worked will with children and adults in Sunday School and other organizations, but if she had worked in the nursery or if she had been in a position to make decisions about music and musicians, she would have opened her self to criticism. If the pastor becomes involved in some controversy - and someone will invariably involved him - the problem may escalate of his wife is also involved. There are other problem areas for the pastor's wife. My wife has helped and encouraged those who worked with youth, but she has never been a youth leader or teacher. Children love having one of their public school teachers as a Sunday School teacher. Young people may not.

My father in the ministry told me when I was a teenager that the devil can get into a church through the music program quicker than any other way. Some would amend that by adding the nursery. I have just read e-mail concerning three churches in one area that have been deeply divided over music, two of which have split and the third seems certain to split in the near future. If the pastor's wife is a gifted soloist, pianist, or organist she will probably have many opportunities to serve. But if there are pianists and organists in the church who play as well or better, she had better be very careful if she wants to avoid problems.

When criticism comes the minister of the Gospel had better be ready to offer a defense of his position, whether it is a personal matter or a doctrinal issue. For example, if the pastor preaches that the Bible is the inspired Word of God - the perfect Word of the perfect God - he may be asked if he means that it is inerrant. If he believes it is inerrant, they may want to know if he believes inerrancy is limited to the original manuscripts (based on claims of Scripture), or if that also applies to the King James Version ("It was good enough for Paul and Silas"). He may also discover that there are some people who are afraid of the term "inerrant" because they feel that some people have politicized the term. He needs to be prepared to offer a defense - but he need not be defensive.

9:4 - DO WE NOT HAVE A RIGHT TO EAT AND DRINK? *"Don't we have the right to food and drink?"* Literally, he asks, "Have we no right..." The double negative demands that we assume that some of them did not think they had the right. Vincent points out that means a right to eat "at the expense of the church" [VINCENT]. Paul and his fellow missionaries have the same right to eat and drink as others, but there is more at stake here than his rights. The word "right" in these verses is the same word (*exousia*) translated "freedom" in 8:9. "It links the chapters, though Paul's subject here was not sacrificial meat but ordinary food. "To bring out the meaning of these rhetorical questions the phrase 'at the expense of the church' could be added to verses 4-5 (cf. Matt. 10:10-11)" [BKC].

When, as a teenager, I was asked by our Associational Missionary, M. C. Waldrup, to preach in mission churches in the Mississippi Delta. When I moved on to Mississippi College I did supply preaching for some time and before my Junior year I was called as pastor of the Dockery Baptist church, Cleveland, MS. It was not uncommon in those days for someone to ask me, "Do you believe in playing cards?", or "Do you play cards?" Obviously, these people associated card playing with gambling. When I saw that this was a problem for some people, I decided that for the sake of my witness with those people it would be better if I did not play any card games at all. I did not want to get into a discussion about Rook or other card games that I placed in the same category with dominoes, checkers, or chess. The only exception I made was when I played children's games, like

Monopoly or Uno, with my sons. I had a right to play them, but for the sake of my witness I elected not to exercise my right.

9:5 - A RIGHT. *Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?* The answer to this question is made obvious by the previous verses. They had to agree that he did indeed have the same right as others “to take along a believing wife.” This is a plea for the support of a preacher’s wife and children. In Paul’s case his commitment to the cause of Christ precluded marriage. That was one of the basic rights he had passed up in order to give the ministry his undivided attention.

The NAS translates it right. The KJV has “a sister, a wife,” and unfortunately some have “over-interpreted” it. Vincent explains,

Sister means *a Christian woman*, a fellow-member of the Church, as Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 7:15; James 2:15. It is in apposition with *wife*: A wife *that is a sister or believer*. Such an one has also the right, like her husband, to be maintained by the Church. Some of the fathers claimed that not a wife was meant, but a female attendant (*serviens mantrona*) who contributed to the maintenance of the apostles as certain women ministered to Christ. There is no foundation for this. It is contradicted by the example of Peter cited at the end of this verse; compare Matthew 8:14; and besides, the point of the argument is that these companions should be maintained. Such a practice, however, did grow up in the Church, but was abolished by the Council of Nicaea on account of its abuses. Stanley remarks that the fact of these women accompanying their husbands, may be explained by the necessity of females to gain access to and to baptize the female converts in Greece and in oriental countries; the same necessity which gave rise to the order of deaconesses [VINCENT: QV].

AS THE REST. From this, are we to infer that all the other apostles were married - or that all of the apostles had the right to be married and to take along their wife? We know that Peter was married - Jesus healed his mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14), and that “the rest of the apostles and Christ's brothers, and Cephas” (Peter) were either married or had a right to be. Why did he single out Peter here? It was probably because of the use of his name by one of the divisions in the church at Corinth. It may also have been because of his prominence in the early church. Paul mentioned James by name in Galatians 1:19 as one of the Lord’s brothers.

9: 6 - BARNABAS AND I. *Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?*

With the word “or” Paul puts himself and Barnabas on the opposite side from “the rest” in verse 5. This is the first time he has mentioned Barnabas since they separated before the Second Missionary Journey. Paul and Barnabas received no support from the church in Antioch when they went on the first great missionary journey. They had to work to pay their own way. The Philippian Church seemed to have been the only church that offered Paul any financial aid (Phil. 4:15). There was no more compulsion on Paul and Barnabas to support themselves than upon the other workers for Christ. They renounced no right in being voluntarily independent.

In this verse, Paul is responding to criticism we are not given in the epistle. He has been made aware of it and he answers the charges. Possible some looked down on these missionaries because they were bi-vocational. Had they supported Peter and Appolos but offered no support to Paul? Whatever the case might have been, he asks them Is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living while you support others? He had the right to be supported by those to whom he ministered, but he did not insist on this right (1 Thess. 2:9).

9:7 - WHO ... SERVES. *“Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?”* To prove his claim to the right to receive pay for preaching Paul used the illustrations of the soldier (vs. 7), the husbandman (vs. 7), the shepherd (vs. 7), the ox treading out the grain (vs. 8), the ploughman (vs. 10), the priests in the Temple (vs. 13). A soldier is paid by the government, a farmer lives on his crops, and a shepherd shares in what his flock produces. A minister is a spiritual soldier (2 Tim. 2:3), a farmer (3:6-8), and shepherd (1 Pet. 5:2). Robertson says that this is “proof enough in all conscience, and yet not enough for churches who even today starve their pastors in the name of piety” [ATR].

WHO PLANTS A VINEYARD. Who tends a flock? Paul likens the pastor to a soldier, vine dresser, or shepherd. He contends with the world, he plants churches, he exercises a shepherd’s care over them.

9:8 - HUMAN JUDGMENT. *I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?* Paul uses illustrations from daily life but he also has some from a higher order - from the Scripture.

THE LAW ALSO. Perhaps objection was made that the Scripture does not support the practice of paying preachers, an objection still made by stingy, greedy people. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament stress that the minister is to be supported by the congregation.

9:9 - IT IS WRITTEN. *For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?* He points to Deut. 25:4 to vindicates his claim. God cares for the ox, as He cares for all animals (Ps. 36:6; Matt. 10:29), “but still more for man, the head of the animal creation. If we show consideration for the needs of animals that serve us, how much more should we care for men who devote their lives to ministering to us? It is a church’s responsibility to see that their minister is adequately paid for his work” [NCWB].

9:10 - FOR OUR SAKE. *“Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.”* All Scripture was written for our benefit, this passage from the Pentateuch being no exception.

PLOW IN HOPE. That is, in hope of profit or benefit from his work. “The thresher” threshes in hope of partaking of his crops. Paul is making the point that the minister has a right to benefit from his labors. There is nothing new in this. The Twelve Tribes were expected to support the priests in the Old Testament.

It is God’s will for churches to provide for his needs of those who serve them. This should be done in such a way that he can meet his obligations and live with dignity. There are church members who will strip the pastor of his dignity by under paying him, or by fighting to avoid giving the pastor a cost of living increase at budget time, when in fact, the church that only provides a cost of living increase never gives their pastor a raise. Often churches that do not keep up with the cost of living think the pastor should be grateful for what they are doing for him, when in reality they are lagging behind other churches. The only way one pastors will get a raise is to move to another church.

A very godly pastor, the late H. R. Herrington, had announced his retirement and some of his members asked, “How they would ever find another pastor like you?” He told some of them that they were going to have to double their current salary. He knew they had dropped behind other churches, but he had never mentioned it to them. He never complained. He completed his twenty-five year pastorate and retired gracefully. He was applying Paul’s principle. He had a right but he did not insist on it.

9:11 - IF WE SOWED. *If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?* There are two conditions of the first class (“if we sow,” “if we reap”), both assumed to be true. Just as the farmer has a right to expect to benefit from his work, those who sow “spiritual things” have a right to benefit from their work. “Mere physical necessities, which were all the Corinthians had to offer, would have been small enough return for the infinitely more precious spiritual treasures they had received” [NCWB]. Some churches honor the Lord by being generous with their ministers. Others leave a lot to be desired. “Material things” denotes material support.

Southern Baptists, through the Cooperative Program, seek to meet the needs of missionaries in various countries all the time. Because of the diligence of their leaders and the generosity of members of local churches they have eliminated some of these problems to which Paul was subjected in providing for the Lord’s servants on the mission field today. Support for those on the mission field is often stronger in the local church than support for their own pastor.

9:12 - THE RIGHT. *If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.* Clearly, all the Lord’s servants have the right to receive a salary and expenses from the church they serve. This much he has established.

A fourth line of appeal was made to the precedent of other Christian leaders. Paul had earlier alluded to the ministry of Peter (Cephas) (v. 5). Though unattested, it is probable that Peter ministered in Corinth (cf. 1:12; 3:22; 15:5) and was supported during that time by the church. The same was probably also true of Apollos (1:12;

3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12). If the church supported them, their founding father Paul was surely no less deserving [BKC].

DO NOT WE YET MORE? Paul and his companions had more right to be provided for than others who served at Corinth after their departure because of Paul's peculiar relationship to that church as founder and apostle. By using the plural he includes Silas and Timothy.

WE DID NOT USE THIS RIGHT. Paul deliberately declined to use his right to pay in Corinth. The circumstances were such that he elected to relinquish his rights to avoid problems when he founded the church and ministered to them.

THAT WE WILL CAUSE NO HINDRANCE. If they supported other ministers - and apparently they did - Paul was more deserving of their support, but he turned it down to avoid being a "hindrance to the Gospel of Christ." Luke records the beginning of their ministry in Corinth in Acts 18:1-5:

After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

Remember that Paul was responding to critics in this defense of his ministry at Corinth. If they criticized him for working without pay, just imagine what they would have said if he had exercised his right and asked for support. Their criticism reveals a lot more about these critics than it does about Paul and his co-workers. At the same time, the minister must be very careful about money.

