

1 Corinthians 1 Commentary-Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS **1st Corinthians**
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1 Corinthians A Look at the Book

I had a group of men several years ago from our church who were in a discipleship group with me. We were talking about the rules of Bible study, and I made the statement that Bible study has three steps. It doesn't change. It doesn't matter what book you're studying. There's observation, interpretation and application. It'll never be any different. Whatever book you study, those are the rules of Bible study. Don't jump in and start interpreting. No sir. You must start in observing. Don't apply until you have observed and interpreted. So often we get off track when we do that.

As I was talking about that one of the guys in the group said, "You know what? That's like bass fishing, isn't it?" That caught my attention. I like to put it on levels that I can understand. I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You know, we fish tournaments, a lot of us. And the first thing a tournament bass fisherman does is observe the lake. He doesn't just go out to the lake and throw his line out with a bobber on the end and a hook and all and expect to catch a fish. No. He doesn't want to know what's on top of the water. He wants to know what's underneath the water. So he spends days finding this out. He gets the ph factor and the oxygen content and the thermo clime. It's got to be between 68 and 72 degrees. He gets a topographical map and finds the places in the lake with that particular temperature. Then he begins to mark it. He marks the creek channels and the coves, etc. He puts out his boat marker. He doesn't do much fishing for about three days. But he does a lot of observation. When tournament day comes immediately he begins to interpret what he has observed and how he is going to fish that lake. The application is when he finally gets to that spot and he uses his equipment."

I thought to myself that's beautiful. If you don't understand observation, interpretation, application, maybe we can put it that way and you can grasp it very quickly. You've got to observe, observe, observe, observe. Then out of that you interpret, and out of that you apply.

We're going to do some observation in 1 Corinthians. That's what we're going to do. You're going to find a lot of similarities with the church of Corinth in the book of 1 Corinthians with the book of Judges. It's incredible. In the book of Judges, we had the willful deception of Israel. They chose not to obey God. They chose rather to give into their flesh. By the way, flesh is flesh no matter which

testament you're studying. Whether it's before the cross or after the cross, flesh is flesh. I don't care whose it is, we all have to deal with it. We're going to find some similarities.

In Israel they chose not to obey God. Therefore, they became idolaters. They became very immoral. Idolatry and immorality are always tied together. They also had to reap the division amongst the tribes. There was no unity among the tribes. You can see that. We see that all through the book of Judges. We're going to see a lot of these same things pop up in the book of 1 Corinthians.

Observation

I want you to strap your seatbelts on. We're going to do some observation, and I don't think we're going to get into the text too much. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:1. You find out the author and who he's writing to immediately: "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth,..."

There are three things I want us to see about Corinth. First of all, we want to look at the city of Corinth. There's not much in the scriptures to tell you this. I'm just going to have to historically help you understand the city of Corinth at that time. Actually today Corinth is a small town. There's not much significance to it, except historically. Historically there's a lot of significance to Corinth. It's located about 45 miles from Athens on the eastern side of Greece on an isthmus.

Do you know what an isthmus is? I'll be honest with you. I had to look it up. It's a narrow strip of land that connects two major pieces of land. That's what an isthmus is. Geographically you have to understand that Greece is divided that way. There's a northern part; there's a southern part. They're connected by about a four mile wide isthmus. On the western side was the Gulf of Corinth. On the eastern side was the Saronic Gulf and the port city of Cenchreae. Do you remember in Romans who was from Cenchreae? It was a woman by the name of Phoebe. That's where that was. In the middle of this isthmus that connects the northern and the southern part to the south is Corinth.

It's situated on a very commanding plateau there. It just rises up above where everybody can see it. In ancient times if you were coming from the north to the south, particularly to Athens, you'd have to go right through Corinth which made it a very strategic city in that time.

Did you know that the Olympics started in Greece? There were two sets of games. One was the Olympian games and the other one was the Isthmian games. The Isthmus of Corinth was what it was named after. Corinth hosted that particular event. Corinth was destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC, then rebuilt by Julius Caesar 100 years later. When it was rebuilt it was basically a Roman colony largely populated by Romans, of course. It became the capitol city of the Roman province of Achaia. But because of its location, once rebuilt it didn't take it any time to become a strategic city one more time. People had to go through there. It was a very critical place, a very cosmopolitan area. In Paul's day it was made up of Greeks, Roman officials and businessmen, and near eastern peoples, which included many Jews. So you kind of get a little idea of the city of Corinth.

Like most Greek cities Corinth had an acropolis which is a high place. We've been to the acropolis there in Athens. They also had one. It was a huge mound of granite which stood 2000 feet. It was called the Acrocorinth. It was used for two things. That high plateau, that high mound was used first of all for pagan worship and secondly for the defense of the people. It was big enough that all the people of Corinth plus all the people in the neighboring farmlands could come up there and actually it would hold every one of them on top of this big huge place that was there.

Also it housed the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. In that temple were 1000 women priestesses. Can you imagine? They were actually temple prostitutes, ritual prostitutes. That was a part of their religion, the promiscuity of their religion. Remember in the book of Judges that was exactly the same thing that went on with the Baal and Ashtaroht and their kind of idolatry. At night these women would go down into town to lure businessmen and foreigners into their trade. Even to the pagan world Corinth was known for its moral corruption. As a matter of fact, there's a Greek phrase that meant you behave like a Corinthian. It was used any time you got around somebody who was involved in gross immorality and drunkenness. They would use this phrase. You've got to begin to get the understanding of the nature of this city; a very, very evil morally bad city. In that day when you thought of Corinth, you thought of something that was morally depraved.

This begins to give us a setting of 1 Corinthians. You'll see where these people came out of this kind of stuff if you'll turn over to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. It kind of gives you an idea how these people were saved and had come out of that garbage that Corinth was known for. In 1 Corinthians 6:9 we read, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." If you stopped right there it wouldn't tell you much, but look at the next verse: "And such were some of you." That's what the city was known for, all of those things above that we just read. Paul goes on to say, "...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."

Though they were saved out of it, oh, there was like a pull of gravity on them all of the time trying to pull them back into the debauchery of sin Corinth was known for. So when you think of the church of Corinth, you first of all think of a city that was known to be morally evil. The people who were converts there had to live in that kind of garbage every day of their life. That begins to give you a setting now as you see the city of Corinth.

Secondly, let's look at the church of Corinth. Who founded it? Where did it come from? How did they get a church over there? When we looked at the church in the book of Romans we discovered that when God wants a church somewhere God just puts it there. He did the same thing here. Right in the middle of this moral garbage heap God put a church.

The church at Corinth was founded by the apostle Paul. He went there on his second missionary journey. He had gone to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and then to Greece. Let's look at that. Go over to Acts 16. We won't read all of that. That's a lot of scripture. I just want to show you some of the things that happened here and how he got over to Corinth. Paul's the founder, the first pastor, I guess you could say, of the church of Corinth. They had no church until Paul went there. I love what he said in Romans. He said, "I would not dare to speak of anything except that which Christ has accomplished through me resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles." And he said, "For I was able to take the good news all the way to Illyricum," which is modern day Bosnia. 1400 miles he had covered with the gospel. Here are some of the results of that right here in the city of Corinth.

Well in Acts 16:12 it talks about the fact that he's over in Philippi. He left Troas and ran a straight course (Acts 16: 11) to Samothrace and on to Neapolis and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia. Look what happens there according to Acts 16: 13: "And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled." It talks about the woman Lydia. This is Philippi now, not Corinth. This is where we're getting started. He's on his second missionary journey.

Acts 16:16 is an interesting situation that happened over in Philippi. "And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling." This is a demon-possessed girl. Look what she says. "Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, 'These men are bond-servant of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.'" Have you ever read that and wondered why a demon-possessed girl would tell the truth about what these men were doing? Has that ever bothered you? Well, good. I'm going to try to answer it for you.

First of all, she was known in that town. Remember, she brought much money to these men as being a demon-possessed person. They used her for that kind of profit. For her to tell the truth about them and the people already knowing about her, what do you think that made them look like? The devil never tells the truth unless he has some way to hurt you. The truth that he tells is not the way in which we would tell it. So she's telling the truth, but she's already known to be a lowlife and to be a demon-possessed girl. Why pay any attention to her? So it was one of the better ways of discrediting what they were doing.

"And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' And it came out at that very moment." Now this makes the people of the city angry and so, therefore, they go to the magistrates. The magistrates come and beat them up. They take Paul and Silas and put them in jail.

Acts 16:25 reads, "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;" That's when the earthquake happened and the jail cell opened up. God did it. The jailer was scared to death. They said, "Don't sweat it. We're still here." And he said, "What must I do to be saved?" They led him to the Lord and then went to his house and led his whole family to the Lord.

The next morning the magistrates come and say, "We're going to set you free." The apostle Paul,... I like him. Look at Acts 16:37: "But Paul said to them, 'They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans...' Roman law says that you could not even put a person in jail until first of all you have tried him. That was the right of a Roman citizen. They never asked him. They beat him up and threw him in jail. They messed up and the apostle Paul knew that. The apostle Paul says, "and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." They were the ones who disobeyed their own law.

Well, to make a long story short, they talk him into leaving because they had really, really made a fool out of themselves. So they leave there in Acts 16:40. Verse 1 of Acts 17 says, "Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews." Again, Paul preached just like he had before. Many people came to know the Lord and believed in Him. We find in verse 5 and following that the Jews are becoming jealous. They take along some wicked men from the marketplace, form a mob, and set the city in an uproar. So everywhere he goes he preaches the gospel but the disbelieving Jewish people, the religious Jewish, were always stirring up strife.

Therefore, he leaves. They sneak him out in verse 10: "And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews." Here's what he found. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these were more

noble-minded than those in Thessalonica." Do you know what the word noble-minded means? These had more class than the rest of them. So instead of beating them up and throwing them out of the city look what they did: "for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."

By the way, if I ever have been an encouragement to your life when you hear me preach or you hear anybody else preach, be a Berean and go to the word to see if these things are so. And if they're not, then you pray for us, because somebody's wrong. It has to be what Scriptures say.

Well, in Acts 17:13 we read, "But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there likewise." They had to get Paul out of town again in Acts 17:14: "And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea." Now he left Silas and Timothy behind. "Now those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens."

Athens is where he walked up there on that acropolis and looked and saw the statues of unknown gods. He couldn't stand it. I'm telling you. That guy, wherever he'd go he'd get stirred up about something. He goes up there and argues with all the stoic Greek philosophers of that day and said, "Hey! You've got a thing down there that says 'The Unknown God.' Let me tell you who He is and let me tell you how you can know Him." That was the apostle Paul.

It wasn't long before he had to leave Athens. So he leaves Athens in Acts 18:1 "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth." That's how he got to Corinth on his second missionary journey. You think about it. It's almost as if God kept squeezing him out of here, squeezing him out of here, and squeezing him out of here. God wanted a church in Corinth and He wouldn't let Paul stay anywhere else. Everybody would get mad and run him out. So, finally, he arrives at Corinth.

In Corinth he meets some folks that you'll readily remember, Aquila and Priscilla. Both were Jews who had been driven out of Rome. They were over in Corinth, and they were tentmakers. Paul was a tentmaker, so he just stayed with them for quite a while and began to preach in the synagogue. Then Timothy and Silas come on down from where he left them in Berea. They finally come on down to where he is. Paul preached the good news of Christ and had great, great results, except the resistance began to build against him even there. Even Crispus the leader of the synagogue was saved. Look in Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized."

So here he is in Corinth, and he's seeing a great work. Now remember what they're coming out of to be saved. This is a great thing to see people saved in the midst of the garbage they had to live in every day. Well, he ministers in Corinth for one and one-half years. Look at Acts 18:11 : "And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

In the meantime it talks about the Jewish opposition beginning to build against him. These are the main leaders of the Jews, not all Jews.; and as a result of that they tried to put him before the Roman Tribunal. But Gallio was the proconsul there and he said, "No, sir. This is not a political matter. It's a religious matter." So he took the case out of court, and Paul thought, "You know, it might be a good time to leave Corinth." So shortly afterwards, with Priscilla and Aquila, they go to the city of Ephesus. Now in Ephesus he leaves his two friends and goes on to Palestine in Acts 18:12-22. I'm not going to read all that.

The second leader of the Corinthian church was a man by the name of Apollos. Paul started it and spent a year and a half there. We've seen the history of it. The next pastor they had in Corinth was Apollos. He's the guy Priscilla and Aquila had to help out in his doctrine. He's from Alexandria and had come to Ephesus and begun to preach there. Evidently his doctrine wasn't right. So Aquila and Priscilla had to sit him down and straighten him out. After they straightened him out he began to get a good reputation. The "pulpit committee" sent out a plea from over in Corinth, and so all the people in Ephesus even the elders said, "Hey, we've got your man." He goes to Corinth and becomes the second pastor or the leader of the church of Corinth.

Well, amidst the debauchery and gross sin God said, "I want a church there." He squeezed Paul over here and over here and over here and finally got the man to Corinth and a church grew out of that. Now you have Apollos who's there and you see the church that God has planted. But I want you to know it has the distinction of being one of the worst churches in the New Testament. I hope you understand this. Please understand this. You've got to realize it's in the worst place it could possibly be, but it has one of the worst reputations of any church that you'll ever study of in all the books, the epistles, in the New Testament.

We've looked at the city of Corinth. We've taken a glance at the church of Corinth and how it got started. Now let's look at the congregation of Corinth. Let's look at the people who are in the church. This is what the book's about. If you don't know this, then you don't understand the observation. You don't understand what's underneath the water when you first look at it.

Alright, if you're in Corinth and you were looking for a church to attend, this wouldn't be the place you'd want to look. We learn immediately from 1 Corinthians that the church had many problems. One of the main problems was they were followers of men and not of God. Look in 1Cor 1:11. He says, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are

quarrels among you." Then he says, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and [here's the spiritual ones] 'I of Christ.'"

You know, when you read this and think about it for just a little bit, it doesn't sound much different than the twentieth century, does it? "I'll tell you who I listen to. I've got all of his tapes. I bought his books. If he'll ever get on the radio and television I'm going to listen and I'm going to watch." Isn't it the same way? "Well, you might believe this way but I'm a such and such." Then the spiritual ones walk in and say, "Hey, we're of Christ." To me they're the scariest ones in this whole bunch" "We're of Christ and nobody else around here is."