I was saved when I was twelve years old, called when I was thirteen, licensed to the Gospel ministry at seventeen, and ordained at nineteen. My father-in-the-ministry, M. C. Waldrup, took me around by the side of the auditorium of the Green River Baptist Mission, seven miles west of Sledge, Mississippi and "had a little talk with me" before I was licensed. We had another talk in my home before I was ordained. He told me frankly that he was opposed to my ordination because I had not been called by a church to be their pastor. I had, however, served as a mission pastor for the two previous summers. The pastor of our sponsoring church, Henning Andrews, had come to see me and told me that the Lula Baptist Church, Lula, Mississippi, had observed me for a number of years and they had a lot of confidence in my ministry and wanted to ordain me if I felt that was the Lord's will. I explained this to Brother Waldrup and he supported me and participated in the service.

Back to that "little talk." He told me there were two great dangers facing a pastor, and either could destroy his ministry. The two dangers he said, are women and money. Even the suspicion of an

impropriety in either area will seriously threaten one's ministry. As I recall, my father in the ministry said, "A farmer can beat someone out of five hundred dollars and in time people may forget about; and they will never condemn other farmers because of it. But if a preacher beats someone out of five cents there are people who will never forget it." If I were to sit down today with a teenager who had been called to preach the Gospel, I think I would pass along his advice. I might add that he does not have to beat anyone out of five cents, all he has to do is to be suspected of it.

Paul had been criticized when he had not received money. He showed great wisdom in refusing to exercise his rights. At the same time, he stresses that every minister has a right to be supported by the church.

9:13 - THOSE WHO PERFORM SACRED SERVICES. *"Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?"* The priests were supported by the people (Num. 18:8-24). The Jews in the congregation were well aware of the provisions God made for the priests and Levites in the Mosaic Law and could explain this to the Gentile converts.

Paul had temporarily interrupted his catalog of illustrations on the right of recompense to underscore the rationale behind his own refusal to exercise that right, despite its general practice by other worthy servants of Christ (v. 5). He then offered a fifth example in support of the right of remuneration by citing the practice of the priesthood. Old Testament priests were remunerated for their service (Num. 18:8-32), and so were the pagan priests with whom the Corinthians were probably more familiar (cf. 1 Cor. 8:10) [BKC].

9:14 - SO ALSO THE LORD DIRECTED. Just as the Lord commanded the people to support the Old Testament priests, he: directed that *"those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel."* The NIV renders the verse, "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel."

The Lord Jesus Christ directed that ministers of the gospel should receive compensation for their services. Paul devotes an extended paragraph to the argument that the ministers of the gospel should receive compensation in terms of "material things," by which he means money, possessions, and other benefits (v. 11). He declares that this is an axiom of the Law (v. 9). The matter is illustrated by the Levitical priesthood, who "partake of the offerings of the altar" (v. 13). Nevertheless, Paul himself has asked for no stipend (v. 15) [BSB].

The Lord has made his argument for the minister's salary complete for all time. He has "directed" (NAS), "commanded" (NKJV, NIV), "ordained" (KJV) that they which preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel. "Evidently Paul was familiar with the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7f. either in oral or written form. He has made his argument for the minister's salary complete for all time" [ATR]. Tertullian, bishop of Smyrna, wrote (*Apology*, chap. 39) that it was the custom in his day to take voluntary offerings from the people, and after the expenses of the Lord's Supper had been met, the bishop would allot a stipend for the various ministers of the church in

proportion to their service. Anything that was left over was given to the poor, especially to orphans and widows.

Churches that are generous with their pastor and other staff members both honor God's command and show their love for His servant. They should love the pastor and honor the Lord's command enough to make a study at least once a year, prior to adopting a new budget, to determine what the staff member's salary, expenses, and benefits should be. Help is available to Southern Baptist churches through the state convention headquarters - usually through the Church-Minister Relations office.

The pastor should be a good steward of his income by tithing, giving offerings beyond the tithe, and by a proper use of that which is left after tithes and taxes. He must not be greedy or materialistic - and furthermore, he must by all means not appear to be materialistic. Don Harris was Tax Assessor in West Carroll Parish in Louisiana for several terms. I observed that when he replaced an automobile he bought a used car or truck. He explained that because his office was a position of trust, any show of affluence might cause someone to question how he handled the people's business. That was a good move politically. It is far more important for the minister because there is a lot more at stake - he is dealing with the Lord's business.

There are some churches in which people are so critical of the pastor, support him so begrudgingly, that only a bi-vocational pastor seems to be able to work effectively with them. They will praise him for not "preaching for money," but the real problem is theirs.

Many people are not aware of what it costs to be a pastor, especially in a smaller church. Around 1985 a pastor told me that it cost him \$500.00 a month to be pastor of his church. I thought that was a rather high until I went back to my tax records and found they were about the same. We both had a lot of out of town hospital calls to make. If we had told our people what our net income was, some of the people would not have believed it. So we kept quite about it. I still do.

2. Paul's Restrictions (9:15-27)

9:15 - BUT I HAVE USED NONE OF THESE THINGS. Paul writes, and they had to be aware of the truth in his words, that he had never taken advantages of what was rightfully his. He had never received anything materially from them for his work in their church. Furthermore, he says, *"And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one."* Because of the peculiar circumstances, Paul refused to receive the pay that was due him.

FOR IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR ME TO DIE. We cannot miss the intensity of Paul's feelings. He knew the circumstances there and refused to leave himself open to criticism. He was apparently receiving enough of that without leaving the door open to it. "This verse eliminates any possible suspicion of Paul's motives: he would die of hunger rather than hinder the gospel. Paul took satisfaction in his ability to minister without pay, since he did not have a family to support. Note Abraham's similar attitude in Genesis 14:22, 23" [NCWB].

9:16 - UNDER COMPULSION. Paul here states that which should be obvious to every God-called preacher of the Word, even if some lay persons do not believe it: *“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”* Paul now explains why it was so important for him to preach without charge. He could not take any credit for preaching the Gospel because it was his responsibility - the calling which his Lord had given him. A similar attitude is found in Luke 17:10: “if you merely obey me, you should not consider yourselves worthy of praise. For you have simply done your duty!” (TLB). “But it was not Paul’s duty to minister without pay; on the contrary, he had every right to be supported by the churches. Serving without charge was Paul’s way of freely offering to God more than had been demanded of him, and his joy came from seeing that through such sacrifice his ministry became even more effective in winning men to Christ [NCWB].

When I was a youth I worshiped in a mission church where we had earlier services than most churches in area. I got home each Sunday morning just as R. G. Lee, pastor of began his sermon of a Memphis television station. Later, I never missed an opportunity to hear Dr. Lee in person when he spoke at churches or at conventions in my area. I have never forgotten one story he told about visiting a very busy business man at his office. When he asked to see the man, the receptionist asked if he had an appointment and when he told her he did not, she began to inform him that her employer did not see anyone except by appointment. As she was speaking the man he had been asked to visit opened the door, and seeing Dr. Lee, demanded to know, “Who is he?” When she told him, he declared in a forceful voice, “You preachers are all alike; cut off your salary and you would stop preaching tomorrow!” Dr. Lee responded, “That’s a lie!” The man stood there staring at him for a minute or so and then invited him into his office. Dr. Lee explained, “You can pay me for what I do Monday through Saturday, but nobody can pay me for what I do on Sunday.” Every preacher knows what he meant.

When I was about seventeen I was invited to preach a little mission one Sunday. At that time we had a 1951 Chevrolet pickup, the family car was either broken down or was needed by the family. I could use the truck, but my father was afraid the tires were too worn for the trip. A family on the farm had an old Ford car that was giving them trouble, so I could not use it. But there was good news - the tires were the same size as those on the truck. The bad news was that the wheels were different. So I took off all four wheels, one at a time, from each vehicle, let the air out, broke down the tire, removed the tire and tube. I then swapped out the tires and tubes and pumped them all up by hand. I drove to the mission and preached that Sunday and then on Monday I had to reverse the procedure in order of the tire swap. It was like fixing sixteen flats, all by hand, but I was not going to miss the opportunity to preach.

I preached in jails, rescue missions, “old folks homes” (that’s what they were called then!), and the state penitentiary. I preached in churches, missions, and homes. I understand the “compulsion” of which Paul wrote. Jesus had called him, the Holy Spirit led him. He could do nothing else but preach, and deserved no credit for doing it. This divine compulsion is part of the evidence that one is called to preach (Jer. 20:9).

9:17 - A STEWARDSHIP. *“For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.”* The NIV states it clearly: “If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.” This is a difficult argument to follow, but Vincent’s comments should be helpful:

The exact line of Paul’s thought is a matter of much discussion, and must be determined if we are to understand the force of the several words. It appears to be as follows: He has been speaking of the fact that he preaches at his own cost. He so glories in this that he would rather die than surrender this ground of boasting. Compare 2 Corinthians 11:7-12; 12:13-16. For it is the only ground of boasting that is possible to him. The preaching of the Gospel in itself furnishes no such ground, for one cannot boast of what he needs must do; and the necessity to preach the Gospel is laid on him under penalty of a “woe” if he refuse. He goes on to show, in two propositions, why and how there is no cause for boasting in preaching under necessity. 1. Supposing there were no necessity, but that he preached of free will, like the twelve who freely accepted the apostleship at Christ’s call, then he would rightfully have a reward, as a free man entering freely upon service; and so would have some ground of glorying. 2. But supposing I became an apostle under constraint, as was the fact, then I am not in the position of a free man who chooses at will, but of a slave who is made household steward by his master’s will, without his own choice, and consequently I have no claim for reward and no ground of boasting. What, then, is my reward? What ground of boasting have I? Only this: to make the Gospel without charge. In *this* I may glory [VINCENT].

Paul’s call was clear and he worked willingly. “Willingly or unwillingly, Paul could not escape his responsibility to preach the gospel, because a stewardship (responsibility) had been committed to him, and he was under orders to preach even though he was never paid (cf. Luke 17:10)” [RSB]. It has been suggested that the only reward he had for his willing work was to make the Gospel free of expense. Surely, Paul looked for a greater reward than personally glorying in his having refused pay for his work.

From time to time, I hear reports of preachers who leave the ministry for one reason or another. Some, of course, resign or retire from one area of ministry to focus on another, but some just quit. I have been told that there are many seminary graduates who are working at secular jobs in, or near the city in which their seminary is located. They want to find a church, if they do not have to move, but do not want a church if it means a change in their lifestyle. It is hard to understand that in light of Paul’s great exclamation in the previous verse: “for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”

9:18 - WHAT THEN IS MY REWARD? If I did not receive any material reward for my service, he asks, *“What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.”* This is a question every minister of the gospel should ask - he should be able to answer it. Did he then not have any reward for his service? Yes. In fact; two rewards are mentioned. First of all, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he offered the Gospel free of charge (vs. 15), and no one could deny him that (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9-

10). In the second place, he had the opportunity to see the Gospel at work among those to whom he preached (1 Cor. 9:19, 23), and these results, the believers themselves, were his reward (cf. 2 Cor. 7:3-4).

The word translated “reward” (*misthos*) may also refer to a wage. Paul had shunned material recompense, but he was not without a reward or return for his labor. He had the joy of reaping. To widen that harvest he would gladly give up certain **rights**, among them the right to material support, in order to enjoy both the integrity of his boast about his ministry and the results of his ministry (cf. John 4:36) [BKC].

9:19 - I AM FREE. *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.* Paul had been discussing his sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel. Now he turns to “the adaptability in his relationships to others. Just as he did not allow material things to hinder his ministry, so he did not let narrow attitudes or rigid approaches become obstacles to his testimony” [NCWB]. He was free, but he never mistook his freedom for license. He made himself a slave to all for the cause of Christ. Robertson quotes Edwards, “He refuses payment in money that he may make the greater gain in souls” [ATR]. Every minister of the Gospel must make adopt a similar philosophy with regards to money and ministry.

Many sacrificial demands are necessary to evangelize effectively. Although we have freedom in Christ, love for the lost world constrains us to assume the servant role and be willing to become all things to all people to win them to Christ. We serve their needs rather than asserting our rights. We must identify with people, sacrifice our own pleasure, and pour ourselves out to them if we are to point them to Jesus Christ [DSB].

9:20 - THAT I MIGHT WIN. *“To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law.”* Paul wisely adapted to the group to whom he ministered. When he was ministering to Jews, he became as one under the Mosaic Law. If he had not done so he would have reached very few Jews. But when he was ministering to Gentiles (those who are without law), he adjusted his approach in order to win them to faith in Jesus Christ. However, whether working with Jews (those under the Law), or Gentiles (those without the Law, vs. 21) he was always in submission to a higher law, the law of Christ.

AS A JEW. Paul was a Jew and was not ashamed of it - in fact he had been a very pious Pharisee (Acts 18:18; 21.-26). But there is more to it than that. This speaks of both position and perspective.

NOT BEING MYSELF UNDER THE LAW. He was emancipated from the law as a means of salvation, yet he knew how to communicate with those under the Law because of his background and his life with them.

Though Paul was primarily an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:8), he never lost his

concern for the salvation of his own people (Rom. 9:3). He made it his custom to seek out the synagogue in each town he entered (Acts 17:2) in order **to win the Jews** (Rom. 1:16). No verse points out more starkly Paul's own consciousness of what he was, both before and after meeting Christ. Before, he was the Jew's **Jew**, faultless with regard to legalistic righteousness (Phil. 3:6). Afterward, he was a new man (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20), who had found in Christ the righteousness he had sought (Rom. 10:4; 1 Cor. 1:30). He was still a Hebrew (2 Cor. 11:22; Phil 3:5), but he was no longer a Jew living according to the Law (**I... am not under the law**). Still, he was willing to subject himself to the scruples of the Jews (e.g., Acts 21:23-36) in order to gain a hearing for the gospel and **to win** them to Christ. Yet he never compromised the essence of the gospel at the heart of which was salvation by faith, not works (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9) and freedom from legalism (Gal. 2:4-5) [BKC].

9:21 - WITHOUT LAW. *"...To those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law."* This denotes the heathen people who were outside the Mosaic Law (vs. 2:14), not lawless (Luke 1-2:37; Acts 2-23). Paul knew the philosophies and religious beliefs of the pagans with whom he worked and could quote the heathen poets (Acts 14:15; 17:23; 24:25). The Gentiles, having never lived under the Law of God were brought under the law of Christ through faith in Him. Paul was a Hellenized Jew from Tarsus. He spoke their language and understood the world-view, philosophies and thought processes of Gentiles. The Lord guided him to develop an approach to the Gentiles that would enable him to reach them for Christ.

9:22 - THE WEAK. *"To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some."* This denotes weak and inexperienced Christians - babes in Christ - who have not learned to apply their freedom in Christ in their everyday life. Because of their spiritual immaturity and doctrinal limitations they allowed insignificant issues, such as whether to eat meat offered to idols, to become major obstacles to their growth in faith.

When Paul, the great missionary, was working with weak Christians, he restricted his liberty, as he has explained in verses 9-13 of this chapter. This is the chief point, the climax, in his plea for the principle of love on the part of the enlightened for the benefit of the unenlightened (8:13). He thus brings home his point about renouncing pay for preaching as an illustration of love (8:13).

He became "all things to all men" on the mission field. This does mean that he tried to be all things to all people at the same time (play acting), but in differing situations he adapted to the situation so as to win as many as possible. Winning the lost was his goal and worth all cost of adaptations. In matters of principle Paul was adamant as about Titus (Acts 16:3).

Remarkable elasticity is necessary in the major task of evangelism. Paul concludes a long sentence emphasizing his own mode of life by stressing that he had "become all things to all," so that he might be effective in reaching some. The statement implies absolutely no compromise of theological or moral truths, but flexibility in methodology [BSB].

To summarize, we see that “Among those with scruples (even morbid scruples), Paul avoided those things which they scrupulously avoided in order to place no stumbling block in their way which would make it more difficult to win them to a better appreciation of Christian Liberty” [BRUCE]. A practical application of their principle is needed today.

9:23 - FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL. *“I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”* One can sense the great missionary’s evangelistic zeal, his passion for souls. He was totally committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is possible for a pastor or evangelist to have a zeal for evangelism that is primarily focused on their own success - baptisms, Sunday School enrollment, church growth. There are those who boast of their numbers and look scornfully upon those whose numbers do not measure up to their ideas of evangelistic zeal. I have known pastors to have great success - in terms of numbers - in one church and then witness very little growth in another situation.

Paul had a zeal for the Gospel, but he did not manifest it in boasting of the appraised value of his church, his staff, his baptisms, or the annual report to his denominational headquarters. He understood that he could save no one. He planted, others watered, but on God could produce the harvest.

FELLOW PARTAKER. We might render this, “so that I may become copartner with others in the Gospel.” The Greek text emphasizes “that Paul shared together with those he brought to Christ in the blessings of the gospel. These blessings included both the present reward referred to in 9:18, and also the future reward Paul was determined to win, which he discusses in 9:24-27” [NCWB].

9:24 - A RACE. *“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.”* The word for a race is from an Old word (*stadioi*), meaning to place. Paul plays on the Corinthians’ knowledge of the Isthmian games, which were held every two years near Corinth. Greek cities had races - courses for runners like that of Olympia. The fixed distance of a foot race in the Isthmian games was 606.75 feet.

THE PRIZE. We run the race of life with our eyes on the prize. In some of the athletic events with which Paul and his readers were familiar, the prize (award, trophy) was set on a pedestal at the finish line, so that participants ran the race with their eyes on the prize. We are urged to run the race of life with a sense of purpose - we run to win - and we can all be winners in Jesus Christ. This use of an athletic event as an illustration or metaphor is not unique in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Philippian church, “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14). In Hebrews 12:1-2, we find:

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and

perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

9:25 - EXERCISES SELF-CONTROL. *“Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.”* The word for self-control is a common adjective for one who controls himself. The athlete must control (discipline) himself in all things. Training for ten months was required under the direction of trainers. Abstinence from wine was required as well as a strict diet and regimen of exercise and other habits.

RECEIVE A PERISHABLE WREATH. The NKJV has, “obtain a perishable crown.” The winners in the Isthmian games received a wreath of pine. Another translation is “a corruptible crown.” The crown was not corrupt when they received it, but before long it would wither and dry out, and then it would lose leaves or needles. Though highly prized, it was “perishable.”

9:26 - RUN ... NOT WITHOUT AIM. *“Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air...”* Paul’s objective is clear, with Christ as his goal (Phil. 3:14). He kept his eyes on Christ as Christ watched him.

I BOX. He changes metaphors, but he is still using a familiar metaphor of an athletic event in the Isthmian games with which these Corinthians were familiar.

AS NOT BEATING THE AIR. Many years ago I was studying this passage and found an explanation which satisfied me for the time. One commentary claimed that this was a reference to shadowboxing. But if the reference is to shadowboxing, the metaphor would not be of the actual fight but training for the fight. So this would then denote wild punches (misses) thrown during an actual boxing match. My first love among all sports when I was a teenager and young adult was boxing. I memorized all the champions of all the divisions and read everything I could find about the great fighters, John L. Sullivan, to Jack Dempsey, to my all time favorite Rocky Marciano - whom I saw referee a Golden Glove bout in Jackson, MS. I knew about the lighter weight division greats, Willie Pep, Henry Armstrong, Sugar Ray Robinson, and many more. I would sit up and listen Don Dunphy call the Friday night fights from Madison Square Garden. Who could forget Rocky Graziano and Tony Zale?

Like everything else, boxing evolved and the broadcasts gave way to telecasts, and in recent years they started adding an interesting statistic at the end of each round. Now they report the punches thrown and the punches landed. If one fighter throws one hundred punches in a round and lands thirty, he is probably win the round over an opponent who throws fifty punches and lands ten. The punches thrown that did not land were like “beating the air.” Beating the air does not hurt the opponent, it does not score points, but it can be exhausting - in fact a miss can take more out of a fighter than a hit.