Well, anyway that same thing's going on in Corinth. Because of this Paul said they were acting like babies in Christ. If you want to know what a baby in Christ is, a little immature whining little church member over in the nursery, he's about to tell you. First of all, it's people who say, "Well, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, I'm of Christ" or whatever. They're men followers, etc. 1Cor 3:1 says, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men." Now why couldn't he? He spent a year and a half with them. They trained Apollos and sent him over there. And he said, "I couldn't speak to you as spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ."

Now I want to tell you something. This whole book really is Paul addressing a bunch of babies in Christ, a bunch of immature whining church members. I'm serious. You've got to see this as we walk through it because that's the mentality that he's dealing with here in Corinth.

1Cor 3:2 says they couldn't receive the solid meat of the word. He said, "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able." They only could receive the milk and not the meat. Of course, Peter says, "You desire the milk of the word." What Peter is talking about there is how a little baby would desire milk. But Paul's talking about something different here. He's talking about the fact that I've got to feed it.

How do you feed a baby, by the way? Have you ever noticed that? You just have to spoon feed them or in a bottle or whatever. He says, "You can't seem to take the meat. You're too immature. You're the men of flesh. You're babes in Christ. You're not growing up. You're still in the nursery. That's your problem." They were walking like mere men rather than believers in that there was jealousy and strife among them. You see, when you get trapped in the flesh and this kind of thing that's where your factions develop. That's what we see in Judges. That's what we see in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 3:3 reads, "for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" Men-followers are simply babes in Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:4 goes on, "For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one."

We could go on. We'll touch all of these when we get to them in the context, but I just wanted to give you an idea of the church at Corinth. This immature, men-following group, characterized the church at Corinth. Paul deals with their division from 1 Cor 1:11 all the way through 1 Cor 3:23. He talks about the unity that ought to be there but the divisions that are present.

Because of their fleshly mind-set they even became judgmental of the apostle Paul. Can you imagine that? They started examining him to see if he was really who he said he was. The apostle Paul says in 1 Cor 4:3, "But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord." Then he says, "Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God." In other words, it's one thing to judge himself; it's another thing to let God judge you. But they even became judgmental of the apostle Paul. There was the problem of immorality among them.

It just doesn't get any better so just humor me, and try to listen to it. Paul talks about it in 1 Cor 5:1 all the way through 1 Corinthians 6:20. Look what he says in 1 Corinthians 5:1. This shows you some of the immorality that had gotten into the church. But remember the magnetic pull of all the garbage of sin that was around them. It says, "It is actually reported 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." Well, there was no discipline. There was no discipline at all. He says in 1 Corinthians 5:2: "And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst." As a matter of fact, it was immoral the way they were treating one another since they were men of flesh anyway. They seemed to chase after the flesh all the time and not Christ.

This was also seen in the fact of the way they treated each other in legal matters. In 1 Corinthians 6:7 they were suing each other in court. That made a great testimony. He says, "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?" On and on and we'll talk about that when we come to 1 Corinthians 6.

Do you see any symptoms here that come right out of the book of Judges? They were confused about many things. As a matter of fact, in 7:1 it appears they've written a letter to him and asked him some questions about things that were confusing them. In 1 Corinthians 7:1 through 1 Corinthians 11:1 he answers those questions that they have been concerned about. Let's look at them. In 1 Corinthians 7:1 he says, "Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." So he gets into marriage. They had a lot of questions about marriage. I want to tell you something. We have the same questions in the twentieth century. They haven't gone away. When we get to that chapter you'll understand what I'm talking about. He addresses this and talks about the unbelieving husband leaving his wife, etc. You know, you've heard that preached on many times. Well, hopefully, we'll see it in the context of Corinthians and go through that. It's a tricky area.

The question of liberty in Christ comes up and from 1 Corinthians 8:1 he picks up on that and goes through 1 Corinthians 11. A lot of these things are woven together. He speaks of the freedom to eat whatever we want but speaks of being sensitive to our brother who may be weaker in the faith. In 8:1 he says, "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols." He talking about whether we can eat the meat of those things and he has to deal with that problem.

In 1 Corinthians 9 he speaks of the freedom he has as an apostle to take money for what he does but also the freedom to choose against that. He has the freedom to take it, the freedom not to take it. In 1 Cor 10:23 we find, "All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify."

Then in 1 Corinthians 11 we're going to deal with the subject (and I guarantee you've asked this question many times) of women wearing a covering over their head. A lot of people really struggle with that. We went to Romania and I guarantee you this is a situation. How do you handle that? We will see. We will address that subject in 1 Corinthians 11.

We'll see there were many, many divisions among them. It gives me the idea that he's not covering them all. He's just referring to the fact this is a factious group of people. They're divided and the reason they're divided is because their faith and all is not based on Christ and His word. They're men-pleasers, etc. In 1 Corinthians 11:18 he says, "For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it." There are divisions among you when you come together. That would be a tough church to be in, wouldn't it? Just factions and divisions everywhere. He's going to say some interesting things about division, however, that we'll also look at.

They treated the Lord's Supper as a meal. These people, Lord help them, they've come there for supper instead of coming to honor the Lord. This is in 1 Corinthians 11:20: "Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you."

These are some of the problems we're going to be dealing with as we walk through Corinthians. Somebody said, "Wayne, are you sure you want to do this book?" You know, I didn't choose this for any other agenda than I just felt like the Lord was leading me to do it. That's all I know. We're going to seek to be obedient to Him and see what comes out of it. What falls, falls. If the shoe fits we're going to have to wear it. That's the way it's going to be. There are going to be some tough places we're going to have to wade through. This will be one of them.

One of the toughest places we'll wade through is 1 Corinthians 12-14 when we deal with the spiritual gifts. Paul didn't want them to be ignorant of spiritual gifts. It says in 1 Corinthians 12:1, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware."

I preached out of 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14 years ago. There was a tension in the church that developed over those three chapters like I don't know if I've ever witnessed since. I mean, it was like people would come tight lipped and just scared to death of what I was going to say? "Is he going to make fun of this? Is he going to do this?"

I want you to know when we get to 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14, I will only share what I believe the word of God says in the context of 1 Corinthians. I want to assure you of that. There should not be any tension. But if we disagree then we don't go on and say, "Well, one's right and one's wrong and let's just live together." Listen, folks, somebody's wrong. But we will live with one another because Christ is the basis of our fellowship not how we feel about 1 Corinthians 12-14. We must remember, doctrine divides. Jesus said it: I come with the sword and that sword is the word and it's going to divide. Folks, it doesn't have to divide the fellowship but it's going to divide where we all stand sometimes and we're going to have to let the love of Christ overpower that if someone has difficulty.

I guarantee you the Scripture's not private interpretation. If Wayne's wrong, he's wrong. I just want to warn you ahead of time. When we get to 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14 let's put it where it fits. Let's don't touch it and leave it there and see what God does. I think it's going to be interesting for all of us. That's 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14.

In 1 Corinthians 15, you're going to get into another area. It's not going to be easy. It's going to be dealing with the fact that if you don't believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ then you're not saved. That's what he's going to talk about in 1 Corinthians 15. He said, "For if He did not bodily raise from the dead then we have no bodily resurrection and, therefore, there is no gospel and your faith is only now and it makes us all foolish to begin with." That's basically what he's going to say.

1 Corinthians 15 is also going to talk about the order of events of how He was the first fruits and set the pattern and the rest of us follow. It's a great chapter. If you've never understood death chapter 15 will give you an explanation of death that'll just bless you until the day you have to make that journey. Maybe we won't have to make it. Maybe the Lord will come before we get to any of this. I don't know.

Well, in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 he deals with the problem of stewardship. And 1 Corinthians 16:5-24 is the closing out of the letter. That's the book of 1 Corinthians, the letter that Paul writes to the church at Corinth.

Well, we broad-brushed it. That's all I've done. All I'm trying to do is just sort of whet your appetite. This is a church. It's in a very, very difficult place, and they've become men-followers and not God-followers. There's division among them. Like I said, if you were in Corinth during those days, that's not the place you'd want to recommend somebody to join. This was a tough place and Paul, having founded the church, is really, now, writing to them and straightening them out where they had been wrong. He's trying to put truth back in its rightful place.

Remember where we started? Observation, interpretation, application, that's the way you study Scripture. That's what you've got to do in every book you study. I hope in 1 Corinthians we're beginning to show you the pattern that's in there. When you come across something, it's not like Paul says, "Oh, I've got these great things to teach you", it's like Paul's saying, "Let me straighten you out." See it's different than most of the epistles that he writes. It's similar maybe to Galatians. The Galatians had gotten back under law. It wasn't the same thing.

1 Corinthians is a troubled, factionist church and they're wrong just about every which way you turn. And everything Paul does is trying to turn them back right side up and straighten them out. Then when you take the book, now you fit it into that pattern. And interpretation and application come easy from that point on.

1 Corinthians 1:1 The Authority of the Word of God

The Word of God is God's authority to man. He gave it to us through men like the Apostle Paul and he signs the letter, "Paul an apostle by the will of God." So we understand then that this is God's word to us. I'm going to call this message "The Authority of the Word of God." We're digging a foundation to understand the book of 1 Corinthians. There are going to be places it'll be very exciting and challenging. There will be other places, however, where it will be necessary for you to know that in other places God will speak to you in His word. I've had a lot of good messages messed up by a lot of bad hearers.

You know, the word of God is a precious gift to all of us. I hope you see that. I hope we don't just sit it on a shelf at home and think it's a great thing to look at when you come to church on Sunday. The word of God is that which keeps us sane in an insane world. It's what turns us right side up in an upside down world. Turn over to Psalm 19:7-8. I want you to see what the Psalmist said about the word of God. It's so critical to our life. It's meant to give us direction. It's meant to teach us. It's meant to reprove and correct and instruct us, as 2 Timothy 3 says. Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect [That's a great word, isn't it? It absolutely accomplishes exactly that which God intends for it], restoring the soul." Have you ever felt like you needed to be restored in your soul, the mind, the will, the emotion? "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The simple has the idea there of those who just are ignorant and do not understand. Ps 19:8 reads, "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart."

I tell you, when you get in the word of God and realize that it's designed to help you not hurt you, then you begin to realize that you can rejoice in this. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." If you took these two verses, put them together and looked at the contrast of it, it would say, "Without God's word you would be defeated, ignorant, depressed, and blind." You've got to have God's word. It's not like the opinions of man. "God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts," he said in Isaiah 55. His ways are higher, so His word is a precious gift to the Christian community, to all the world really. It points to Christ. It's the light that we look at. That's why the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:105, he said, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."

I love it when we sing that little chorus, "Thy Word." It came right out of Psalm 119:105. Sometimes I catch myself singing just as I go through the day because the word of God is such a precious gift that God has given to us. No wonder the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:10, "With all my heart I have sought thee; Do not let me wander from thy commandments." I'll tell you what, when you stray that's sin. When you cross the boundary, when you wander from what God's word has to say, that's when the misery sets in.

In Judges 17 and 18 we have Micah, the fellow who took the word out of his worship and got his own priesthood. Boy, a great guy. He said, "God's really going to have favor on me now. I've gone out and got my own church, got my own religion, and I've even got my own preacher. God's really going to have favor on me." In Judges he was doing what he thought was right, not wrong. It says, "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes." That's what happens when you take the word of God out of your life. You end up deceived. You do what you think is right and you're so far off base you miss the point. You're off course and you don't even know it. You're deceived thinking it's right.

Then we saw the tribe of Dan. The tribe of Dan was the tribe that absolutely, totally embraced idolatry, disobeyed God, and moved to a land that God hadn't even assigned to them. They disappeared off of the list of tribes. We saw how they were deceived. They thought God was even pleased with their disobedient lifestyle.

All of us are desperate for the word of God. It's His design in our life. If you've got trouble in your family, your finances, or whatever, God's word sets it straight. Man's got a lot of opinions. Man's got a lot of wisdom, but not like God's wisdom. We have to have it. It's a gift that God has given to us.

Now, how did He give it to us? He gave it to us in the Old Testament through prophets. God used the prophets to give us the Old Testament and we have that now in print. They didn't have all of that. They had it in portion. They prophesied that way. We have it all put together for us now in the day that we live in. In the New Testament God gave it to us through the apostles. So through the prophets and through the apostles we have a precious gift that God has given to us today in the word of God.

It is with this in mind that we approach 1 Corinthians 1:1. This is God's word. It was not only for them but it also profitable to us in the day that we live in, in context as we study it. 1 Corinthians 1:1 says, "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother." Now I like the way they did that. They would sign the letter before they'd write it. I wish people would do that today. Don't you? You'd read a whole lot less mail if you knew who it was coming from. Sometimes you start off and have to read a whole lot to find out. Sometimes I just go to the end anyway and find out who wrote the letter. The word of God is God's authority to man. He gave it to us through men like the Apostle Paul and he signs the letter, Paul an apostle by the will of God. So we understand then that this is God's word to us. The Apostle Paul was like a father to the Church of Corinth. Look over at 1 Corinthians 4:14. He's like a father to them. They're like his children. He is their spiritual father. He had the gospel assigned to him to take to the Gentile world and they were part of this.

1Cor 1:14 says, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." Then in 1Cor 1:15 we read, "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." It was through Paul that he preached the gospel. They got saved. He was the first pastor of that church. Apollos, as we saw in our review the last time, was the second pastor of that church.

Well, word had come to him. He was concerned. It's kind of like any father would be over his children. He was concerned about some of the things that were going on. Look in 1Cor 1:11. I want you to see how the message was getting to him by different sources. 1Cor 1:11 says, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." "I've heard about you. You are quarreling," he said. Well, somebody had to tell him.

Look over at 1Cor 5:1: "It is actually reported (I have heard from someone) that there is immorality among you." 1 Corinthians 11:18 reads, "For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you." So you see, the reports are coming to him from every place that there's trouble in Corinth. The Apostle Paul is burdened as a father would be for his children.

This is where I want to make the break in the distinction. The book of 1 Corinthians is not just a letter from a friend or a fatherly figure of encouragement to believers who you know are in trouble. No, sir, it's not that. It's more than that. It is God's holy word that is written through the Apostle Paul to the Church of Corinth. I don't believe in the dictation theory so much, but I believe God used Paul's own personality to write what God had burdened his heart to write and this becomes Scripture. There's a difference in a fatherly letter to somebody and the word of God written through an apostle to somebody. It takes upon itself a different authority altogether.