9:27 - BUT I DISCIPLINE MY BODY. *“But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so*

that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.” He changes metaphors again: “I discipline my body.” The KJV has, “But I keep under my body,” which is not easy for the modern reader to comprehend, especially if the verse is taken out of context. The NIV reads, “I beat my body.” Some think Paul is saying that his opponent is now his own body, and with that translation, it is understandable that some may adopt this interpretation. Another translation is, “But I buffet my body.” Buffet is from *hupopion*, the part of the face under the eyes, thus a blow in the face, to beat the face until it is black and blue. There is an account is given by Rodolfo Lanziani (“Ancient Rome in the Light of Recent Discoveries”) of the

exhuming at the foundation of the Temple of the Sun, erected by Aurelian, of a sitting bronze statue of a boxer. The accompanying photograph shows the construction of the fur-lined boxing-gloves secured by thongs wound round the forearm half-way to the elbow. The gloves cover the thumb and the hand to the first finger-joints. The writer says; “The nose is swollen from the effects of the last blow received; the ears resemble a flat and shapeless piece of leather; the neck, the shoulders, the breast, are seamed with scars.... The details of the fur-lined boxing-gloves are also interesting, and one wonders how any human being, no matter how strong and powerful, could stand the blows from such weapons as these gloves, made of four or five thicknesses of leather, and fortified with brass knuckles” [VINCENT].

Paul is not condemning the body because it is evil (like some of the Gnostics). It is like the horses in a chariot race, which must be kept well in hand by whip and rein if the prize is to be won. Paul was not willing for his body to be his master. If we go with self-discipline, as in the NAS, (I discipline my body), as here, it means that he trains and disciplines his body so that it will serve him well in the match (the arena in which he lives out the Christian life). A well disciplined body will perform much better in any athletic contest than an undisciplined body.

We have been considering the physical body. However, some see in this a reference to the old sinf “nature embodied in the flesh, with its selfishness and evil desire that are contrary to the new life in Christ (see Rom. 8:13)” [NCWB].

MAKE IT MY SLAVE. This means to bring one’s body “into subjection” (NKJV). The metaphor of the victor teaching the vanquished as captive and slave. A well conditioned athlete does not live for his body, or serve his body. Instead, he makes it serve him. I have known a few serious bodybuilders. When they are preparing for competition they follow a very rigid exercise and diet regimen. One young man told me that each evening before going to bed he plans every thing he will allow himself to eat the next day and never varies from it. I might have been a bodybuilder had it not been for some basic obstacles - like diet, exercise, and motivation! While my friend planned his meals, I just thought about where and what I would eat. Of course, no one had to wonder which one of us was the bodybuilder

AFTER THAT I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS. Paul says that the discipline to which he subjected his body was to assure himself that while he preached to others he himself would not be disqualified. What Paul has in mine is his being rejected for the prize, not his entrance to the race. He

will fail to win if he breaks the rules of the game (Matthew 7:22f) [ATR: 150]. Self-discipline is important. It involves voluntary curtailment of one's rights at times.

C. Exhortations (10:1 - 11:1)

Paul begins this section by laying a foundation for warning them of God's discipline. There was the possibility that these believers at Corinth, considering all their gifts and blessings, might think that they were unlikely candidates for God's discipline (1:5). However, no one should be proud and arrogant thinking that they are exempt from the discipline of the Lord if he is unfaithful to Him. To illustrate this truth he points to another people who, though both chosen and blessed by God, nevertheless were subjected to severe discipline at the hand of the Lord against Whom they had rebelled. "Israel of old was reckless and unrestrained after her physical and spiritual freedom from tyranny in Egypt. As a result God meted out severe discipline by cutting short the lives of many Israelites. They were all in the "race" (9:24), but almost all were disqualified (9:27) in spite of their advantages" [BKC].

10:1 - OUR FATHERS. *"For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea..."* Remember that Paul did not divide this letter into chapters and verses. "For" makes a transition from the discussion of the latter part of chapter 9 to the exhortations of this chapter 10. He now uses the nation of Israel as an illustration of some people who were disqualified (9:27). He uses the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness to confirm his statement concerning himself in 9:26f, and as a powerful warning to the Corinthians who may be tempted to flirt with the idolatrous practices of their neighbors.

ALL UNDER THE CLOUD. The Israelites marched under the pillar of cloud by day (Exodus 13:21f; 14:19). The mystic cloud was a symbol of the presence of the Lord with His people. The "all" is significant. There are five "alls" in verses 1-4, denoting five advantages which were enjoyed by ancient Israel. First, "all" the Israelites enjoyed the supernatural guidance (Ex. 13:21) and protection of YAHWEH (Ex. 14:19-20) during the Exodus - they were "all under the cloud." The saints at Corinth had also experienced God's guidance (cf. Luke 1:79) and protection (cf. 1 Peter 1:5).

ALL PASSED THROUGH THE SEA. The second "all" denotes the second privilege, or blessing. All of the Israelites "passed through the sea" and experienced a miraculous deliverance from those Egypt, which metaphorically shows that they passed from death to life (Ex. 14:21-28). The Corinthians had also experienced a miraculous deliverance from spiritual death - (that is salvation, Heb. 2:14-15; Gal. 1:4).

10:2 - ALL WERE BAPTIZED. Continuing, he writes, *"... and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."* The Israelites "were all baptized into Moses," meaning that they were "united with their spiritual head, God's servant, who became the object of their trust (Ex. 14:31; cf. John 5:45). The Corinthians had been baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) of which He is the Head (Eph. 1:22) and in whom they trusted (Matt. 12:21; Eph. 1:12)" [BKC].

BAPTIZED. Baptized? In the Old Testament? This is fourteen hundred years before the baptism of John and before Christian baptism - fourteen hundred year before the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How can he possibly stretch this to mean baptism? The picture is clear. The cloud covered the people while the sea rose in walls on each side of them as they marched across. The immersion was complete with the water around them and the cloud over them. Moses was their leader then as Christ is now (See Galatians 3:27).

Baptism is a beautiful picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the believer, it is an outward manifestation of the inner experience of redemption. We read in Romans, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (6:4). The great redemptive act of God in the Old Testament was the Exodus from Egypt - the crossing of the Red Sea was both a reality and a symbol (Ex 14:1-15:18).

This event was seen by Christians as a preview of the new Passover and the new covenant which would come in Jesus. Paul drew a parallel between the crossing of the sea and Christian baptism. The "cloud" was the cloud of God's glory, representing the divine presence that surrounded them as the waters of baptism surround the Christian believer. Passing through the sea was like passing through the waters of baptism to the new life in Christ. God has one plan of redemption. What the people of the old covenant experienced in the Exodus was pointing to the fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the new Moses, who sealed the new covenant with His death and resurrection [DSB].

10:3 - ALL ATE THE SAME SPIRITUAL FOOD. This is the fourth "all" and the fourth privilege. "All" the Israelites enjoyed "spiritual food," manna - the supernatural bread from heaven (Ex. 16:4, 15). The Corinthian believers had also eaten bread from heaven - Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:31-34).

The manna (Exodus 16:13ff) was called "spiritual" because of its supernatural character. Jesus called himself the true bread from Heaven (John 6:35), which the manna typified. Just as baptism (vs 2) was the spiritual fulfillment of the meaning of the baptism in cloud and the sea of the old covenant, the Lord's Supper fulfills the meaning of God's provision of the manna and the water in the wilderness (Num 16:1-17:7).

10:4 - THAT SPIRITUAL ROCK. "*And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.*" This is the fifth "all" and the fifth privilege and blessing - "they all drank from a 'spiritual drink'" (Ex. 17:6). The change to the imperfect tense shows their continual access to the spiritual source. The rabbis had a legend that a fragment of the rock fifteen feet high followed them, gushing out water for the entire 40 years. While Paul does not make that claim, he may be alluding to this legend, giving it "a spiritual turn as a type of Christ in allegorical fashion" [ATR]. He is making use of the rabbinical method of teaching

(see Galatians 4.24). According to Paul, Christ (the “spiritual rock”) was the source of this supernatural water. “Since the incident of the rock which produced water marked the beginning of Israel’s wilderness wanderings (Ex. 17:1-7) and happened again near the ending of their wanderings (Num. 20:1-13), Paul concluded that Christ accompanied them. Christ too was the source of supernatural water for the Corinthians (cf. John 4:10-14)” [BKC].

We already have the reference to the Lord’s Supper as a fulfillment of the manna in the Wilderness. Now he completes the illustration with “that spiritual rock.” The bread and cup in the Lord’s Supper are the spiritual food and drink in the New Covenant, just as the manna and water from the rock were in the Old Covenant. “When Christ is called the ‘spiritual rock,’ it simply means that the rock which gave them living water is a symbol of Christ who gives life to those who depend upon Him. Paul meant that Christ would always be present to nourish His people wherever and whenever we call upon Him” [DSB].

It is possible that these five blessings were intended by Paul to reflect the two ordinances of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1-2) and the Lord’s Supper (vv. 3-4) which the Corinthians may have thought communicated a magical protection like similar rites in some of the mystery religions. The Corinthians did seem to have a distorted view and practice of both of these ordinances (cf. 11:17-34; 15:29) which required correction [BKC]

AND THE ROCK WAS CHRIST. Paul associates the literal rock as the real source of their sustenance in a physical sense with Christ, the spiritual Rock, the source of our spiritual sustenance. The claims that the rock followed them, gushing forth water for forty years, was nothing more than a rabbinical legend, whereas, Paul says, it was Jesus Christ Who was with Israel all the way through the Wilderness. “He definitely states here in symbolic form the preexistence of Christ” [ATR]. This does not mean that Christ in the shape of a huge rock followed them through the wilderness. It means that Christ was the source of the water that saved them, as He is the source of our sustenance today - He is the Water of Life.

10:5 - WITH MOST OF THEM. *“Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.”* He is putting it mildly. Only two of them (Joshua and Caleb) actually reached the Promised Land (Numbers 14:30-32).

LAI D LOW. The Israelites were “laid low,” as if by a hurricane. This is an explanation of the desolation brought about by the years of disobedience and wanderings in the wilderness (Numbers 14). We have often seen pictures on television of the desolation wrought by a hurricane. Driving along the coast of Florida in a thunderstorm once, I glanced to my right, north of the highway, and saw a strange arrangement of little concrete squares. Because of the heavy rain I could not look back but I wondered what use someone was making of those rows of concrete slabs. Then it hit me - those really were slabs, slabs left when a hurricane passed through and “laid low” the entire subdivision.

10:6 - AS EXAMPLES. *Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not*

crave evil things as they also craved. The word translated “example” (*tupoe*) meant the mark of a blow - an image (type). When they were happening, they were real to the Israelites in the wilderness, but they serve as an example to us.

In 10:6-13, Paul outlines four aspects of the evil things Israel practiced in the wilderness: idolatry (v 7), fornication (v 8), testing the Lord (v 9), and grumbling (v 10).

These sins have a universal nature that is not limited to the situations either in the wilderness or at Corinth. It would be foolish, if not arrogant, for modern believers to scoff and think we cannot succumb to the same behavior. The apostle's words continue to admonish and warn Christians. We will face temptation. Temptation is not sin. God wants to help us through temptation to victory [DSB].

CRAVED. The Israelites preferred the food of Egypt to God’s manna (Num. 11:4). Fallen man naturally prefers the food of Egypt to that which God supplies. Their wandering in Wilderness for forty years while all the adult (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) were dead serves as a warning to us - to us today, not just to the ancient Corinthians. The punishment happened and it is recorded in Scripture “as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved evil things.

10:7 - DO NOT BE IDOLATERS. “*Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY”* (see Ex. 32:1-14, making of the golden calf). Literally, it is stop being idolaters, implying that some of them already were.

EAT AND DRINK. While Moses was on Sinai, the people “sat down to eat and drink.” He was on the mountain with the Lord forty days, so we should not be surprised that the people would sit down to eat food. But that is not what was happening here. Their sitting down to eat and drink was a prelude to a drunken orgy - as soon as they finished eating and drinking they “stood up to play.” Eating and drinking was a stepping stone to idolatry by these murmuring Israelites who would rather return to slavery than face the wilderness equipped only with faith. The Corinthians are to avoid idolatrous festivals such as the one Moses witnessed when he saw the people singing and dancing around the golden calf (Exodus 32:18f).

The lesson is not limited to the Corinthians. It is a warning to us today to remain faithful to the one and only God, and to avoid any association with false gods. Such activity involves us in the demonic realm. New Age religions have so influenced our society today that many people are committing idolatry without giving it a thought. The so-called Christian cults (Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses) and New Age, or postmodern, religions often use Christian terminology to seduce members of evangelical churches who are not well grounded in Scripture. Little do many professing Christians know just how vulnerable they really are. Their knowledge of God and His Word is so shallow and their understanding of theology is so vague that they may be influenced by anything that sounds remotely Christian. Satan is an expert at seducing such people and leading them into idolatry. His first choice is for them to embrace a religion that is totally against Jesus Christ, but if that fails his next best thing is to involve them with a non-Christian group that sounds Christian, such as a New

Age god. The New Age Christ is a false Christ, but many people are ignorant of the fact. It has been amazing how many Christians recommend the television program, "Touched By an Angel," because it is "clean" and recommended for family viewing. I often wonder how many Christians understand that the angels portrayed are, for the most part, New Age angels and not Biblical angels.

10:8 - NOR LET US ACT IMMORALLY. This answers any question about what was meant by the quotation in the previous verse, "the people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." "...as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day." Literally, it is "and let us cease practicing fornication" - some of the Corinthian church saints had already ceased fornication (1 Corinthians 6:11; 7:2).

The connection between idolatry and immorality is seen throughout the Bible. Many false religions were in fact fertility cults. They claimed that sexual activities in the temples of their gods stimulated their gods and motivated them to bless and protect them. This was a serious problem in Corinth where prostitution was part of the worship of Aphrodite. It is believed that the roots of the religion in Corinth can be traced back to the sea-faring Phoenicians, those ancient mariners who spread commerce, culture, and religion around the Mediterranean world. If so, there is a tie to the Baal worship of Old Testament Canaan.

Immorality includes all sexual sins. America is in the throes of a sinful sexual revolution that is leaving lives ruined in its wake. State troopers in Arkansas have been quoted as saying they were often asked to arrange sexual trysts for then Governor Bill Clinton. According to them, when he returned to the car following one of these encounters he made jokes about his experiences. On one occasion he reportedly announced to the trooper that he had made a study of it in the Bible and found that oral sex was not a sin. It is amazing what one can come up with when he lets Satan guide him in his study of Scripture rather than the Holy Spirit! All immorality is sin. God's plan is one man and one woman for life - and that means in marriage. All other heterosexual relationships are sinful, and all homosexual are sinful because those relationships are perversions of God-given drives and violate His purpose for man and woman. The ungodly secular media in America, which has waged a decades long war against God, has given President Clinton a pass, including the problem of his definition of "sex," "alone," and even "is."

John MacArthur (*The Pillars of Christian Character*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 1998, pp 208) says that "In the cultural war being waged against God's kingdom, Satan seems to be using a six-step plan to rally the forces of his worldly kingdom. We can envision his plan unfolding somewhat along these lines (I will summarize some of his points):

"(1) Satan's ultimate goal is to win souls to his cause.

(2) A powerful and effective way Satan gains adherents to his system is to corrupt society...Satan influences society toward evil by exploiting people's tendencies to conform to the opinions, ideologies, and trends set forth by the news, advertising, and entertainment media. He accomplished that by simply manipulating those culturally influential forces of communication. Daily we see examples of the devil's controlling

the media...Satan's success rate can be measured by how much easier it is to be bad as society grows worse and worse.

(3) Another powerful means Satan uses to corrupt society is his destruction of the family, a fundamental cultural building block where sacrificial love can be learned on a daily basis.

(4) He can ruin the family by destroying marriage.

(5) He can destroy marriage by weakening sexual fidelity, the glue that bonds it together.

(6) Finally, Satan destroys sexual fidelity by means of the sexual revolution. This revolution, which got jump-started in the 1960s, demands that people be free to do whatever they want sexually. As we have seen, it is the centerpiece of the tragic redefinition and distortion of the biblical ideal of love. It is also the devil's most strategic tool in waging the cultural war against the city of God and all who trust in Him.

The sexual revolution will perhaps prove to be the most destructive revolution in history, far worse than any political or military revolution we have known [MACARTHUR: 28-29].

MacArthur is absolutely right about the 1960s and the media. The one thing he does not point out is that by the 1960s America had been living in its post-Christian era for one full generation. It was forty years beyond the famous Scopes Trial which popularized evolution as nothing before ever had in America. It was thirty years beyond the date (1935) Francis Shaeffer gave as the date America entered the post-Christian period, and twenty years beyond the time the Bible Belt entered the post-Christian period. The "Sixties Generation" gave us the sexual revolution, but it was a revolution in the making from some time. It was during the sixties that the Supreme Court of the United States set about to free the public from God, beginning by removing from public schools prayer (1962), Bible reading (1963), and even a nursery rhyme that did not mention God, but might lead someone to think of Him if they quoted it (1965). Every chart reflecting the moral index in America shows the destruction of our culture as the lines on the graph suddenly take a sharp upward turn.

The America many of us once knew is no more. It is incredible that the America of Washington, Madison, and Adams would decline to such a state, but we have. It is hard to believe that America would elect someone with the morals of a Bill Clinton, but it is even more amazing that when his sins were exposed (first by the foreign press) America elected him for a second term - taking advantage of a third party led by Ross Perot that split the moral vote. Daily the media exclaimed, "It's only sex," and "The economy is good." The media protected him and destroyed those who opposed him. And many naive Americans accepted whatever the media told them, not realizing that the news and entertainment media was spoonfeeding them Satan's message. The Christians who were best grounded in the Word of God were often the easiest to deceive because they grew up believing they

should be well informed, and that they would be informed if they only watched the news and read the newspaper. Little could they imagine that Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, and CNN would mislead them.

It was also in the 1960s that America was fed a steady diet of television sitcoms and movies that attacked Christian values, and mocked God and His Word, treated Jesus as a non-person, and portrayed evangelical Christians as right-wing fundamentalists (a term far worse than “communist”!). Active church families sat with their eyes glued to the set, laughing with them as a parade of characters like Archie Bunker (*All in the Family*), Fred Sanford (*Sanford and Son*), and the characters on *MASH* who systematically attacked Christian values. Later, some of the directors and producers confirmed that they were doing just that.

An assessment of what is now being served up on television, in movies, and through music will reveal just how successful Satan has been. Many Christian families have bought and paid for the satanic entertainment that destroyed their own children and broke their own hearts. It is time for a new revolution in America - Revival! That is the only hope for us.

IN ONE DAY. Twenty-three thousand were killed in one day. According to Numbers 25:9, 24,000 were killed, which probably means that 23,000 were killed in one day, and others died later..

10:9 - NOR LET US TRY THE LORD. Christians should not only abstain from immorality of ever kind, we should never put God to the test, “as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.” The KJV has “tempt” the Lord, but we must remember that finite man cannot tempt God to commit sin (James 1:13). He can, however, try Him or put Him to the test, as the Israelites did in the wilderness on more than one occasion, including the reference here and the incident recorded in Exodus 17.

When Jesus said to Satan, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (KJV), he was quoting from Deut. 6:16, where it says, “Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah” (KJV). Jesus did not mention Massah, but if we are to understand this fully we must understand that when the Israelites put God to the test at Massah He did not condemn them for doing so. Yet, in Deuteronomy he warns them never to do it again. What was the difference? At Massah they had just begun their walk with the Lord, and they had not entered a covenant relationship with them, but after Sinai God’s people are commanded never to do it again. That command has never been rescinded.

DESTROYED BY THE SERPENTS. Read the account in Numbers 21. In verse 6 we read, “The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.”

10:10 - NOR GRUMBLE. “Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.” Children of God should not grumble, as some did after the judgment on those who, led by Korah (Num. 16:41-50), rebelled against the Lord. They were destroyed by the destroyer. God is

love, He is holy. God is omnipresent, omniscient - we could go on and on listing the His attributes, but there is one thing He is not. God is never impotent. Those who try to put God to the test are treading on dangerous ground. There are grumblers in almost every church and those grumblers are in jeopardy. God will act in His own time and in His Own way, but he will take action if the guilty person does not repent.

10:11 - AN EXAMPLE. - *“Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”* God visited His judgment on the rebellious Israelites in the Wilderness, not only as punishment for their sin, but as an example for all generations from then until the end of time. So much for the well-meaning evangelists who fervently proclaim, “If God doesn’t judge America he owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology.” In the first place, God has never owes anyone an apology. In the second place, he was not setting a precedent in the Wilderness which he would follow in every case of rebellion.

I have often heard people wonder aloud why God did not strike certain blasphemers down for their blasphemy. He can do it, and if He elects to do so He will, and no one could prevent it. But He is under no obligation to Himself or anyone else to act the same way in every situation. He will always act at His Own initiative, not because some finite mind thinks he should. We already have an example of the of the terrible consequences of sin, and He does not need to repeat the example every time some individual calls for it.

UPON WHOM THE ENDS OF THE AGES HAVE COME. The plural seems to point out how one stage succeeds another in the drama of human history. Is Paul referring to the second coming of Christ as in 7:26? “The time of Jesus on earth is the central moment of history. History has meaning through Christ's saving work. He fulfilled all hopes raised in the past and provided concrete hope for the future” [DSB].