When I get a letter from the IRS, I open it immediately. But when I get a letter from some other people I can put it off for two or three days. But there's something about authority that you immediately respond to. You want to read and find out what it is that they're saying. So when the Corinthians saw Paul's name they would immediately recognize him but they also knew that he was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We've already studied that the city of Corinth was a bad place. Folks, it was almost as bad as it is today. Did you catch that? A lot of people look back and say, "Boy, it was awful." I think they would probably blush at some of the things going on in America today. But back in that day it was a terribly immoral, lewd city. If you ever thought of something bad, you thought of Corinth. It was at a

crossroads. If you were going from northern Greece down to Athens, you had to come right through Corinth. There was a little isthmus there and it was right in the middle of it. There was a trade center and all of these different things, and it sort of attracted all of the different cosmopolitan peoples of the world. For that reason it was a highly immoral place.

There was a Greek word that was used wherever you were. If you were in Thessalonica or Athens, wherever, and somebody would start acting grossly immorally, they would say, in the Greek expression, "You're acting like a Corinthian." In other words, it was a common expression. When you thought of something bad, you thought of Corinth. But isn't it wonderful that God put a church in the midst of all that kind of stuff. That's what Paul said. He said, "Where sin increases grace abounds even the more." God's grace was right in the middle of it.

However, the corruption of that city had evidently put its claws in the church of Corinth, and they were suffering because of it. Their flesh had risen up. Paul's going to have to write now under the authority of God, as an apostle to them, to correct them, to turn them right side up, to straighten them out, and to give them direction. God speaks through Paul to the Corinthians, and I want to document that in the first phrase of 1Cor 1:1. Remember, we're digging a foundation.

When my Dad and Mom built their house they used a team of horses to get a foundation dug years and years ago in Roanoke, Virginia. Of course, these days you don't do it that way. It doesn't matter how you do it. You've got to do it if you're going to build a house. So remember as we're wading through some of these things and you say, "Good grief, that was kind of dry." Just kind of relax, sit back, and say, "God, can you actually speak through me in something that's as foundational as this message is?" God may have a word for you. It may be that you treat God's word like you'd treat a letter from a friend rather than God speaking to your life. You need to hear this. It's different than just a friend writing it. This is God, holy God, writing His word through His apostle to this church.

Paul is a believer in Jesus Christ The first phrase is what we're going to look at. "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God." There are four things that I want you to see in this phrase that documents the authority of the word of God. First of all, Paul says that he is a believer in Jesus Christ. He's separating himself from the other people named Paul in that day. They knew immediately who this was. "Paul, called as an apostle." That little word "as" is not in the Greek text. It really reads "called the apostle." In the Greek it is kletos apostolos. There were no punctuation marks in that day, so you don't know exactly how it was constructed. Let me show you two different ways.

First of all, the word kletos is the word translated "called." It comes from the word kaleo, to call. When you put it in the plural it's the word kletoi. When you put it in the plural it refers to the church of Jesus Christ, the called ones. That's always important to remember. To those who He foreknew He predestinated. To those He predestinated He called. To those whom He called, He justified. To those whom He justified, He glorified. Man did not find God. God finds man. That's so important. Yes, there's a balance to that. Man has a will and also has a measure of faith to believe, but God initiates the process. That's the first thing you get out of the word "called." It didn't start with man. It started with God and it is speaking of the church.

Look in Romans 1:3-6. I want to show you that the word kletoi refers to the called ones, the church of Jesus Christ. In Ro 1:3 Paul is speaking about the gospel. He says, ".concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake." Look at Ro 1:6: "among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ," kletoi, that's what he's talking about there. It's the church. It's His church, His body.

Look over in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, just to make sure you understand that word. "Called," in the plural, refers to those that have put their faith in Jesus Christ. "For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom." They both have their downfall. "But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." So, "the called" is the church of Jesus Christ.

When you think about yourself being a believer and a called one that puts it into perspective, doesn't it? It didn't start with you. It started with God. If you put a comma after the word "called" it makes the word an adjectival noun. In other words, Paul is saying, "Paul, called, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." The first thing he would be saying if you did that would be, "I'm Paul the believer. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I put my faith into the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, wouldn't you want to hear from somebody who, first of all, was a believer? He put his faith into the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, the Church of Corinth knew this but Paul has documented who he is. "I'm Paul. I'm a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ."

If you knew anything about Paul and his past this would shock you to start with. Paul, a believer in Jesus Christ? A called one? I thought he was a Jewish man who persecuted the Christians. 2 Timothy 1:12 says, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." Paul knew in Whom he had believed. Paul begins, I believe, by saying, "I'm Paul the believer. I put my faith into the Lord

Jesus Christ.”

Paul has a message that concerns Christ

The second thing that we see in this phrase is that Paul says that he has a message that concerns the Christ that he believes in. If there's no comma after the word “called” then what you have here is a called apostle of Christ Jesus. He would be saying that he's first called to believe and then at the same time, basically, he was called to be an apostle to deliver the message of Jesus Christ.

I want you to understand the word apostle, apostolos. It means one sent forth with a message. Generically speaking, every one of us are called as an apostle of Christ Jesus. We all have a message in the One who we put our faith into, and we are to be out as ambassadors for Him telling that message to as many as we know how. We are to live it first and then if we need words, we'll document it. But we're to be witnesses of Him whom we have put our faith into. You see, it has the idea of an ambassador for someone.

I wonder if you have discovered that in your walk with the Lord, that you're an ambassador for Christ. One of my hobbies is going out to eat. My wife and I used to go out to this particular restaurant which is not there anymore. We got to be friends with this waitress. Over a period of time we developed a relationship with her. She never knew who I was or what I did. We don't tell people that. We'd rather let them know who we are, that we love Jesus, and have a message about him.

Well, one day she walked over to our table and she said, “I've got to ask you. Are you a preacher?” I thought, “Oh no! I gave it away.” I said, “Yes ma'am.” She burst out into tears and said, “I knew it. I knew it.” Boy, she began to share with me the most difficult story that I'd heard in a long time. She had cancer. She had some kids and had been divorced. She was just in an awful dilemma. I was able to bring it back to our church. This was years ago. We were able to help her with the cost of her surgery and help her out and hopefully got her back on her feet. But it's interesting when you go out to eat or wherever you go, if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you're taking the news of Jesus Christ to others. He called you. You didn't call Him. Now that you're a part of His kingdom, you're also an apostle. In a generic sense, you're an ambassador by the way you live, by what you say, by all of that. It all builds together.

We're called ones. We're believers and we have a message. We bear the message of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me show you what that word “apostle” means. Look over in John 13:6. It means one who is sent out, one who is sent with a message. The word is sometimes found even in the verb form. John 13:16 says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.” There's your word right there in a verb form. So you get the idea, one sent from the master, one who has a message.

In Philippians 2:25 it's used of a person representing someone else like this person was representing the congregation at Philippi. It says, “But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need.” So the generic usage of the word “apostle” is one who has a message concerning the one in whom he's placed his faith.

Paul says, “I am Paul, the believer, and I'm one who has a message concerning my Lord Jesus Christ.” In Galatians 2:7 we see the people he was sent to, of which the Corinthians were a part. It says in Galatians 2:7, “But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised [the Gentile world], just as Peter had been to the circumcised.” Paul had been given a message. He'd placed his faith into Jesus Christ. He was a called one and he was one who had a message concerning the One in whom he put his faith.

Paul has authority from Jesus Christ

The third thing begins to make the plot thicken. Paul is also saying in this phrase that he has authority that comes from Jesus Christ Himself. This is where we make the distinction. It's not just a letter from a friend who loves those people. It's a letter from a person who has been appointed into a position and called an apostle. It's a specific usage of the word “apostle” that none of us will ever, ever, ever enjoy for ourselves. If you ever hear me say that I have become an apostle in the specific sense that I determine doctrine like Paul did, then pack your bags and leave. Wayne has lost his mind. The group of apostles that he was a part of in the specific sense was a very narrow, small group of people. You must understand that. They are the ones through whom we have the New Testament. They gave us the New Testament books, the apostles.

Look in 1 Corinthians 9:1. They had to be witnesses of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. 1Cor 9:1 says that he's an apostle born out of due season which meant that he came later on after Jesus had resurrected. Jesus met him on the Damascus Road and stopped him in his tracks. In 1Cor 9:1 he says, “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?” Then he qualifies it. “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” These men were commissioned by Christ Himself and they had to be witnesses of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. They're equivalent in many ways to the prophets of the Old Testament who prepared the way for the Messiah.

In Ephesians 2:20 the apostle Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus. Those first three chapters are power-packed about what we have in Christ, who we are in Christ, and where it all came from. In Ephesians 2:20 it says, "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone." So we see they're relegated to a certain time. They're a specific group. They're a narrow group. They're a small group. Not many people fit into that. Jesus commissioned them.

In Ephesians 3:5 it says, "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." So the apostles were the people God used. He revealed to them and they in turn wrote it down so that we have the revelation from them. So he was writing as a mere man. That's the thing I want you to keep hearing. This is God's word and God's using a man to give us the doctrine we have even today.

He was in the category of what's mentioned in Hebrews 2. This is important. Look over in Hebrews 2. Hebrews really nails this. You cannot miss it. You may not think this is helpful to you but you wait. There are people calling themselves apostles everywhere. You better be careful. Hebrews 2:3 reads, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a [[salvation]]? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed [notice the pronouns here] to us [third generation] by those [second generation] who heard." First by the Lord; confirmed to us by those who heard. Now who do you think "those who heard" represent? That's the apostles.

Look in Heb 2:4. "God also bearing witness [look at the pronoun here] with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." Now this is significant to understand. You know, signs and wonders are going around everywhere today. People are saying, "Hey, it's a pattern. It's a prerequisite to revival in the twentieth century." Have you ever studied signs and wonders? It is only used ten times as a phrase in the New Testament. The first time it's used in Matthew 24 it says that the antichrist will try to deceive the elect by signs and wonders.

Then it's used with Jesus. It explains it. It says in John 20:31 many other signs did He do, "but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ." They were only to point to the fact who He was. They're used with Stephen right before he was stoned to death. The next time you find them they're according to the apostles. The pattern, the focus, and all was with the apostles, not with us today. By those who heard it was confirmed to us with signs and wonders and miracles, etc. You say, "Can God not do that today?" Sure He can but it's not our focus. That's not our focus anymore. It's not a pattern for us to look for.

When you hear that, people make you think that's God doing something. As a matter of fact, take the word sign and wonder apart and one of the first times you find it, it says, "An evil generation seeketh after a sign." It doesn't have a real good pedigree here, folks, when you start looking into it. But it did with the apostles. It affirmed who they were. It affirmed that they had seen the resurrected Christ and had been commissioned by Christ. These signs and wonders were done to give creditability as to who they were.

Look in Acts 2:43. "And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles." Flip over to 5:12 of Acts. "And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people." So you understand, then, that they're in a narrow group. They're in a small group. There has never been anybody like them. These were the ones through whom we get the word of God.

Look at Acts 1:1 and 2 and you find that Christ chose them Himself and instructed them Himself. "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen." God chose them, God Himself. Jesus chose these men Himself. But listen, their authority was delegated. You've got to see this, man. It's not in them.

A guy told me one day, "I saw a man stop 150 cars in the middle of the interstate highway by just putting his hand up." I said, "Man, if I ever tried that, they'd run flat over me. How did he do that?" He said, "He had a big badge right here and when he stood out there he stood with the authority of that badge and everybody stopped." It wasn't his authority. It was the authority the badge gave to him.

That's what you've got to realize. These men had authority, but it wasn't in themselves. It was in the One who gave them the badge as apostles. He chose them and He called them and now He's delegated to them the authority to give the epistles of the word of God to the church of that day. It's important that you realize why this is. He said, "All authority is given to me."

Do you realize in Matthew 28:16 they needed it themselves? He was leaving them. He didn't say, "All authority is given to Me, now I'm going to give it all to you." He didn't say that. He kept it with Himself and there's a reason for that. We've got to realize that authority is not in man. It's in Christ Who lives in man, you see. That's the key. Authority must always be centered in Christ. When man assumes it that's when doctrine is perverted. Matthew 28:16 reads, "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated." Notice who He's with, the eleven disciples. "And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them [the eleven], saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" That's when he says, "Go therefore and confirm the gospel, teach the gospel, preach the gospel, baptize, make disciples." But He told them, He said, "All authority rests in Me." It must always be centered in Him alone.

Now why must it always be centered in Christ? I'll tell you why. Because He's the creator of all things. He is the only One who knows the plan. He's the only One Who knows the design. So, therefore, for the Apostle Paul to write out of his own personal opinions, his own personal feelings, would have done the Church of Corinth no good whatsoever. But for him to wear the badge of the authority of an apostle that Christ had delegated to him and speak in his own way to the people the things that God had put on his heart to speak, that's different. God knew the Church of Corinth and God knew what they needed and God knew what it would take to turn them right side up. The authority rests in Christ. It can never rest in man.

John 1:3 says, "All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Isn't it wonderful to get into the word and know that God's word is designed specifically for you and me? You can trust it because He's the one who created everything. You want wisdom? You come to the word of God. Paul had a badge, but that badge of authority was delegated by Christ. The authority rested in Him. As long as he was submissive to the One Who gave him the badge, then he could be usable as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was completely surrendered to Christ

That's my next point that I want to show to you. First of all, I'm a believer, a called one. Secondly, I have a message concerning the One in Whom I have believed. Thirdly, I'm coming to you in authority that has been delegated by Him. It's not my authority. It's His. But then, fourthly, I am completely surrendered to what I'm writing to you. It not only relates to you but it relates to me. I'm just the messenger. I'm just the voice. I have to live up under it also. I also live and surrender to the will of God.

He says, "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ." Some translations put it "Christ Jesus" because most of the original puts Christ Jesus. That makes a difference. Jesus was an earthly historical figure; Christ is the anointed One and the resurrected One. So he's focused there. Some people say that He was only a man. No, no. We know He resurrected. He's the Christ, so Paul puts it first. When you see that in the New Testament it reverses the order. The emphasis is on the resurrected Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah. He says, "by the will of God."