10:12 - THEREFORE. Based on what he has already said, (*Therefore*), Paul concludes, *“let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.”* This is a fair warning to all who would put God to the test, to all who are presumptuous, to all who are arrogant.

10:13 - NO TEMPTATION. *“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”* In vs. 9 we are told that believers are not to “try the Lord,” or put God to the test. The KJV has “tempt the Lord,” but test is the better translation in that verse. We are not to ask Him to prove Himself - He has already done that in the past and He is doing it presently. But He is doing it His way, as we see in Romans one. But here “temptation” is the right word. What we are dealing with here is the temptation to sin.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul has just written to the Corinthians that they must not to commit idolatry (vs. 7), and they must cease all immorality (vs. 8). Those were two temptations the Corinthians, especially the Gentile converts, had to face daily. They had been saved out of idolatry

and in the pagan temple where they had previously worshiped, immorality was practiced as a part of worship and service to the idol. There was pressure from family and friends to continue in the old sin, but no matter how great the pressure, they must resist it. All believers face temptations. We are taught to pray, “Lead us not into temptation” (Matt. 6:13), but we are also to resist temptation. How do we do that? This verse will answer that question.

COMMON TO MAN. Paul writes that even though we are all unique individuals, there is absolutely no temptation we will ever face that is not common to man. When our temptations seem too great to resist, we must remember this. The Corinthian believers had to deal with specific temptations. They might have rationalized that Paul, a pious Jew before his conversion, did not understand how strong their temptations were, but He could point to Ephesus and the Galatian churches, or to Philippi to show that though their circumstances were unique, and their temptations were similar to those faced in other places.

When the movie industry moved from black and white films to color, as new films were advertised and previewed an evolution in the color production. At one stage the word “Technicolor” was used to announce the latest thing in color films. Preachers in that period would often proclaimed, “Satan tempts in technicolor!” He will use any approach to seduce one who is created in the image of God, and when temptations come - and they will come - it helps to know that while our circumstances at the time may be new to us, the temptation is common to human beings. God has seen others through those temptations and He will deliver us if we are faithful to Him.

GOD IS FAITHFUL. What a great passage on the faithfulness of God! Our heavenly Father is faithful to us in all things. Once the child of God understands the grace of God, he knows that his hope is in the faithfulness of God to keep all His promises. All the promises of God hinge on the faithfulness of God to keep His promises. We must also understand that God’s faithfulness is not like ours. Paul is possibly our greatest example of human faithfulness, but even he constantly found himself “falling short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

God is absolutely and perfectly faithful in all things. Our salvation depends on His faithfulness to His promises. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Our Sanctification depends upon the faithfulness of God to do what He says He will do. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

We can depend upon Him to watch over us, to guide us and protect us in a time of temptation. We do not have to face them alone, the Lord has given His Holy Spirit to all believers to enable them overcome temptation. “He expects right actions and right attitudes from us at all times, but understands the strength of temptation. He gives us power to overcome temptation. When we succumb to temptation, we cannot blame Him. We did not take the help available to us from our faithful God” [DSB].

THE WAY OF ESCAPE. Because God is faithful in all things, we can be sure that (1) He “will

not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able;” and (2) when the temptation comes He “will provide the way of escape.” He does this “so that you will be able to endure it.” The “way of escape” is literally, the way out. This does not necessarily mean that the temptation will be removed, but when it is not removed, God will empower us to resist the temptation and to bear up under the test of our faith. Vincent notes that, “The words *with the temptation* and *the way of escape* imply an *adjustment* of the deliverance to each particular case” [VINCENT]. There was a way out for Joseph - flight! Was that one of David’s options when he was tempted by Bathsheba? Make no mistake, she was not an innocent victim.

2. The Lord’s Supper contrasted with idol feasts, 10:14-22

Paul now returns to completes the section of the letter which was an answer to the question the Corinthians had asked concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols. To put it into perspective, he has:

1. Laid down governing principles (chapter 8)
2. Illustrated those principles in relation to his apostleship (chapter 9)
3. Illustrated those principles as revealed in the history of Israel (chapter 10:1-13)

And coming back to the subject:

4. We have the first definite prohibition (10:14-22)
5. Then we have final instructions (10:23 - 11:1)

In this passage (10:14-22), Paul’s point is that when one participates in a religious feast it means that he is having fellowship, not only with other worshipers, but also with the one worshiped at that feast. This is certainly true of the Lord’s Supper (vv. 16-17); and it was equally true of Israel during the Old Testament period (v. 18). It was also true of a pagan feast (vv. 19-22). Therefore, believers must not participate in pagan feasts since they may thereby open themselves to demonic attacks (v. 20), and since they will be identified with pagan worship, which will dishonor God and compromise the believer’s witness.

10:14 - FLEE IDOLATRY. “*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*” “Powerfully Paul applies the example of the Israelites to the perilous state of the Corinthians with regards to idolatry” [ATR]. The key to victory over some temptations is found in the word *fight*, but where idolatry and immorality are concerned the key to victory is in *flight*. While it is true that the idols represents a god that does not exist, Satan is the power and force behind idolatry, and he does exist. Idolatry is a serious sin because it is both a gateway sin, opening the door to other sins, and a positional sin - that is where Satan wants people.

Anything that we cling to and trust in our hearts that is not God is an idol and, therefore, demonic. Christians must choose to worship God alone. Any participation in ceremonies identified with false gods and false worship is forbidden to us. The

Corinthians wanted to please everyone by participating in idol worship and Christian worship. Paul warned them against such evil [DSB].

10:15 - AS TO WISE MEN. Paul says, *“I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.”* They had not been acting as wise men, but Paul himself had been among the outstanding leaders who had taught them, so there was every reason to address them as wise men. Men is used in the generic sense, it applies to all believers. Paul did not appeal to their “experience,” their feelings, or to any special revelation they might have had, but to their wisdom. Justification is not attained through logic, but the doctrine of Justification can be stated logically. Sanctification is not accomplished through logic, yet the doctrine of Sanctification is logical. There is no wisdom without knowledge, but there may be knowledge without wisdom. A doctor may know the danger in drinking alcoholic beverages, but through over indulgence he can become addicted to alcohol. An attorney may know the law but violate it in some way and end up in prison.

Paul spoke to the Corinthian saints as to wise people who were capable of understanding and applying divine truth. Based on this verse, it is obvious that God expects His people to be able to consider and to evaluate that which is communicated to them, just as the new believers in Berea had searched the Scriptures to see if what they heard from Paul was true (doctrinally sound). We are free to study God’s Word, and under obligation to Him to hear and study His Word, consider it, and decide under the leadership of the Holy Spirit what we should believe and how we should make an application of it in our daily life. Under the priesthood of believers, each person has the privilege of studying this for himself, or herself, and arriving at a conclusion.

10:16 - THE CUP OF BLESSING. *Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?* It is called the “cup of blessing” (cup of thanksgiving) because at the Last Supper Jesus gave thanks over the bread and cup. When we observe the Lord’s Supper, we pronounce a blessing over the elements, just as Jesus did at the institution of the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. In 10:15-22, Paul emphasizes that by the one cup and the one loaf Christians share symbolically “in the one body of Christ.”

Paul used this powerful argument for unity in two ways: it means that Christians must not be divided into factions because they are members of the one body of Christ, and Christians must not participate in sacrificial meals in idol temples because that demonstrates participation symbolically with idols. It would be a foolish contradiction to participate in both the “Lord’s table and the table of demons” [DSB].

A SHARING OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. I like the word “sharing,” but this might be more literally translated “a participation in the blood of Christ.” “Sharing” is a translation of the word *koinonia*, which is usually rendered “fellowship.” The word “fellowship” in the Bible refers to that which is held in common. “The Christian’s fellowship is the fellowship of the cleansing blood and united body of Christ. Phil. 2:1; 3:10, it can mean also fellowship (Gal. 2:9) or contribution (II Cor. 9:4); Phil. 1:5). It is, of course, a spiritual participation in the blood of Christ which is symbolized by the cup” [BSB].

THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAK. The bread is the unleavened bread served in the Lord's Supper as a symbol of the body of Christ which was sacrificed for us on the Cross. "The mention of the cup here before the bread does not mean that this order was observed for see the regular order of bread and the cup in 11:24-27" [ATR].

10:17 - ONE BREAD. "*Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*" Originally, it was a loaf from which pieces were broken. Today, most churches buy boxes of the bread already cut into small squares, but in my first pastorate, a deacon and his wife prepared for the Lord's Supper. They had the grape juice in communion cups on the communion table. They had a large piece of unleavened bread which I broke before he deacons served. This captures the idea of the "one bread." If someone protests that the little squares we use today do not symbolize that we are "one body," we might remind them that the initial significance is not violated in any way - the bread is still a symbol of the body of Christ, as the fruit of the vine is a symbol of the blood of Christ. Furthermore, those little squares were initially cut from a larger piece of bread.

ONE BODY. This points to the church, the mystical spiritual body of Christ as in 12:12. This is the spiritual kingdom or church of which Christ is head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23).

10:18 - ISRAEL. "*Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?*" This is the nation of Israel, the Jewish people, not the spiritual Israel.

SHARERS IN THE ALTAR. The Israelites who offered sacrifices (Leviticus 8:31) had spiritual communion with the altar of God. "Paul says *with the altar* rather than *with God*, in order to emphasize the communion through the specific act of worship or sacrifice; since, in a larger sense, Israel *after the flesh*, Israel regarded as a nation, was, in virtue of that fact, in fellowship with God, apart from his partaking of the sacrifices. Possibly, also, to suggest the external character of the Jewish worship in contrast with the spiritual worship of Christians" [VINCENT]. Since the Jews' worship of God centered around the altar sacrifices, "eating the prescribed portions of the offerings involved a distinct consciousness of their relation to God, and to one another as God's people" [NCWB].

10:19 - A THING SACRIFICED TO IDOLS. Paul continues, "*What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?*" Paul has already stressed that an idol is merely a symbol of a non-existent god. He is not giving credence to idols here. He answers his own question in the next verse.

10:20 - TO DEMONS AND NOT TO GOD. "*No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.*" He has compared the worship of the true God by Jews and Christians with the heathen worship of idols. He is now quick to add that the analogy is not complete, since the idols worshiped by the heathen have no real existence in the sense that they imagine. "However (here Paul introduces a new fact), they are in reality sacrificing to demons, since Satan as prince of this world controls and

appropriates the acts of worship which are not directed to the true God (Lev. 17:7; Ps. 106:37; Rev. 9:20). Fear, rather than love, motivates heathen worship, since fear is the spirit of Satan and his demons (James 2:19) [NCWB].

This is Paul's reply to the heathen who claimed that they worshiped the gods represented by the images and not the mere wood, stone, or metal idols. The word for demons (*daimnia*) means evil spirits, those spiritual forces of wickedness (Eph. 6:12) that are under the control of Satan. The word, common in the Gospels, occurs in Paul's writing only here and I Tim. 4:1. Demonology is a deep and dark subject here pictured by Paul as the explanation of heathenism which is a departure from God (Rom. 1:19-23) and a substitute for the worship of God. It is a strong indictment, but it is justified by the licentious worship associated with paganism then and now" [ATR].

10:21 - THE CUP OF THE LORD. *"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."* No truer statement has ever been made. Jesus had said, "You cannot serve both God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). The two are diametrically opposed. A little background on the pagan feasts of the period help us to understand what Paul is saying. At pagan feasts libations (wine poured out to gods) were usually made from the cup to the idol first, and then the guests drank. In drinking from the cup they were in partnership (fellowship) with the idol.

THE TABLE OF THE LORD. There is a major contrast here we do not need to miss. The Lord's Supper is a feast on a table, not a sacrifice on an altar. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the only sacrifice for Christians, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper has the same relation to his ultimate sacrifice as the Jews' feasts had to their repeated sacrifices on the altar, and the heathen idol feasts to their sacrifices. "The heathen sacrifices were offered to idol nonentities, behind which Satan lurked. The Jewish sacrifices were only a symbol looking forward to the reality of Christ's death. But the Christian taking part in the Lord's Supper has communion or fellowship with the body of Christ, the Son of God himself, once sacrificed and now exalted as the head of the church [NCWB].

10:22 - DO WE PROVOKE THE LORD. *"Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?"* See these very words in Deut. 32:21 of the insolence of the ancient Israelites. How could one think he could have fellowship with God through the Lord's Supper and with demons at idol feasts? Was their participation in pagan worship not tantamount to claiming greater power and wisdom than God? The Lord has declared that He is a jealous God and will tolerate no other gods among His people. The very thought provokes God to wrath. The point is that such behavior displeased God (Ex. 20:5; Deut. 32:21). These Corinthians might have thought they were strong (1 Cor. 8:7-10), but did they want to face the power of God in judgment? Did they require the same discipline as Israel?

3. Glorify God by Seeking the Welfare of your Brothers (10-23-11:1)

10:23 - ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL. *“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”* Some may see this as a libertarian slogan (see 6:2), but only if they pull this out of context. Paul’s theology is deep, but very practical. An application of this principle is needed today, and if our theology was deeper it would be more practical.

NOT ALL THINGS ARE PROFITABLE. The word might be translated “expedient.” A look at a thesaurus would help us to understand why the word is translated “expedient” - advantageous, judicious, sagacious, worldly-wise. There are indeed many things which are lawful which are most definitely not beneficial or profitable or expedient. Paul’s philosophy of ministry was formed around this theme - “all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable.” By “all things” he has not aligned himself with some of the Gnostic philosophers of his day, nor has he adopted a libertarian attitude in the moral arena.

We must keep this in context (of both this epistle and the entire New Testament). Paul has said that he could eat meat, even if it had previously been dedicated to an idol, without harm to himself. If, however, his eating the meat would confuse or mislead a weaker believer he would abstain from eating it. There are countless applications of this principle, but the thing for us to remember is that Paul was never distracted by secondary issues, small or great. His focus was never drawn from the main issue of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christianity must always be concerned with issues such as these, but it is not “issue driven.” There is more to the Gospel than food, drink, and entertainment. Christianity is not a list of restraints on personal freedom. It is a relationship with a God Who is absolutely Holy, and this God is conforming us to the image of His holy Son. We do, and abstain from doing things because of the effect of those things on that relationship. The greatest desire of the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit is to glorify God.

Without a doubt, the most exciting time in the history of Christianity was the First Century - from the virgin birth to the perfect life of Christ; the ministry of Christ (preaching, teaching, miracles); the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; the appearances of the risen Christ and the Ascension; Pentecost and the ministry of the Holy Spirit who came to indwell believers and empower them to do the work the Savior. A careful study of the Book of Acts will reveal some remarkable things about the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. First there were the three phenomenal manifestations of His coming: The sound of a rushing, mighty wind; cloven tongues like fire that rested upon the one hundred-twenty in the upper room; and the miracle of those Galileans speaking in at least seventeen different languages. Those were the manifestations of His coming, but what was the ministry of the Holy Spirit? What happened in the lives of those who were filled with the Holy Spirit? Unfortunately, if you ask some today what happens when you are filled with the Holy Spirit the first thing that comes to their mind is speaking in tongues (unknown, other). What was His effect on the early believers? A study of the early chapters of Acts is revealing. For example, in Acts 2:41-47 we read:

So then, those who had **received his word** were **baptized**; and that day there were **added about three thousand souls**. They were **continually devoting themselves** to the **apostles' teaching**

(sound doctrine) and to **fellowship** (the word means partnership, a participation in), to the **breaking of bread and to prayer**. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and **many wonders and signs** were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and **had all things in common**; and they began selling their property and possessions and were **sharing them with all, as anyone might have need** (true Christianity, not communism). Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with **gladness and sincerity of heart**, praising God and having favor with all the people. *And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved* (notes and emphasis added).

What characterized people who were filled with the Holy Spirit? The following passages from Acts are revealing:

Now when they saw the **boldness** (confidence, courage) of Peter and John, and perceived (enemies of the Cross were watching them) that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. **And they realized that they had been with Jesus** (do people say that of us?) (4:13).

And **when they had prayed** (remember, they continued in prayer) **the place** where they had gathered together **was shaken**, and they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** (we are indwelt once, but we are continually being filled as we pray). and began to **speak the word of God** with **boldness** (4:31).

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but **all things were common property** to them. And with **great power** the apostles were **giving testimony to the resurrection** of the Lord Jesus, and *abundant grace was upon them all* (4:32-3).

That is all interesting, but what does that have to do with what Paul is saying here - "all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable?" In Acts 4: 36-37 we read, "Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." Seeing the great act of love by Barnabas, and desiring the praise and glory, Ananias and Sapphira went out and sold their property and held back part of the price they received, The Ananias brought a portion of the money and laid it had the feet of the apostles, assuring Peter that this was all they received for their property. God took his life on the spot, and when his wife came in three hours later and confirmed the lie, she paid with her life.

Barnabas owned property and he had every right to keep it. He sold his property in order to help the poor, and he had the right to decide what portion he would give to the needy. He had a right or all or any portion of it, but it was more "profitable" to give it to help ministers to those in need. Ananias and Sapphira had property and they had the right to keep it. They sold it and they had the right to keep a portion of it, but lied to the Holy Spirit.

Famous television chef, Graham Kerr, prepared meals on his program in which he often used wines in his recipes. When he became a Christian he substituted other ingredients for the wine. He had the right to use the wine - the alcohol cooked out - but it was not “profitable” to do so. Bubba Smith and Dick Butkus made commercial after commercial for a major brewery. The commercials were hilarious and before long the retired NFL stars were more famous than ever, and being well paid for their work. When Bubba Smith became a Christian, he gave up the commercials. What got his attention was that everywhere he went young people would see him and shout quotes from the beer commercials. That was not “profitable” spiritually, even though it was very profitable financially.

An application of this principle must be made by the children of God. There was a time when a Christian in the bible Belt might be severely criticized for playing pool (because of the environment in the pool hall and the gambling often associated with it). During the period a pastor reported that as he was planning a two week mission trip to some island nation in the Carribean, he called a missionary there and asked about the schedule. He announced that he was going to take his golf clubs and try to get in a few rounds of golf. The missionary cut him off, “No, don’t you dare bring any golf clubs down here.” The people of this island viewed golfers as rich, lazy people who didn’t have anything to do, but play, drink, and do other things they questioned. The missionary said, you can play pool and no one will have anything to say about it, but if they see you playing golf they will never listen to you. The pastor had the right to play golf and enjoyed the game - but it would not have been profitable under the circumstances.

10:24 - LET NO MAN SEEK. *“Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.”* This is Paul’s rule for social relations (1 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:2; Rom. 14:7). It is the way to do what is “profitable” (vs. 23), that which advances the cause of Christ. This does not mean that it is a sin to work, save, invest, or maintain one’s property. The Bible never advocates slothfulness. What is condemned is selfishness, living only for one’s self, as Ananias and Sapphira.

BUT THAT OF HIS NEIGHBOR. Literally, it should be rendered, “the affairs of the other man.” Robertson says, “This is loving your neighbor as yourself by preferring your neighbor's welfare to your own (Phil. 2:4)” [ATR]. The early church, especially Barnabas, manifested this unselfish and compassionate attitude toward their neighbors.

10:25 - EAT ANYTHING. *“Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake...”* Paul could eat anything that was edible and digestible. Jesus had removed food restrictions for Jews (Mark 7).

THE MEAT MARKET. The subject now changes from meat sacrificed to idols and served at pagan feasts to meat that had been sacrificed, or dedicated to idols before being sold in the market for private consumption (v. 27). Paul told the Corinthian believers to go ahead and eat such meat unless questioned, in which case he should restrict his liberty (v. 28).

Material things belong to God and are entrusted to us for our use. We may misuse things, but this does not take them away from God's ownership. The evil is in the user,

not in the material thing itself. Paul explained that the ritual defilement of meat by pagans in sacrifices did not make the meat evil. It was God's before they took it, and it remained His. Christians use material things in ways that show concern for fellow believers. We are to use all things to the glory of God [DSB].

ASKING NO QUESTION. Paul told them to ask no questions as to whether a particular piece of meat had been offered to idols before put in the market. Only a part was consumed in the sacrifices to heathen gods. The rest was sold in the market. One does not have to be overly scrupulous. When I was growing up on a farm in the Mississippi Delta we did no work on the Lord's Day, other than feeding and watering livestock. A share-cropper came to my father once with a request, "I know you go to church and you don't work on Sunday, but I don't go to church and I was wondering if you would let me take a tractor and plow my cotton this Sunday." Daddy replied, "I don't work on Sunday, I don't want my land worked on Sunday, and I don't want my tractor used on Sunday." We did not hunt, fish, or participate in organized sports on Sunday. After we got home from church, watched R. G. Lee on television, ate Sunday dinner, and watched Billy Graham, we would play cork ball in the yard or throw a baseball or football Sunday afternoon. Then we would feed the livestock and go back for the evening services.