In Kittel's Dictionary of Theological Words, you have to wade through all the German to get to it, it says that phrase has absolutely the idea that Paul is saying, "I am totally submissive to the authority God has in my life and the only way I can exercise any authority is to be submissive to the Authority that delegated to me to begin with." Do you know what? That principle holds true in our life even though we're not apostles. Christ lives in us. We're seated with Him but we're not Him. Remember the two absolutes? One is there is a God. The other is you're not Him. When I have authority at all, if it's delegated by Him, then it only comes depending on the measure of my surrender to Him that God can exercise His authority through me or through you or through any of us. Paul says, "I'm an apostle. I'm called an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." How many times does he say that in his epistles? He says it in verse 1 of almost all of his epistles. He made sure they understand who he is. If they know another Paul somewhere, it is not him. This is a radically changed man. A man who understands if he has any authority over them it's only because God delegated it to him. The authority continues to rest in Christ and only by his measure of surrender to Him is it even exercised in his life.

I think that's why Paul said in Romans 1:1, "I'm a bondservant." That's why he said in Romans 1:9, "I don't serve God out of my soul. I serve Him out of my spirit. I've cut myself free of all the soulless agenda I used to have." Romans 1:14 says, "I'm a debtor. I owe a debt. I live like a surrendered man who owes a debt to One Who one day called me. I didn't find Him."

Do you think he didn't understand the authority of God in his life? The disciples were wooed by Christ by the seashore, most of them. What happened to Paul? He was smacked down right in the middle of the road by the authority of the almighty God. This man lived having been blinded for three days before he could even start his journey. He lived understanding the authority of God in his life. So he's not some egotist as people would say. You can read that in commentaries by the way. He's not an egotist. He's a man broken, surrendered, to a Holy God. He's called, chosen, appointed, and the authority he has is not his. It's the One Who gave it to him and delegated it to him. It only can be exercised according to the measure of his surrender.

I'll tell you what. As we get into 1 Corinthians remember this. All Scripture is profitable. This is Scripture. It's not just a letter from a mere man to the friends he had in Corinth. It's God speaking through an apostle. This book will transform your life. It can renew your mind and transform your life.

When I was in Reno one time there was a fellow there who was a weatherman. He was always telling me what it was going to do the next day. I love these guys. They talk about these clouds. He was always talking about the weather. But he came to me after one of the messages and said, "For the first time I see it." I said, "What?" He said, "This is the whole key to Scripture. This is the whole key. I finally know how to deny myself." I thought, "Are you kidding me? I try to be as clear as I know how to be." He said, "I finally just figured it out." I have to bow before Him in loving surrender. That's the way I deny myself. But if I'm not saying 'Yes' to His word, then I haven't yet said 'Yes' to Him." He said, "For some reason all that came together for me this week and now I realize I've got to have this book and I've got to live surrendered to it in order to know that I'm living surrendered to Him and denying myself day by day."

If you take this book out of your life, folks, you've just taken away the authority of God in your life. You've taken away what God has put as a design in your life. I've got a friend who prays every day for one hour. That friend spends less than one hour a month in the word of God. What does that tell you about his sincere but ignorant effort to pray every day? It's the word that gives us the vocabulary to even know how to pray. You see, the two have got to go together in tandem. Those who are in the word and never pray have the same problem. The two have got to be married together and God gives us a vocabulary even in our prayers. It's an important book, isn't it? 1 Corinthians should be a journey that'll help us all.

1 Corinthians 1:1 The Fruit of Surrender

Dr. Barber introduces us to Sosthenes an unlikely character to be singled out by the apostle Paul. Why does Paul call him not just "a brother" but "the brother"?

We are going to talk today about the fruit of a surrendered life because the Apostle Paul is going to do something here in a moment that is going to introduce someone to us. But let's remember that the church of Corinth would have recognized him immediately. They would have recognized him to be the founder of their church, the father of their faith. In 1 Corinthians 4:14-15 it says, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." Then in 1Cor 4:15 he says, "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."

So Paul in writing to them is writing as a surrendered believer, but they would have recognized him right off. They knew the fire that burned in his heart. They were the results of it. He was the father of them spiritually. They were his spiritual children in the sense that they responded to the gospel that he preached.

Now I told you he is going to introduce someone here. Look in 1Cor 1:1 again. This is a beautiful story here in 1Cor 1:1. It says, "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Sosthenes our brother." The story of Sosthenes is a beautiful story. It should just encourage every heart for all generations if you have someone that you know whom you don't think can ever come to know Christ. Just listen to this story of Sosthenes. The verse reads "our" brother, but it really is not that in the Greek. It is *ho adelphos*. It is "the" brother. Oh, what a beautiful picture.

But I have to go back and take some time to show you how the story unravels. Why it is that Paul singles out Sosthenes and puts him alongside himself in his introduction as he writes the letter to the church at Corinth? In Romans 15:17 Paul says, "Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God." What are those things? "For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles." I want you to think about that verse. I want you to think about your walk with God. I want you to think about your salvation experience. And I want you to ask yourself the question, "Am I sitting here with my heart burning with a message and do I have a burden for people that are around me?" Because if you don't, you are going to miss out on the fruit of a surrendered life. You are going to miss out on that. Sosthenes was the fruit of Paul's surrendered life. He is a man who came to know Christ as a result of Paul's willingness to be faithful unto God, to be faithful to the message. I just want you to think about that as we are going through this. I want you to see the people that Paul's life affected.

I want to take you back to Acts 17:16. I want to walk you through the journey to where Sosthenes came into Paul's life and how he was affected by the gospel of Jesus Christ and why Paul says, "and Sosthenes, the brother" in 1Cor 1:1. First of all, I want you to see how Paul, being a surrendered vessel, had a fire burning inside of him and was so effective with the academic world of his day.

Now I don't know if you are like me, but sometimes when I get around somebody that really has a great vocabulary and a great education, it intimidates me a little bit. Sometimes I have to carry a dictionary with me to understand their sentences. They make me feel like they can tie me up in knots and I can't seem to answer like I want to answer. But I want to assure you that if you love the Word of God and the God of the Word and you are living with that fire burning inside of you, don't ever be intimidated by the academic world that we live in. They need the same message that we also need and have.

Well, in Acts 17 Paul is going down to Athens. It seems like every time I study his life that God is just squeezing him from one place to another. It is not as if he plans all these things. It is like the Holy Spirit is leading him. And the leash that He uses to pull him is the leash of persecution. He is over in Philippi and they beat him up and throw him in jail. Boy, that was a big mistake. He was a Roman citizen. Roman law says that you can't do that until you first of all question him and give him an opportunity to speak for himself.

This causes turmoil in that city. Finally, they ask him to leave. He leaves Philippi and goes over to Thessalonica. He goes right to the synagogue and when he gets there, boy, there are many people, especially Greeks who believed. But the unbelieving Jews get on his case again and even treat some of his friends badly. They slip him out by night and take him over to Berea. He gets to Berea and finds some of those great believers who at least checked him out in the Word to see if these things were so. But here comes the

unbelieving Jews again giving him a problem. So they sneak him out and he goes down to Athens and that is where we are.

You know, I hear some people sometimes say, "Well, I have been faithful to Jesus and people are persecuting me. And I don't like it. What is wrong with me?" Nothing. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for My name's sake." Do we understand 2 Timothy 3:12 which says, "If you seek to live a godly life, you shall be persecuted"? It didn't say that you might be, it says you shall be. It is not a question of "if," it is a question of "when," it is coming. Light and darkness don't work real well together. Paul was persecuted. You are in good company when you have a fire burning in your heart and you are persecuted because of it. That is exactly what the Apostle Paul's life was marked by. If you ever wanted to find him in a particular city, just go to the jail. He was usually there. Or if there was a riot somewhere, he was in the middle of it. I mean, that is the way it always was.

Look in Acts 17:16: "Now, while Paul was waiting for them at Athens,..." The "them" there is Timothy and Silas. He is waiting on them to come down. He has some R & R here, a little free time. He is in Athens waiting on them to come to meet him. "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols." Now the word "provoked" there is the word *paroxuno*. Actually one part of the word comes from the word "acid." Something started stirring inside of him and he couldn't help it. That is the way it is. When you have a fire burning inside of you and everywhere you go and everything that you do that fire continues to rage. You are living by the very message that you believe. You are living believing the Christ who lives within you. Then you have to be provoked when you see all the garbage that is around you, the idolatry of other people.

Paul was sitting there in Athens, the fire just raging inside of him. He looked around him and just got provoked. Man, he saw all the idolatry that was around him. Acts 17:17 says, "So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present." He had a message. He would share it with anybody. He didn't care. In the market place or wherever he was, he was sharing the message.

The word for "reason" there is the word that means intelligent discourse. They had something to say. He had something to say back, and they were reasoning it out. "Come on, let's talk about this thing. Let me tell you about Jesus. Have you got a question? Let me answer it." He was doing this daily in the market place and in the synagogue.

Well, this stirred up the intelligentsia of the area, those of the academic thinking, the school of thought. You know, Athens had a name for the academic way they treated things, the intellectual and philosophical ways of thinking. So he stirred them up. Acts 17:18 reads, "And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. And some were saying, 'What would this idle babbler wish to say?' Others, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,' because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection."

Let me tell you about the Epicureans and the Stoics. These were philosophers of the day, but you need to understand what they held to and it will really make the plot thicken. The Epicureans were a sect of Gentile philosophers from the island of Samos. Their doctrine held that the world came into being and will be dissolved by chance. That is exciting, isn't it? Or it happened by some mechanical means, but absolutely no creation at all, it just sort of happened.

Have you ever thought that to believe what the evolutionists tell you takes more faith than to believe what the Word of God has to say? They say there were two little cells floating around in space and they just sort of floated into each other and boom, there was a head-on collision. Now we have the interstate highway system, we have politics, we have buildings, we have everything you can think of and they all came when these two little cells ran into each other. That tells you who was driving that kind they were. They ran into each other.

Anyway, this is what they say, you see. They say the world was not created, it just sort of happened. Maybe it was a mechanical cause like an explosion or something. But God couldn't have created it. They said all events happen by chance or by mechanical cause. In other words, there is no Sovereign in control of what is going on. They taught that when you die the soul dies with the body. In other words, there is no future hope. So in other words, eat, drink and be merry, do whatever you need to do because you deserve it. Isn't that what the commercial says, "You deserve it. Go on and have a good time"? They taught that man's chief happiness lies in pleasure or bodily ease. They also did not believe in judgment of any kind or retribution whatsoever.

The Stoic philosophers were a little different. They were heathen philosophers who came from a sect that was founded by Zeno, who was a Cypriot from the island of Cyprus, a philosopher in 336-264 BC. Now here is what they thought. They thought that men should be free from passion or any kind of emotion and submit without complaint to unavoidable situations. In other words, fatalism. It is all going to be bad anyway, might as well go ahead and get in. I mean, I know some people like that. I think they must be kin to them. But that is the way they believe.

So you have the Stoic philosophers on one side, the fatalist, and on the other side, the Epicurean which don't believe hardly in anything, everything just sort of happened and you can do whatever you want to do and there is never going to be any judgment. There was no creation. No Sovereign in control. That is who Paul is dealing with here. It says in Acts 17:19, "And they took him and

brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?'" They had heard about it. The Areopagus was a place where they would hold courts. It was up on top of a huge hill there called Mars Hill.

Now the Acropolis is a huge hill. They have one in Corinth. They have all kinds of idolatry on top of it. But right off to the side there on the top is this big, huge stone that is called Mars Hill or the Areopagus. That is where they would hold court. Now Paul was not being tried for anything, but they wanted to talk with him and to debate with him. Acts 17:20 reads, "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears;" they said, "we want to know therefore what these things mean." Now you have to understand, they are doing this for sport. I mean, they didn't have television. They just enjoyed something new. They didn't really care. It is kind of like the mindset you get in Europe sometimes. You go over there and teach the Word, and they say, "Well, that's good. That is your opinion." And they walk out. That is the way it is. Everybody loves something new. Just tell me something new and we will argue about it and leave and nobody comes to any conclusion. Well, that is kind of the way it was.

It says in Acts 17:21, "Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new." But there is one problem they made here. They underestimated who it was they were taking up to the Areopagus. The Apostle Paul was probably the most intelligent man other than Jesus in all of the New Testament. In fact, he studied under Gamaliel, who was the great teacher of the Mishna of that time and was known to be an intellect. Peter said of him in 2 Peter 3:15-16, "You know, our brother Paul speaks some things that are kind of hard to understand, doesn't he?" Paul just had an intellect. He was one person who could meet the academic world head-on and tie them in knots because he knew both sides. He knew the law and he knew how to talk with them.

Well, in Acts 17:22 they are about to find out. "And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.'" Now how did he know that? Well, he explains in Acts 17:23: "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.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you." Man, he was so sharp. He saw that one idol that said, "To an unknown god," and that was it. That is all he needed. He said, "You don't know who He is. I do. Let me tell you about Him."

Watch how he starts knocking the Epicurean thinking. Acts 17:24 continues, "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." Do you realize that idolatry comes from not believing that God is supernatural and creator? Because if He is not a creator God, if He is not Sovereign, if everything happened by chance, then religion is nothing more than a defense mechanism of the mind. Therefore whatever you do in religion, you can make it yourself because there is no God anyway. That is where idolatry comes from. The Apostle Paul just nailed that theory to the wall with his word.

Then in Acts 17:25 he continues, "Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things." Man, he is just knocking their idolatry right down the tube. Now look at this first phrase in Acts 17:26. If you are not a creationist and understand that God spoke and the world was created, look here. "And He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation." Do you realize what he is saying that is so contrary to the thinking of that day? No wonder he was a little provoked! Acts 17:27 says, "That they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." You know, you can go to the darkest part of Africa and man is worshiping something, a stick, a stone, some grass, something. And God put that within man to know he needed to worship.

Acts 17:28 reads, "For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said." And he quotes a line from one of their own poets, "For we also are His offspring." Then he takes that line and says in Acts 17:29, "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent."

Repent of what? There is no retribution. Do what you want to do. What do you mean? There is no such thing as sin. That is what they were saying. And he is saying, "No, no, no. Yes, there is and you better repent." They also believed that there was no judgment. Look in Acts 17:31 at what he does: "Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Of course, he is pointing to Jesus Christ when he says that. When he mentions a raising from the dead, buddy, this stirs them up even more. Remember, everything happened by chance. There is no sovereign. Or you are on the other side, you are fatalist.

Paul is talking about Jesus Christ, the judge. He is talking about the day appointed. He is talking about the resurrection of Jesus. Acts 17:32 goes on, "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, 'We shall hear you again concerning this.'" He really messed up their minds on that statement. Acts 17:33 says, "So Paul went out of their midst."

Let me ask you a question. Do you think that the fire burning inside of him had any kind of fruit whatsoever amongst all these intellectuals, all of these men who were known because of their philosophy? Have you ever thought about this? A philosopher really

has to stay within the bounds of his own philosophy. If he ever steps outside of it, he loses his identity. Wouldn't that be a sick way to live? They can't even treat truth over here because they are known. They have already drawn their boundaries over here. They can't be known outside of what their philosophy is.

Well, Paul just absolutely blows their mind, and one man, who is mentioned here, comes to know Christ. It was worth every bit of his effort. Let me show you in Acts 17:34: "But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman called Damaris and others with them." Dionysius was one of the famous senate, the court of the Areopagus. And so, here is a man that was an intellect, a man who thought a certain way, but he was confronted with the gospel and as a result became a believer.

Therefore, the intellectual world can be affected when they are willing to live lives that are surrendered to God. Remember that. Don't ever be intimidated by somebody who can out-talk you or somebody who can out-think you. Just remember something, hang on to the Word of God for dear life, stand on it and share Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit of God can convict that man just like He can convict anybody else. Many of us are intimidated by academic and intelligentsia of our day because we don't think we are on their level. You don't need to be on their level. God is way above their level and He lives in us. And so, when you live with a fire burning within you, don't worry. God will bring to remembrance the things He has taught you in the Word and that will be the basis for which the Holy Spirit will use to bring others of that world, of that thinking, to know Jesus Christ.

You know, you think about what is going on in our world today. Madalyn Murray O'Hair's son became a Christian. Things are going on. People who have thought differently for so long are coming back to what the Word of God has to say. So when you have a fire burning within you, and God puts in your path someone of that type of thinking that is different than yours and maybe higher up as far as academic is concerned, don't worry about it. The gospel can change them just like it can change anybody else.

All I am trying to say is, the Word of God absolutely is needed by the academic world that we live in. Be a vessel. Let a fire burn in your heart and it will touch them.

Paul's Surrendered Life Affected the Religious and Non-Religious

But the second thing here that I want you to think about in Paul's life is how his life as a surrendered vessel also affected the religious and the non-religious. Do you remember the statement of St. Francis of Assisi? He said to his congregation, "When you leave today, witness to somebody. Oh, yes, if you have to, use words." Well, the Apostle Paul had integrity, folks, and that was the basis of his witness. Before he ever opened his mouth, he was a man of integrity. He had made certain choices to make sure his lifestyle did not in any way offend others. If it was Christ offending them that is one thing, but if it is Paul offending them that is another. He made sure it wasn't him. He made sure that the only offense would be what Christ would do through his life.

He had chosen not to take any money for what he did. Now, in 1 Corinthians 9:1-14 he shows very clearly that is okay to do that. You can take money for that because he said it is right. People who labor in the Word ought to receive from the people who are blessed by that, but he said, "I have made a choice. I have gone against that. I am free to make this choice." He said, "I have chosen not to take a dime. I have chosen not to take any money whatsoever because I am working with Gentiles and I don't want them to use that to mess up the message that I am trying to tell them." So Paul had chosen to become a tent maker, of all things. That is the way he made his money. He didn't take any money for what he did. In fact, when Philippi sends him a gift, he is almost embarrassed to have to receive it. He even tells them, "I didn't need anything, but thank you for your kindness. I am sufficient in Christ." So he had made that choice early on in life. That was the integrity that began to frame his witness. In 1 Corinthians 9:18 he says, "What then is my reward? That when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge." In other words, I am going to make sure that when people hear me, they know that I am not expecting anything out of them at all. I just want them to hear the word of God and let God work in their heart.

Well, look in Acts 18, and we will take him out of Athens into Corinth. It is very important that you get into Corinth. That is where we are going to find our brother mentioned. Acts 18:1 says, "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius [the Roman emperor] 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."

Now here is Paul. He is happy as he can be. He gets over to Corinth. He is a tent-maker. He finds two other tent-makers, moves in with them and they start work. Every Sabbath he had a habit of going to the synagogue. Work during the week, make his money to earn his living and on Saturday he would go to the synagogue. It shows you that in Acts 18:4: "And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks." This man never quit. If he wasn't making tents, he was sharing the gospel somewhere in the synagogue.

Well, in Acts 18:5 finally Timothy and Silas show up. He was waiting on them in Athens. They finally show up in Corinth: "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.” Now, this intensified effort of sharing the Word stirred up a lot of hostility. He didn’t have it before. He would just go on the Sabbath and reason with them. Now it is every day. He stopped the tent making. He is full-time now just simply sharing the Word of God. Acts 18:6 is referring to most of the Jews. “And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles.’” In other words, I have stuck with you religious folks and you won’t listen to me. Alright, I will go to the non-religious. I will go back to the Gentiles. And I am clean as far as God is concerned because I have told you the truth.”

I want you to see something here. God is just absolutely awesome, isn’t He? I mean, God is so far ahead of Paul you can’t even think about it. Basically he gets kicked out of the synagogue is what happened. They won’t let him come in there anymore. They are sick of him. So he says, “Alright, I’ll see you.” And he goes next door to a man’s house. Acts 18:7 reads, “And he departed from there and went to the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.” Over there they had windows that were open and you could hear everything that was going on. I mean, if you were in a house next door to the synagogue, you are going to hear everything they do in the synagogue. But if you are in the synagogue next door to that house, you are going to hear everything that is going on in that house! Paul said, “Go on and kick me out of the synagogue. That is alright with me. I am moving next door.” So he goes next door and does the same thing.

Well, an interesting thing happened. There was a man by the name of Crispus who was the leader of the synagogue. As a matter of fact, he was the one who kicked Paul out. Look at Acts 18:8: “And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.” I mean, you have got to get excited about this. Crispus was over in the synagogue, having kicked Paul out, but he keeps listening to what Paul is saying. He keeps hearing the gospel coming from the house next door. Finally he gets under conviction and can’t stand it. He gets saved, his whole household gets saved and as a result of that, the people say, “Hello. We better listen to this.” And a little small revival begins to start right there in that community because Crispus got saved.

This led to a very fruitful ministry for the Apostle Paul for the next year and a half. In fact, God even told him in Acts 18:9-10 of chapter 18 of Acts that nobody would bother him. “And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.’”

Now folks, I want you to see that Paul is a man who has a fire burning inside of him. Wherever he goes he sees those come to know Christ. If it is the academic world, Dionysius, or the religious world, Crispus, he sees those come to know Christ. If it is the Gentile world of Corinth, he sees many come to know Christ because he is a surrendered vessel through which God the Holy Spirit is convicting others of their sinful life and of righteousness that can be found in Christ Jesus.

All of us can be that kind of vessel wherever we go. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could just sit here and think about all the countless people who have come to know Christ because we have our focus like it ought to be? We are not like the church at Corinth, but we are like the Apostle Paul. Isn’t it interesting that Paul’s life is surrendered but the life of Corinth is not? He stands in stark contrast to the church at Corinth. Folks, I am praying in my own heart that those of you who relate more to Corinth than you relate to Paul will understand how far you have drifted. Maybe when we finish this book all of us can get our focus back and be about the business that God has for us.

What I am trying to tell you is, that if you will just become a surrendered vessel, willing to let God use you, it doesn’t matter where you are, I guarantee you there is going to be fruit to that surrender and there are going to be people who are religious and people who are non-religious and people who are academic and people who aren’t academic. It doesn’t matter. Because the Word of God is for every man regardless. But you have to have a surrendered life for the Holy Spirit to use so that He can convict of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Paul’s Surrendered Life Affected the Hostile World

Well, the third group of people that the Apostle Paul affected was the hostile world, the enemies, the ones who treat him badly. Oh, this is where the story really unfolds. Remember Crispus was the guy who kicked Paul out of the synagogue and then got saved himself. The man who followed him was a man by the name of Sosthenes. Much harder, much meaner than the Apostle Paul. Though his name is not mentioned until later on in the text, it is very implicit in the verses that he is the ring leader of bringing up false charges against the Apostle Paul. Corinth would ring with the name of Sosthenes and they would think to themselves, “Yes, we know who he is. He is the persecutor of the believers. That is who he is.” Well, get that in your mind.

Acts 18:12 says, “But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat.” Now, they kind of messed up here because Gallio was a just man, not just in the sense of God’s justice, but just as far as being a good man, a right man. Historians called him a sweet spirited man. He was a kind and gentle man. He wasn’t somebody who was out to make a name for himself. A proconsul is the same thing as a governor. Achaia was a province in Rome.

Of course, Claudius was the emperor, but Gallio was the proconsul and would handle the legal matters in that area. Well, their charge was in Acts 18:13: "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." Well, they messed with the wrong guy. Gallio wasn't going to handle it. He wasn't going to fool with it. It is a religious matter, not a civil matter, so he says in Acts 18:14, "But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, 'If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.' And he drove them away from the judgment seat."

A strange thing happens right here. It is hard to understand. Look in Acts 18:17. It is interesting. The Greeks who were there do a strange thing. They see a countryman being betrayed by his fellow countrymen, and they don't like it. In Acts 18:17 it says, "And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue." Why are they grabbing him? He was the one who led them over there with the false charges. "They grabbed him and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. And Gallio was not concerned about any of these things." Now that is a strange happening, isn't it? They took Paul to be put on trial. Gallio wouldn't fool with it. So some of them there felt sorry for Paul and jumped on Sosthenes.

Now what I am going to share with you now has got to be written in between the lines and cannot be proven. We may get to heaven one day and they will say, "No, you missed it, Wayne. That was the wrong Sosthenes." I think it is the same one because here is what I see in it and you are just going to have to look at it and throw it out or keep it or whatever you want to do. I am not the absolute, never have been. But I think what happens here is, Paul intervenes on Sosthenes' behalf. Number one, we know he has got a fire burning within him. We know he never carries a sword of his flesh against God or against man. He is a peaceful man in that sense. The only sword he picks up is God's Word.

Paul is defending him from the people who are beating him. He says to him, "Sosthenes, listen to me, buddy, it is not me. I didn't start this thing. I don't know why they are beating on you. But I want you to know something while we are here, God loves you. I know you hate me and what I am preaching, but God loves you and Jesus died for you. And Sosthenes, I am praying for you that one day you will come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior."

That is the kind of man Paul was. And if that happened and we don't know if it happened or not because the Scripture is strangely quiet, then we see then that the fruit was born in Sosthenes' life.

In 1 Corinthians 1:1 we read, "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes," not our brother, no, it is ho adelphos, the brother. Everybody's ears in Corinth would perk up. "Who? Sosthenes? Are you kidding me? You mean, he is a believer?" That ought to have sent a ripple all through the church of Corinth saying, "Man, there is hope for everybody if Sosthenes can come to know Christ."

That is why I wanted to share with you the fruit of a surrendered life. Folks, you may have people in your family right now who you have been praying for years for and you didn't think they could come to become a believer. But I want you to know, if you will be a surrendered vessel and you will live in the Word of God, God will use your life to touch whoever it is. Don't give up on them. Don't give up on them. Crispus, the leader of the synagogue. Sosthenes. You have got Dionysius over there in Athens. You have got people who the world would say, "That man will never come to know Christ." Hey, listen, you be that surrendered vessel and watch God change the minds of others. You see, God can do that.

Turn to 1 Peter 3:13. I just want you to see what the Apostle Peter says for all of us. There are a lot of people out there that can intellectually tie you up in knots. There are people out there who are religious or non-religious. There are hostile people out there. But they are all the people for whom Jesus died. Don't be intimidated. Just have a fire burning and watch God reach them. In 1 Peter 3:13-16 he says, "And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ maybe put to shame." That is a lifestyle, that is Christ burning in your heart. That is always being ready to give an answer for the hope that you have.

I am telling you, there are people out there and God, not you, will touch those lives and bring them to know Christ. Before I close, let me just ask you a question. How many of you know people right now, in your family that for years you have almost been driven to give up on their ever coming to know Christ? Well, be encouraged. Don't be a Corinthian. Be like the Apostle Paul. Get your focus where it ought to be and begin to be a vessel through which God can use to touch that individual. You may be surprised who is next in the kingdom that you didn't think would ever make it because God uses people just like you and me.

If somebody stopped you on the street and said, "What is the church?" what would you say to them?

If somebody stopped you on the street and said, "What is the church?" what would you say to them? Everybody has an opinion, but look at 1 Corinthians 1:2. We are going to find from the text what the church of God really is. He says, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours."

Now just what is the church of Christ? Well, that little phrase "to the church which is at Corinth" dispels two myths that the people seemed to believe. Immediately Paul erases them. The reason I am dealing with them now is because when I get to that phrase a little later on, I want to treat it in a little different way. But first of all, there are some people who say that the local church is not important at all. Have you known people like that? They say, "I don't need to go to a church. I don't need to belong to a church. Man, I am a part of the body of Christ, and it is worldwide. I can worship in my house just like I can worship at home." Most people who think this, by the way, have had some bad experience somewhere along the way. And they don't feel like they have any God-given reason to be in a local church. Well, I hate to tell you, it is the church of God which is at Corinth. That is a local church. As a matter of fact, Paul didn't address the whole church all the time. As an apostle he did, certainly, because it is in the New Testament. But he wrote a letter to the Ephesians; he wrote a letter to Corinth; he wrote a letter to Thessalonica; he wrote a letter to Philippi. Each of these were local church situations. And so therefore, people who say that the local church is not necessary are people who just don't understand the Word of God and most likely are still bitter over some bad experience they have had somewhere along the way.