My mother often witnessed to a neighbor who often missed church to go hunting on Sunday. He thought it was a big joke when he brought us some squirrels, but waited until after we had eaten them to tell my mother that he had killed them on Sunday. He thought it was a big joke, and he obviously thought he was making a point. What effect the meat could have had on us eluded me.

10:26 - FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS. . Paul quotes Psalm 24:1 (which was a common form of grace before meals). This gives the reasons for Paul's advice. Enough said! It all belongs to God and He had made edible things available for our consumption

10:27 - IF ONE OF THE UNBELIEVERS. *"If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake."* If an unsaved neighbor invites you for a meal or a general banquet you may go if you desire to do so - but not to a temple feast (8:10), which is prohibited.

10:28 - BUT IF ANY MAY SAY. *"But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience sake."* If someone makes an issue of the fact that the meat had been sacrificed to an idol, then the believer should abstain from it. "If" here is the condition of third class - he may, or he may not. If it does happen, then do not eat it. Table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians was a delicate question (see Gal. 2:11ff).

10:29 - NOT YOUR OWN CONSCIENCE. *"I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?"* When we become a Christian we become our brother's keeper. Not only do we try to avoid violating our own Christianized

conscience, we must avoid violating another's conscience. A present day analogy is abstinence from alcohol, gambling, and questionable entertainment.

I visited an elderly man in a local hospital a number of years ago and when I asked him about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I discovered that he had a big hang-up. It seems that some local pastors would leave their morning worship service and stop by his fruit and vegetable stand on their way home to buy some of his produce. While buying a watermelon they would tell him he should be in church instead of working on Sunday. I have talked with lost people and with new believers who were disturbed by Christians dancing, drinking, and wearing immodest clothes. Believers must be careful to avoid offending another's conscience.

WHY IS MY FREEDOM JUDGED BY ANOTHER'S CONSCIENCE? Good question! But why does it come up here? We can only speculate, but it is possible that Paul is either quoting from their letter or responding to something in it. "The desire to be subject only to one's own conscience is a further reason not to ask questions (10:27). If you are warned, however, there is a good reason why the other man's conscience must determine your behavior, and Paul gives this reason in 10:31" [NCWB].

10:30 - WHY AM I SLANDERED? - *"If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?"* Paul continues to respond to accusations they must have made against him. He continues to advocate the principle of love for others, preferring others to self. See Romans 14:6 where he justifies the conscience of one who eats meat and one who abstains. By "partake" he means partaking of food served by a Gentile whose meat may, or may not have been sacrificed to an idol.

A knowledgeable Christian did not need to alter his convictions to accord with the conscience of a weaker brother (1 Cor. 10:29b), but he did need to alter his behavior when in the weaker brother's presence. Otherwise the weaker brother might act against his conscience and harm himself (cf. 8:11), which would bring denunciation on the strong brother. What the knowledgeable Christian could enjoy privately **with thankfulness** became in the presence of the weaker brother a contemptible act eliciting condemnation [BKC].

10:31 - DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD. *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* This reveals Paul's philosophy of the Christian life. It should be ours; not because of Paul's example, but because it is God's will. This should be our guiding principle, whether eating or drinking. If one believer behaves in such a way as to offend a fellow disciple, he has done wrong. The guiding principle in all relationships is to seek to bring glory to God, even if it means passing up some right so that another will not be hindered in his walk with the Lord. This is also the highest motive in Christian evangelization - to bring glory to God. When we are guided by this principle, it will develop a life-style that we will never cause anyone else to stumble. The most important thing we can do for another is to introduce him to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and the worse thing is to hinder their coming to Him..

Paul says that we should do everything for the glory of God. This is the all-inclusive principle concluding the discussion that began in 8:1: Test all conduct by whether or not it manifests the characteristics of God. “Other principles for guiding the believer's conduct in this book are (1) is it beneficial (6:12)? (2) is it enslaving (6:12)? (3) will it hinder the spiritual growth of a brother (8:13)? (4) does it "edify" (build up, 10:23)?” [BSB].

The glory of God is to be the Christian's primary motive in everything he does, and this breaks down the barrier between so-called “sacred” or “secular” actions or occupations (Jer. 22:15, 16; Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11). In contrast, going through the motions of worship has no value if the worship does not come from the heart (Zech. 7:5, 6). Concern for the glory of God involves concern for building up other Christians [NCWB].

10:32 - GIVE NO OFFENCE. *"Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God."* The Corinthian church, like other churches established outside Palestine, were made of both Jews and Gentiles. There were obvious problems when two such different cultures were brought together in one fellowship. In Acts 15, Luke gives us an account of the Jerusalem Conference in A. D. 51, and Paul gives us more information on it in Galatians 2. A great victory was won for evangelism when Paul presented the case for pure grace in his debate against the Judaizers who insisted that Gentiles had to be circumcised to be saved (embrace Judaism and its legalism). Peter contributed greatly to the outcome of the meeting and James, the half-brother of the Lord, wrote the opinion agreed upon in the conference - it was not an order, but a request. James understood that genuine fellowship in a mixed church would depend upon the Gentiles adopting godly morals and abstaining from habits that would prevent the Jews from sitting down to a meal with them. For example, they must “abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:20, KJV).

God's people, the church, are free from legalistic rules to live under the Spirit's guidance and Scripture's teaching. With such freedom we still have responsibility for other people. We must do nothing which would influence any other person to turn away from Christ. In love, we give up our freedom to help other people [DSB].

10:33 - THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED. *“Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.”* With this verse Paul sums up the central teaching of chapters 8-10. “Paul practiced what he preached, so that he could point to his own life as an example for the Corinthians to follow (9:19-27; 11:1) [NCWB]. That people “may be saved” expresses the great passion of Paul's life and ministry, and his guiding principle in all relationships. This should also be the ruling passion of every Christian.

APPENDIX I

THE USE OF WINE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

How popular is home wine-making? The question appeared recently in a weekly magazine. The answer was that every month, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury licenses a new 5,000 heads-of- households. The American Wine Society, a Hobby group, reports (1975) membership as 12,000 with a 30% annual increase.

"Pop" wines, advertised so freely on TV, radio, magazines, and billboards, have contributed to a serious and growing problem among young people. People like to joke about the amount of beer consumed by servicemen but it is no joke to three million American veterans who are now alcoholics.

Alcohol is a major problem, but when one takes a stand against beverage alcohol, some "sleeper" comes up with the same old worn-out protest, "But Jesus drank wine! They drank wine at the Last Supper, didn't they? The answer is, "yes." Wine was used at the Last Supper. But the answer to the implied question (Is not modern drinking the same as that practiced by the Jews at their feasts and social function?) is no. There is a difference.

An article by R. H. Stein, "Wine Drinking in N. T. Times" which appeared in the June 20, 1975 issue of "Christianity Today" (p. 9) is helpful in understanding the difference in wine drinking in N. T. times and modern social drinking. Stein pointed out that in ancient Greece wine was stored in large jugs called AMPHORAE. When used it was first poured into large bowls called KRATERS and mixed with water. From these kraters cups (KYLIX) were filled. It is important to note that before the wine was consumed it was mixed with water. The cups were filled from the kraters and not the amphorae.

The ratio of water to wine mentioned by ancient writers varied from 1 to 20 parts water to 1 part wine. Common ratios mentioned are: 2-1, 3-1, 4-1, 5-2 (the larger number represents the water). "Sometimes the ratio goes down to 1 to 1 (and even lower), but it should be noted that such a mixture is referred to as 'strong wine.' Drinking wine unmixed, on the other hand, was looked on as a Scythian or barbarian custom" (Stein).

Wine was not only a common beverage in ancient times. It was used for medical purposes as well as a solvent for medicines. Wine is mentioned often in ancient writings. Plutarch wrote, "We call a mixture 'wine' although the larger of the component parts is water." Writers simply called the mixture wine without explaining the ratio. But if straight wine or unmixed wine was intended it was called 'strong wine' or strong drink.

It seems reasonable to assume that the practice among the Jews was similar to that mentioned above. In

several places in the O. T. a distinction is made between wine and 'strong drink.' In Lev. 10:8-9 we find the Lord addressing Aaron, "Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting..."

OTHER REFERENCES: (1) Num. 6:3; (2) Deut. 14:14-26; 29:6; (3) Judges 13:4, 7, 14; (4) I Sam. 1:15; (5) Pro. 20:1; 31:4, 6; (6) Isaiah 5:11, 22.

Both the Talmud and the 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia suggests that a mixture of three parts water to one part wine was customary. Therefore, it may be safe to assume that the wine used at the Last Supper was a mixture of 3 parts water to 1 part wine.

Yes, Jesus drank wine. Yes, the apostles drank wine. But no, the modern use of alcoholic beverages does not parallel the use of wine in N. T. times. "To consume the amount of alcohol that is in two martinis by drinking wine containing three parts water to one part wine, one would have to drink over twenty-two glasses" (Stein). There is a striking differences in modern social drinking and the use of wine in those days.

In ancient times safe drinking water was often very difficult to find. Unfermented fruit juice would soon spoil and milk would sour. The only answer to a very acute problem was real, fermented wine. The wine helped purify the water and the water stretched the wine supply. When one took an extended trip the only safe, reliable drink was this mixture of water and wine. It was not only practical, it was essential.

Today safe water, coffee, tea, refrigerated milk and juices and cold soft drinks are available to most people whether at home or on the road. These drinks are not only safer than wine, beer and liquor, they are usually less expensive. Seldom does a family become destitute because of a father's addiction to coffee or tea. The same cannot be said of alcoholic beverages.

Lost men generally associate the drinking of alcoholic beverages with worldliness and sin. Many unsaved people can only be reached by one who lives a separated life. Any Christian who drinks beverage alcohol places his testimony in serious jeopardy and to deliberately jeopardize one's witness is a serious offense against God and the unsaved. Knowing this, the man who drinks is seeking the minimum in service and loyalty, and avoiding the maximum. Those who try to justify their drinking may often be trying to determine just how little they can do for God and still be called a Christian by others. It is easy to tell when someone is rationalizing to try justify compromise.

"If the drinking of unmixed wine or even wine mixed with a ratio of one to one with water was frowned upon in ancient times, certainly the drinking of distilled spirits in which the alcohol content is frequently three to ten times greater would be frowned upon a great deal more" (Stein).

Habakkuk warns in 2:15, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also..." On cigarette packages there is a warning: "The Surgeon General has determined that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health." Should there not be an even stronger warning attached to alcoholic beverages?

"At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Read Proverbs 23:29-32.