Now, denominations are not that bad of a thing. Some people say, "I wish we didn't have denominations anymore." Well, you know, denominations can help at times. They give doctrinal clarity at points to know what some people believe. Now, I know there is a downside to that. But there are a lot of people who just seem to think that the whole matter of the local church and denominations, etc., is all wrong. I hate to disagree with you, but the Apostle Paul is writing to a local church. That dispels that to start with. You know, a believer who is not a part of a local church is like a soldier who never puts on his uniform or never goes to battle or like a student who never goes to class and never takes a test or a citizen who never pays taxes and never obeys the law. It doesn't make any sense. Hebrews says, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together."

There is just something about being a part of the family that you want to be with. It is the church of God which is at Corinth and that is very important to understand. That is a local church situation and people were a part of that church.

The second myth that Paul dispels by that one phrase is the fact that the church ought to be the perfect place to go, the ideal place. Now, I don't know how many of you have been caught in the trap of looking for the perfect church. We are always looking for the perfect church, aren't we? The ideal church!

There was a lady one time who was tough. I mean, she just did not like me at all. I started calling her Super Kay. That is not nice and that is not right, but I did. Every time I would see her I would say, "Here comes Super Kay" and would go the other way. Well, my son was little at that time, very impressionable at his age. We were in a grocery store one day and he came running to me. I thought somebody had stolen my car or something. He said, "Dad, Dad, Dad." I said, "What is it, Stephen? Is something wrong?" He said, "There's Super Kay!" Well, when I heard it from him, I had to ask God to forgive me because I knew that it had gone too far.

But I thought when I moved from that church that Super Kay would stay there. Do you know what? She moved with me. The funny thing is, they disguise themselves. She didn't call herself Super Kay anymore, she just changed disguises, you know, looked differently, changed her name and snuck up on me. It is amazing. Everywhere you go, you are going to have people. That is the problem.

I know you don't like to hear me say, "When you come to this church you are going to be offended." I know that. I have even had people say, "Don't say that to people." Well, you are going to be. And the reason is because people are going to be here. You are not going to find the ideal church. By the way, if you do, don't join it because you are going to mess the thing up!

I have a friend who has always wanted to start a church. Now some starting churches is good because church planting is something that is necessary in many of the localities of the world. But I want to tell you something, folks, a lot of people, particularly younger folks want to start churches so they can have the ideal church. I want to tell you something, it has never been done yet. Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, if that is what you are thinking. Because the first thing you are going to do is become the denomination of a nondenominational. That is the first thing you are going to do. "Well, we are not going to be denominational." Ah, baloney! As soon as you get a group of people you are a denomination. Can't we understand that? And then what is going to happen is you are going to get people who are coming out of other churches and they are going to have baggage you didn't know about and they won't tell you. Then one day you are going to wake up and say, "Well, look here. We have the same problems we had before." And God is going to say back to you, "Where did you find in scripture that you are going to find the perfect church?" You will never find the perfect church.

What does this have to do with Corinthians? A whole lot. If you were in Corinth would you want to join the First Baptist Church of Corinth, if that is what it was? Maybe it was the First Presbyterian Church. Let's just call it the Corinth Community Church. Would you like to join it? I mean, it is a perfect church, ideal setting, people just love each other. Man, if you think that, you haven't gotten far enough into 1 Corinthians.

Beginning in 1 Corinthians 1:10 you are going to find out what kind of church this is. They were men followers. In fact, let me just remind you of the verses. In 1 Corinthians 1 beginning in verse 10 he talks about the fact that they followed men. Therefore, there were divisions among them. They had quarrels and divisions. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 he said they have an adult nursery, they are spiritual infants. That is what he said. You know, sometimes in many churches you just want to put a sign up that says "Adult Nursery 1, Adult Nursery 2, Adult Nursery 3. If you want to whine and complain, come in here and this will be your place for the morning." That is what was going on in Corinth.

As a matter of fact, in 1 Corinthians 4:3-5, they even criticized the Apostle Paul. Can you imagine this? They were judgmental of him. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-3 he talked about the gross immorality that was going on there. As a matter of fact he said they were even worse than the Gentiles in that area, and they weren't doing anything to discipline them. Then in 1 Corinthians 6:7 they were suing each other in courts of law. Great church, huh! I know a real good church over in Corinth! Let's join that one.

I tell you what we will do. We will make it the ideal church. Listen, there are no ideal, perfect churches, folks. There are churches that teach the Word and that ought to be the criteria. But that one phrase dismisses the idea that the local church is not necessary. It also dismisses the idea that there is a perfect church because he is addressing the church of God which is at Corinth.

Let me just give you a suggestion here. If you want to find a perfect church, stop looking for perfect Christians and become the ideal Christian yourself. My Mama always told me when I found the right person, she said, "You will just know." I said, "Mama, how will I know?" She said, "You will just know because you know." I didn't know what she was talking about. So everybody I dated I just kind of made myself feel like I knew. I don't know how many people I thought I was going to marry. Thank God, He had grace on me and spared me! A friend of mine said, "Do you know what your problem is, Wayne?" I said, "What?" He said, "Why don't you quit looking for the right person. Just stop. Just stop looking for the right person and start becoming the right person for somebody else."

Do you want the perfect church? Then shape up your own life and start living like you ought to. Then one by one we will have the ideal situation right in your own church. But quit looking at other Christians and telling them that you can't find the ideal church. Man, that is crazy. They are going to have all kinds of levels of maturity in every church.

I think John pegged it. Look over in 1 John 2:12-13. He picks up on four levels of maturity. These are in every single church and you have got to understand this. This is what is going on with Corinth. They may have had more of the infants than others had, but you have them all in every church. You are never going to find the perfect church. You are never going to find the ideal place. 1 John 2:12 he says, "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Those who are fresh in the kingdom need to know that their sins are forgiven.

How many people do you know who later on in life have difficulty with their past life because they don't understand that their sins have been forgiven? So he tells them that straight out.

Then he says in 1Jn 2:13, "I am writing to you, fathers [Now why would he call them fathers?], because you know Him who has been from the beginning." Then he says, "I am writing to you, young men [those in that time of life when God can tremendously use you], because you have overcome the evil one." And you know how to overcome him. In 1 John, it is by obedience to Christ. As we obey Christ we overcome the evil one. Then it says, "I have written to you, children, because you know the Father." These are the older children who are ready now to be disciplined in the faith.

There are four levels of maturity there. They were in John's epistle, and they are in all of the churches Paul addresses. So I just want to say that one more time, that there is no such thing as the ideal church. Praise God for the churches that have more of the fathers than they do the infants, but at the same time you are going to have those different levels of maturity. So be the right person for someone else and therefore the church can be what it needs to be.

The Church of God Is Made Up of "The Called Ones"

Well, what is the church of God? Just what is it? First of all, the church of God is made up of those who are the called ones. You don't have a church without believers. I don't care what denomination you are a part of. I don't care what church it is. You don't have a church until you have believers. That is the key.

He says in the phrase, "to the church of God which is at Corinth." Now the word "church" is the special word that helps us with our meaning. It is the word ekklesia. Let me explain that to you. The word ek is a preposition, and it means motion out of. Suppose I have a pen in my pocket, and I take this pen "out of" my pocket. Now this pocket that this pen used to be in no longer has this pen in

it. Something has been taken out of it. It is very important to remember that. Not away from it, where something is alongside it that is taken away from it; that is different from something that is in it that is taken out of it. Do you understand the difference there in the two prepositions?

Now the word klesia is the word that comes from kaleo, which means to call. So what is the church? It is those who have been called out of something and into something and unto something. That is very important to understand. If you are going to call yourself a believer then you have been called. And it is not you calling, it is God calling you. You have been called out of the world and into Christ and unto Christ.

Let me give you an example of that. A boat in water is by design. Did you know that? A boat is designed to be in the water. How can we still live in a world and not be of the world? You can. Oh, it is very simple. You are called out of the way it thinks and looks. That is what Paul said in Romans 12:2, "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed." You have to live in it but you can't be of it. You have been called out of it, you see, into Christ. So a boat in the water is by design. But water in the boat is disaster.

So the first thing you find out then of the church is that they are the called ones. They have been called out of the world. They are still in it as far as having to exist every day. And they are called into Christ and unto Christ.

He says "to the church of God" by the way, not the church of man. There are a lot of organizations man can build, folks, and they really look good in today's economy of the way people think. But this is not a church that is called by man. This is a church that is called by and unto God. And it is so different because you have to take your hands off of it then. It is His, not yours. Somebody said one time, "The way you build a church is by doing this and this and this." That's funny. Jesus said, "No man can build the church. I will build My own church." It is His church and we are called unto Him.

Now when you think of being called out of something that is a lifestyle of evil and called into a totally different world in the sense that we are in Christ with a brand new lifestyle, think of the church of Corinth and think of the picture that Paul is drawing for them. Look what they came out of. Remember how lewd the city was? Man, there was an expression in the Greek of that day whether you lived in Corinth or not, if you were acting immorally or you were acting sinfully, then they would say, "You are acting like a Corinthian." That was their phrase! The place was known for the debauchery. But right in the middle of it, God had put His church and called them out of all that kind of lifestyle and yet they still lived in Corinth. He called them into a different kind of lifestyle in and unto Christ.

Look over in 1 Corinthians 6 and you will see what I am talking about. Look at what they are called out of and how they are now different and you will get an idea of what it means to be a believer. 1 Corinthians 6:9 says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived." Now by the way, I didn't write this. This is God's Word. "Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters [and this means habitual], nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Look at 1 Corinthians 6:11: "And such were some of you;" but you have been called out of that. Look what happened. He says, "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."

That is a beautiful passage. That is the best illustration I can come up with as to what it means to be the called ones. Man, called out of and into and unto what God wants in your life. You know, a lot of people say, "Well, brother, I have been a Baptist since I was born." Well, bless your heart. I mean, I feel sorry for you. But did you get saved and were you called out of that lifestyle you used to live and were you called into the lifestyle? Jesus didn't say, "I am the life alone." He said, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life." You come out of one way of life and you come into another way of life and that is what the church of God is. And it doesn't matter what tag you want to put on it. You might disagree on eschatology, you may disagree on a lot of things, but I want to tell you, the church of God are those who have been called out of one lifestyle, called into another, called into Christ and unto Christ. And if you are not a believer, you are not a part of the church of God. That is what Paul said to the Corinthian church.

Actually it is a subtle rebuke because from 1 Corinthians 6:10 on he is going to start showing them how they are certainly not living like who and whose they are. So the church of God then is made up first of all of the called ones, those who have been called out of and into and unto.

Before I finish with that one, let me just share this with you. In 1 Corinthians 1:2 it says "which is at Corinth." Now I know I mentioned a while ago a little bit about that phrase, but I also told you I am going to go a different way when I get to it and I am going to do it right now. Do you realize what he just said? He said "the church of God which is at Corinth." He didn't say "part of the church of God which is at Corinth because the other part is at Ephesus and the other part is at Philippi and the other part is at Thessalonica." That is not what he said. He said, "the church of God which is at Corinth." Now folks, I am going to get a little emotional on this but this thing knocked my socks off.

I was studying this and I had never seen it before in my life. What he is saying is, "If there were no other church in Greece, if there were no other church on the face of this earth, that bunch of immature babies was the church of God at Corinth." Man, he is trying to wake them up. They have every bit of God they could ever have or ever ask for. They have Him all and that is the church of God

that is at Corinth. The church of God at Corinth. Oh, man, just think about it, the potential that is there. What is Paul doing in Corinthians? I tell you what he is doing. He is subtly moving in to remind these people of who they are.

I want to show you something. The way you behave, now listen to me, does not change who you are. Are you with me? Think about it again. The way you behave doesn't change who you are. You are who you are because of Christ, the called out ones. Now it may not make you look like who you are supposed to be and it may not make you exemplify whose you are supposed to be, but it does not change who you are. So the church of God which was at Corinth are those Christians who were there, who Paul is writing this epistle to, are the called ones, called out of the world into Christ and unto Christ.

The Church of God Is Made Up of Those Who Are "The Sanctified Ones"

Well, the second thing really helps understand the first one. The church of God is made up of those who are the sanctified ones. Not only the called ones, but the sanctified ones. Now do we know what it means to be sanctified? It says in 1 Corinthians 1:2, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling." Now the word "sanctified" just draws a picture for you and you can't miss it. It is the word *hagiazō*, which means to be separated. It means to be set apart. Another word that comes from this word is *hagios*, and we get the word "saint" from that. It is the word "holy," the holy ones. As matter of fact, we call God the Holy God. Why do you call Him Holy God? Because He is in a class all by Himself. There is no other god like Him, totally by Himself. He is God. He is pure. He is righteous, but He is in a class all by Himself. That word *hagios* means He is separated from anything else you could put in your mind when it comes to understanding who God is.

The term here, "those that are sanctified", is the plural term. It is the separated ones. I love this. So Paul is addressing the church not as a building, he is addressing the church as the people who make it up. What is that little thing we did when we were in kindergarten? "Here is the church, here is the steeple, open it up and there are the people." That is simple. It is the people. Paul is addressing the sanctified ones. God could care less about buildings. I hate to tell you. They are necessary and you have to have them, but as far as eternity goes there are not going to be any buildings made by man's hands. Thank God, they will be made by God's hands and the great architect Himself. But he is talking about the people who make up the church, people who are holy and separated unto God for His purposes.

There is another word for "sanctified" or "holy", and you must realize the difference because there are some people who teach sinless perfection and they come right out of this kind of teaching right here. Since we are sanctified, then we are now sinless. No, no, no. There is another word that would mean that and it is the word *hieros*. It is translated holy but in a different sense than *hagios*. It is a different sense and you must understand it. This is the word that is translated "sacred" in English.

Look at 2 Timothy 3:15: "And that from childhood [talking to Timothy here] you have known the sacred writings." That is that word right there, *hieros*.

Now, look at 1 Corinthians 9:13. It is used again. I am going to explain to you the difference in the two words and it is going to light your fire. 1 Corinthians 9:13 says, "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 with the altar?" So you have two words there translated "sacred" but it is this little word.

What does it mean? Well, in the New Testament when they used this word it meant something that is absolutely spotless, something that has no blemish on it at all. Aren't you glad that is not the word used for sanctified, because every one of us know the blemish that is already on our life, the sin that is in our life. You see, you are not sanctified on the basis of the fact that you are spotless. The church of Corinth, if anything, was not spotless in their behavior. Their history was horrible. Yet now they are sanctified. What in the world? Well, it has nothing to do with man's ability or inability. It has everything to do with God's sinlessness. It was Jesus who came as the Godman and what He did for us on the cross, the sinless lamb of God took sin upon Him. Sin was never in Him. There was nothing in Him that Satan could draw out of Him. He died on the cross for us. He arose from the dead, ascended, was glorified. Now we can be sanctified. We can be made holy, not based on our sinlessness but based on His sinlessness.

Hagiazō means something that has been taken and presented to God regardless of its nature or its past. If you had the other word it would have to be spotless. The only way we are made spotless is to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Perfection is never resting upon our ability. It is always resting in Him who lives in us, the perfect One who lives in us. He has taken us and has set us apart. That is the difference in the two words. Thank God for that.

I think of a friend of mine. He told me, "Wayne, if you just knew where I had come from." He told me some of his past and it made me blush. I am thinking, "Good grief, I thought mine was bad." But isn't it wonderful when we stand together we are sanctified, set apart. We are holy unto God. Not because of anything we have done but because of what He has done for us. Their sanctification was due to God snatching them from sin and purifying them by His blood and by coming to live in their lives. In Hebrews 10:10 it says, "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." And again, it was His sinlessness that

enabled us to be sanctified. It had nothing to do with our being spotless in our behavior or their being spotless in their behavior.

Now the term "sanctified" here is in the perfect tense. You have to remember the perfect tense. Perfect tense is not static. It means something happened back here, yes, in a static sense it happened back here. When I put my faith into Jesus Christ as these Corinthians believers, God set me apart, called me out of the world, called me into Himself. He separated me unto Himself and made me holy by putting His presence within me and washing me of my sin. But the perfect tense means something happened back here that is having a result way over here. It is still going on in my life. That doesn't mean that I can't sin because that is not even the meaning of being set apart and sanctified, but it does mean that the Holy Spirit of God lives in me as a divine referee to make sure I do know when I have sinned. Therefore, I am a changed person because I am not like I used to be. I have His life within me now and it has a present result.

I hear people all the time saying, "Well, I got saved 30 years ago." You did? That is great. What is God doing in your life now? "I got saved 30 years ago." That is wonderful. What is God doing in your life now? "I got saved 30 years ago." You can just forget people like that, folks, because you see, sanctified perfect tense means it happened back here but it is still having a present result on you right now.

You may be in sin but I guarantee you the Holy Spirit of God is rocking your boat because you are not like you used to be and you were called out of that lifestyle. You were called into a different lifestyle and you are not comfortable by what I am saying because the Spirit of God lives in you and that is what we are talking about. It still has a present result in your life. You can't go back and live like you used to live. That is what he is saying. I tell you what, folks, start thinking about that for a while. Then think about the church at Corinth and you see what Paul is driving at.

It is in the passive voice. Passive voice means you didn't set yourself apart. No, sir. You were set apart by God Himself. Religion, you can set yourself apart for that. But only God can set you apart in His Kingdom.

Well, in spite of all the problems in the Corinthian church, Paul reminds them that they are holy and sanctified and they have been called out from this world. Isn't that great! They have been called out.

You say, "Well, Wayne, now that I am sanctified, I know that is positionally. I am in Christ and I am set apart unto Him. But I also know that sanctification is a process. Now, where is the balance in understanding all this?" Don't make the mistake that the Galatian church made. The Galatian church was sanctified by God. God did it. God was the one who came to live in them. It was based on His sinlessness, not their sinlessness. But once they were sanctified and saved and called out, they went back to the law and thought by the efforts of their own flesh that somehow they could now continue to sanctify themselves. The Apostle Paul wrote to them and said, "Oh, foolish Galatians."

Let me say something very simple to you because I have a simple mind. How do you continue the process of sanctification? The same way it got started in your life. When you fall on your face and you cried out to God and said, "God, I am unholy. I am sinful. I am aware of it. I know what You require and I can't meet it. But I thank You that Jesus came to do that for me. And God, I put my faith into Him and I receive what He has done for me and I receive Him into my life. I bow down, lay my sword down. I won't fight Him anymore."

You were saved, folks. But let me tell you something. That same attitude that saved you is the same attitude that sanctifies you. I want to say it one more time. Perfection never rests in human flesh. Perfection rests in the One who is perfect who lives within us. Therefore, day by day I have to continually come before Him and say, "God, I can't. You never said I could. You can and you always said you would. God, I can't produce the righteousness you are demanding out of my life. But God, I know that by my surrendered relationship to you, I can perfect holiness in the sense that I can release your life in me and that is what you are requiring. You are only pleased when you look at me and see yourself." That is sanctification.

Religion. That is what men do for God and justify themselves by it. But sanctification can always rest in Him. That is why when it says you are sanctified you fall on your face and say, "It has nothing to do with me. He is the spotless One. He is the sinless One. He is the perfect One. He has rescued me. And He is the one who has manifesting His life in me. I am decreasing so that He might increase." That is how holiness is perfected in our life.

In 2 Corinthians 7:1 we read, "Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." In Colossians 2:6 it says, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." You say, "I have to go to work tomorrow. How can I be holy before God?" Easy. He has already enabled you by putting His Spirit in your life. Bow down before Him and say, "God, it is not my agenda today, it is Your agenda. I am going to be about Your task. I am going to cleanse myself of all the defilement of my flesh by choosing against it." And at that moment, something takes over in your life that you are not even aware of. And God who lives in you begins to live through you. That is what righteousness is all about. That is perfecting holiness, you see. It is not what man can do. It is what God can do through man.

I don't know really why I stopped and threw that in, but I want to make sure that we understand if we are sanctified, understand all the way through that it is Him from the beginning. It is Him in the middle. And it is Him at the end. Philippians 1:6 says, "I am confident of this very thing, He that began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus." It is not what you can do, it is what He does in you.

What is our responsibility? It is just like Corinthians said, we cleanse ourselves of the moral defilements, we choose to obey Him. We choose to get into the Word. Yes, there is responsibility in the Christian's heart. But then He takes over and what you see manifested in your life is the character of Christ. That is sanctification. We are being made more and more conformed unto His image. It is Christ in us and through us. So sanctification is not only a position, but it is a process. "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus." You know what it means now to be sanctified. It means that He has set you apart unto Himself.

He has another purpose for your life. Then he says "saints by calling." That could be translated "called to be saints." It could be translated "called saints." In the morning when you get up just walk to a mirror and say, "Good morning, Saint Kent." "Good morning, Saint Chuck." "Good morning, Saint Wayne." Just remind yourself of what that means, not sinlessness, not anything like that. But, oh, the message of grace and how God has separated you unto Himself based on what He did to fulfill the law, in your stead, took your punishment on the cross. Now you put your faith in Him and He comes to live in you.

You know, if you start thinking about salvation it just makes you want to shout. We didn't deserve any of it. He came and died for us. He went beyond what was required. Now He puts His life in us and gives us the ability to do all the things He commands us to do. Then one day we get to heaven and get to see Him and He gives us rewards for it! No wonder we are going to turn around and cast those crowns back at His feet and worship Him forever and ever and ever.

Saints by calling. Called saints. You say, "You don't act like a saint sometimes." Well, neither did the church at Corinth. But they were still saints. I want to keep saying it. What you do does not change what you are in Christ Jesus. You may shut the process down a while and you may keep it from being seen but what you do does not change what you.

You know most of us have children who grow up. It is fun to watch them. You warn them and warn them. We were warned and I never paid any attention to my Mother and Daddy either. So there were times when my kids didn't pay any attention to me, and there were consequences that go with that. I remember telling my son, "Stephen, be careful who you run around with. Guilt by association." But Stephen has such a gift of mercy. I mean, he cares. You find somebody who is an underdog and Stephen is drawn right to him. I mean, he has always been that way.

Well, years ago he had gotten his first car, and they were out one night. He had a black Honda. They were out on Brainerd Road and he had his buddy with him. Somebody took a cigarette and just flicked it right on his hood. He had just cleaned the car. You know how you are when you get your first car. You clean it and everything... for about a week anyway. You want to make it look good. It made his friend madder than it did Stephen. Stephen was upset with him, but his friend kind of lost it and a long story. You don't need to know everything that happened, but it wasn't really good. Some things he said and did.

Well, the people who his friend did it to got the tag number of Stephen's car. Now Stephen doesn't own the car. The car was not registered in his name, the car was registered in my name. We got a phone call one day at the church. They called and said, "We can't believe that the pastor's son would talk this way and do some of the things that happened." Well, it wasn't Stephen. Stephen had told me that and I had really trusted him in it, but now he is wondering if I am really going to believe him now that we got a phone call. These people had a friend who was a policeman. I don't know if they are supposed to do this or not, but they tracked it down and called the church. It was a real easy tag number to identify.

The thing that I think I appreciated most about Stephen was he wasn't so upset. He loves his friend and they are still friends and God has done a great work. But the thing that impressed me the most was Stephen was so hurt that he had brought shame upon me. It hit him that he wasn't really getting the blame for it. I was getting the blame for it. Sure enough, they called back and said they were sorry that it wasn't the driver of the car and they cleared him. It was okay. He was honest. He told me exactly right.

I thought about that as I was studying the first ten verses of 1 Corinthians. It is like the Apostle Paul very subtly is writing to them, reminding them of who they are and whose they are. Then in 1 Corinthians 1:10 on he is going to start showing them what they are doing to disgrace and bring shame, not upon themselves but upon the God who paid the ultimate price to sanctify and to call them. Remember that when you go out this week. When you sin, you are going to pay for with God and consequences, yes. But the one who gets the real shame, it is not even the church sometimes, it is Christ who is the founder of it. It all goes back to Him somehow. Just remember that. Maybe it will be a helpful reminder to each of us.

1 Corinthians 1:2 What is the Church of God - Part 2

In the last part of verse 2 Paul says, “to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.” So the next thing that identifies someone as a member of God’s church is that they call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The third thing that identifies a person who’s a member of the church of God is found in the last part of 1 Cor 1:2. He says, “to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.” They call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Corinth had a little bit of an attitude. They were a very rich and affluent city. They kind of felt like they had it all together. As a matter of fact, Paul really had to chasten them when he came out of Macedonia and had gotten an offering from the poor people over there. He says a lot about that in this letter. Corinth kind of had the idea that “We’re the only ones around.”

Do you know anybody in a denomination who thinks they’re the only ones who are saved? Aren’t they fun to be with? They’re going to build a little fence around them up in Heaven somewhere. As we’re walking by they’re going to say, “Who are those people over there in that fenced in area.” They’ll say, “Shh. Don’t bother them. They think they’re the only ones up here.”

That’s kind of the way the Corinthians were. That’s the attitude they had. Since they had all this affluence certainly it must be God’s blessing. It sounds just like Israel in the book of Judges, doesn’t it? It’s no different. Flesh is flesh. So the apostle Paul was saying, “You’re the church of God in Corinth.” If he had stopped right there, they would have said, “That’s right. See, we told you. We’re the only one.” He wants them to know that there are some other believers out there. As a matter of fact, these other believers are not known by their position. Position is what you talk about sometimes, but you’ve got to remember the practice has got to somehow equalize the position. So he doesn’t point to their position in Christ as being sanctified. He points to their practice. Being sanctified means you live a certain way.

He says, “There are those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and our Lord.” He wanted Corinth to know that there were some others out there. Isn’t it wonderful the identifying mark on other believers outside of Corinth? By the way we’re outside of Corinth, and we are known to be sanctified by the fact that we call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I’m going to spend some time on this. We’ve got to understand this, folks. To call upon the name of the Lord means more than when your children are sick in the middle of the night and you call out to God and say, “Oh, God, help me.” Calling upon the name of the Lord is more than being in a foxhole in a battle somewhere and saying, “God, if you’ll get me out of this foxhole I’ll do anything for you.” Calling upon the name of the Lord is more than when the stock market crashes and all of a sudden, financially, you’re doomed and you cry out unto God. It’s much more than that. It’s the lifestyle of people who are a part of the church of God.

The word “call” is the word that’s used in Acts 2:21: “And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Do we understand that verse? Do you understand why the people are calling upon the name of the Lord? They’re calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved. What does that mean? The implication is they know they’re lost. They know they’re helpless. They know they’re hopeless, and so they’re crying out in desperation, “Oh, God, I can’t. Oh, God, if you don’t, it won’t get done.” It’s that kind of attitude.

“Now, wait a minute. Are you telling me that people who are part of the church of God live that way, dependent upon Him?” Well, why is that a problem? If you’re purchased by His blood and you only have one purpose, to be a saint, to be set apart for His use, then why would you not cry out to Him? He’s the only one who has the plan. He’s the only one who has the strength. He’s the only one who can do in and through you what He says He wants to do.

It’s in the present middle voice. Go back to 1 Corinthians 1. Kind of keep a marker there because we’re going to jump every now and then. I want you to see the tense here of calling upon the Lord. The word “call” is the same word we’ve been looking at. But the word is in the present middle voice. Present tense means it’s a constant lifestyle. It’s moment by moment. We sing the hymn, “I Need Thee Every Hour.” That’s the idea of a person who’s blood bought, sanctified, a person who’s a saint, part of the church of God. He lives that way. He constantly cries out unto God that way.

It’s in the middle voice. Middle voice means no preacher has to come in and make you feel so guilty that you’ll cry out to the Lord. Middle voice means you do it when you’re by yourself, on your own, by your own choice. You choose to cry. It’s a choice of life you’ve made. You’ve chosen not to put any confidence in your flesh as Paul said in Philippians 3. You’ve chosen instead to cry out and depend upon and call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, this is interesting to me. There’s a subtle rebuke in this. We’ve already looked at the church at Corinth. If that church was located in your town you would not want to join this particular group. They have all kinds of problems. And yet at the same time they

weren't living what Paul's saying; Paul knows that. It's sort of a gentle rebuke to them. He's going to start addressing their problems. But you see, the reason they have their problems is because they stopped crying out unto God. You start depending on your own flesh and crying out to your flesh and you end up like the church at Corinth. The whole sixteen chapters deals with all the problems they had.

The word name means more than just to identify someone. Have you ever looked up the meaning of your name? I found out my name Wayne means wagon. I wonder why someone named me wagon. Then I found somebody who felt sorry for people named Wayne and so they called them "burden bearer." A wagon bears a burden. We named our children Stephanie and Stephen. That came from the Greek word stephanos which means crowned one. That kind of crown is the kind you get because of righteous living. It's not the diadem which is given to Christ but it's the crowned one. We do pray that our children will live in light of their name.

Back in Scripture names meant much more. Some of us have a little to do with that today. But in their culture it was big time. Remember Jacob who was going to be the leader of all the tribes of Israel? Jacob's name had to be changed to Israel. That's how Israel got here. His name was changed to Israel, because his name meant deceiver. Jacob meant deceiver, conniver. I'll trick you. He tricked his own brother, Esau, out of the birthright. God had to deal with him. He crippled him and changed his name to Israel, the son of God. Israel had twelve sons and those twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel. So the name meant something to them.

In fact, every time they would discover the name of God or God would reveal His name to them it would come in the midst of crisis. When Moses was up on the mountain and they were holding his hands up and Joshua was in the battle fighting and finally they won the battle. Jehovah became the word for provider, my provider, Jireh. Then Jehovah Nisi, my banner. Then Jehovah Jireh comes in and Jehovah Ropha. But they always come in at times when they cried out to God and God had revealed Himself unto them. There's a wonderful Precept course called "The Names of God" that I suggest everybody take. As you go through you begin to understand who God really is and you realize who you're crying out to. They weren't just crying out to some name that identified Jesus apart from somebody else. They were crying out to the One who had for them what their need was for the moment. They understood who He was and they understood what His character was all about.

When you study something in Scripture, it's very helpful to go back to the first time it was ever used. A lot of times it will tell you a little bit of the root understanding of where it came from. This little phrase, "call upon the name of the Lord" is first found in Genesis 4:26. I want you to turn back there with me. I think it might be helpful to us to realize this. Who is it that calls upon the name of the Lord? It's the church of God. But where does it come from?

In Genesis 4:25, remember Cain, the unrighteous son who would not depend upon God, provided an offering that God rejected. Abel, however, evidently provided one that was acceptable. It doesn't tell us that God said anything to him, but evidently He did because God approved of his offering. Therefore, Cain got jealous and killed his brother.

Look at Ge 4:25: "And Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, 'God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel;'" Ha! Now we've got a group of people who are starting to put their trust in God like Abel did.

Ge 4:26 continues, "And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord." In other words, now we have a generation of people who are going to depend upon God, starting with Seth. Abel was killed. Seth takes his place. Then men begin to call upon the name of the Lord.

The next time you find it it's in the past tense. It's over in Genesis 12 with Abram. He became Abraham in the 17th chapter of Genesis. Abram was told by God, "Get your family. Leave your house and follow Me to a land. I'll tell you when you get there." How'd you like to have those kinds of instructions? Abraham, remember, is the one through whom the everlasting covenant was given. It's a covenant of faith. So you see the picture of it right there. Genesis 12:8 says, "Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord."

What I'm trying to get you to see is calling upon the name of the Lord is the attitude that governs the lifestyle of people who are sanctified, blood bought, saints, people who possess all of Him but are possessed by Him. That's their lifestyle. They don't know anything else. The intellectuals of the world would look at them and say, "You're stupid people who walk by faith." Well, fine. That's alright.

A little lady one day was in her apartment and didn't have any groceries. But she was the church of God in that apartment building. She got down on her knees and cried out to God, "God, I need food. I'm working and I can't do anything more than I'm doing. God, would you give me food?" Her landlord called himself an atheist. There are no true atheists, you know. He heard her pray every day because his apartment was next door to hers. So one day he said, "I'll fix her." He went out to the store and bought about twenty-five

bags of groceries, everything he can think of. He stocked up the pantry. There were groceries flowing out onto the floor. She came home and had a fit, I mean a spell. She start praising God, jumping around, and doing everything but stand on her head thanking God for providing for her because He is Jehovah Jireh and that is who she cried out to. That is His name. The man burst out of a closet he was hiding in and said, "Hey, Christians are all alike. You think God gave you those groceries. I went and bought those groceries, I'll have you know." She said, "Sir, I don't where in the world you're coming from but I asked God to give me groceries and if God chose to use the devil to bring them to me, He still gave them to me." That's the church of God.

I want to tell you something. If the world doesn't like it, I'm sad for you. You need to know the same Christ we know and you can trust in Him that way. That's what it means. It means to live a lifestyle of total dependence upon the name of the Lord. It's not a one time anything.

The next time you find the phrase is in Psalm 116:1. If this doesn't say anything to you, folks, there's something deeply wrong in your life. There comes a time in every man's life when he is not calling upon the Lord. There comes a time He reveals Himself to them and when they cry out He answers them. They realize He's the only one who has ever answered. He's the only one that can help me. At that particular point, that sets off a lifestyle that you live from then on. You see this picture in Psalm 116:1: "I love the Lord because He hears my voice and my supplications."

You know there are times when I don't think anybody's listening to me. I love my wife more than anybody in the world. She's my best friend. But there are times she thinks I don't listen to her either. There are times when we don't think we have an audience with anybody. But I want to tell you something, folks. Once you start crying out to the name of God you're going to find you have His ear any time you ever cry out to Him. I'll tell you, you're going to end up like the Psalmist and you're going to say, "I love the Lord for He hears my voice and my supplications."

It says in Ps 116:2, "Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live." Then the Psalmist is going to take you back and show you what happened to him that changed his mind. It turned him from trusting men to trusting God. It says in Ps 116:3, "The cords of death encompassed me, and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow." All that's in the past. "Then I called upon the name of the Lord; 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, save my life,'" he says. And in the crisis God heard him and God answered him. Ps 116:5 says, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate. The Lord preserves the simple." The simple has the idea of those who don't understand. They just cry out. They don't know. He says, "He preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me."

Now the Psalmist found rest in his soul and he's telling the story. He says in Ps 116:7, "Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountiful with you." You know, when you've cried out to God and God's answered to you, there's rest in your soul, in your mind, your will, your emotions. God just gives you the peace that passes all understanding. In Ps 116:8 we read, "For Thou has rescued my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'" Nobody had to convince me. I believed it. I was greatly afflicted.

Then he realized that man's words could not always be trusted. He said in Ps 116:11, "I said in my alarm, 'All men are liars.' What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" The Psalmist is thinking, "Man, God has been so good to me. When I was in those dilemmas I cried out unto Him. He saved me. What can I do that somehow would repay Him?"

Then in Ps 116:13 you find that phrase the second time. "I shall lift up the cup of salvation," I shall lift it and hold it up high, the cup of salvation, the story of how God rescued me. "And call upon the name of the Lord." I'll tell you what, folks, those people who call upon the name of the Lord are grateful for what God has done in their life. They understand there was a time when they were facing eternal death. Hey, by the way, I think sometimes we forget what it was like to be lost, don't we? Be around a lost person for a while and it won't take you long. Hopeless, helpless.

We heard about this cult group out in California. Thirty-nine of them committed suicide. Folks, I want to tell you something about that group. I guarantee they were sincere. They proved that by what they did. They said they were killing themselves because they were going off to a better life. I want to tell you something, folks. That's all people have who don't have the Lord Jesus Christ. A lost person has no hope and, therefore, a lost person will even, if he can, identify with what he thought was a spaceship following a comet if he has to. He'll do whatever he has to do.

But that same lost person one day who because of the divine providence of God comes to know Jesus Christ will stand up in the congregation of the righteous and say, "I was once lost, in distress and facing destruction, and I cried out unto God and God answered me. Now I live my life differently. I live my life crying out and calling upon the name of the Lord." That's the whole attitude.

What? You didn't know that? You mean you're not living that way? Paul would say to the Corinthian church. "We may have some problems here. Have you gone back to putting confidence in men and in your flesh? Well, no wonder the misery and the upside-downness of your world." They were people who realize what God has done. He's sanctified them and made them saints usable to Him who call upon the name of the Lord. They call upon His name in everything.

I've got to tell you a story that happened to me. I was out in Denver with my son. We went skiing and we had a great time out there together. On Saturday I got a very early flight because I knew I was leaving on Sunday afternoon to go to Romania. You know how grueling a trip that is. I got up at 3:45 Denver time, got out to the airport, and got on the plane at 6:00 right on the nose. I said, "This is wonderful. They're leaving on time. I'll be home before noon. I'll have the rest of the day to pack and get ready and rest."

We backed out with that little truck. That little thing stopped and unhooked. The pilot started up his engines, turned the plane around and pointed it to go out. Just as he did something went wrong in the left engine. As a matter of fact, I've never heard this before. Boom! It shook the whole plane. You could just see the walls shaking. I'm thinking, "Hmmm." That's when you go through these, "I'm getting out of here if I have to rip that window out of the wall." We just stopped. The pilot just stopped the plane. I was very grateful. He sat there forever. We sat on that runway forever. Finally, he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is the pilot. I'm sure all of you felt and heard that. We did too. I just want to comfort you. We heard it up here. By our gauges we cannot tell what's wrong. We're going to have to take this plane and turn it back to the gate." I heard rumblings around me, saying, "Fly the plane." I'm thinking, "Go back up to the gate! I'll fly to Romania from Denver."

We got up to the gate, and he had to let everybody off the plane. He said, "Guys, I don't know. They're going to have to fly a mechanic in here for this. It's going to be a while." So everybody went out to the counters. I thought, "I've got faith in these guys. Somehow they're going to salvage this flight." So I went over and sat down. I'm just fooling around with my computer. I carry my laptop with me. That's the way I do a lot of my studying when I'm traveling. I've got all my programs on it and everything. So I was having a good time.

About an hour and half passed and after a while I'm thinking, "Hmmm." The pilot came out and said that the mechanic was not here yet but we'll let you know when he arrives. About two hours after that he came out and said, "Folks, we did the right thing. That engine would have exploded as we took off if we had not pulled back. We found it was a very serious problem in the engine. The flight is cancelled. Please get in line and let them help you."

It's Spring break in Denver. Every airline is full. They've got a waiting list. What are you going to do? I got up in line. Several had been in line. I got up in line about 8:00 and I stood in the line for almost four hours and never moved. You would get excited when someone would move their suitcase around so you could move up and feel like you're going forward. Nobody moved. Finally I prayed, "You know, Lord, I'm just so grateful you stopped that plane from taking off. I'm just going to rest in You."

But I began in my heart to cry out unto the Lord. "God, you know what I'm doing. You know the pressure that's there. I'm putting this into Your hands. Deliver me from trusting in my flesh and trying to figure it out myself. You take it." I kept doing that, and it was amazing. One guy walked up and said, "I've been watching you. You haven't sat down or left the line, and you just stood here with sort of a half-smile on your face. Are you alright?" I said, "Yeah, as far as I know everything's in control."

I got up to the counter, and the lady in front of me had been crying. I don't know what the situation was that had thrown her out of gear. I could tell she was nervous about it. The agent fixed her up and she turned off and was so grateful. This new guy walked in. It had been a woman doing this the whole time. This brand new guy walked in, and I walk up to him. I'm the second guy. "I'm Mr. Barber." I hate this when they go, "Okay, you're going to Chattanooga." You don't have a clue what they're doing, "Uh-huh, uh-huh." Then they pick up the phone and they turn their back to you so you can't hear them talk. "Okay, let's do this again." He gets back on the computer. I'm thinking, "Oh, no." He said, "Okay, good deal. I got it fixed up. I think you can get into Chattanooga at 12:05 in the morning." I'm thinking, "Okay, Lord. I'm gritting my teeth and I want to praise You for this, but I'm not sure." He said, "Okay, Whoa!" I said, "What's wrong?" I thought the computer had blown up. He said, "Somebody is typing for you and searching out flights while I'm doing it." I said, "That's odd. It's just you and me standing here. How'd they do that?" He said, "I have no idea. Sometimes they take people and start working out their flights." I'm thinking to myself, "Six hours later at the very time he's about to tell me I'm going to get here at 12:05?"

He just took his hands off the computer. The keys weren't moving, but you could see the thing typing. It wouldn't let him in but you could see what was happening. He said, "Look at the flight they got you." Tell me. Have you ever tried to look at a computer screen and understand anything on it. I said, "Where's the gate?" He said, "Right there. The one next door." "You're kidding me. When does it leave?" He said, "In twenty minutes and you're sitting in a better seat than you were sitting in before."

I thought to myself, "Thank you, God. Thank you that you even care about airlines and tornadoes when they strike an area. You care about everything in our life. We are those who are blood bought and sanctified. We're saints, and we have a purpose in life which is only to live in You. It doesn't make any sense for us to go to any other alternative but to turn to You and call upon Your name at all times for everything because You here us. The Psalmist said it. You the only one who listens and You're the only one who has the answer.

That's the church of God, folks. That's the church of Jesus Christ on this earth. Forget your denomination. You can join every church

that's got a denominational tag to it and miss Jesus by fifty miles. But if you're blood bought and you're His, you don't live for yourself any more. You live for Him and your lifestyle is one of total dependence upon Him.

When we got to Romania and walked in that room, they were singing, "My Jesus I love Thee. I know Thou art mine." After they finished the hymn, before they let us do anything, the leader said, "Let us pray and thank God that our brethren have arrived." They started praying in Romanian. You can't understand them. But somehow in your heart you do. It was obvious. They weren't thanking God that we got there. They were thanking God that He heard their prayer and had done what they had cried out to Him.

My heart goes out to the world that thinks that there are other ways to do this. If your life's a mess and you're looking at nothing more than a blackness in front of you and there's just nothing there, I want you to know you're at the best place you've ever been in your life to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Quit looking that way and start looking this way and cry out to Him and He will hear your cry. He will hear your cry. Oh, what he's done, folks.

We sing a song that goes like this:

"He paid a debt He did not owe
I owed a debt I could not pay
I needed someone to wash my sins away
And now I sing a brand new song
Amazing grace all day long
Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay."

I tell you what. Keep singing it and keep singing it and keep singing it and then it's going to click. The One who washed them away is the one who saved you from their power every day in their life. It'll affect an attitude that says, "I'm going to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." People who live that way are people who understand gratitude for how they used to live the other way and what God's brought them from and where He's brought them to.

I hope somehow you will continue to call upon the name of the Lord in everything, every supplication, everything in your life. Call on Him and see what He does.

1 Corinthians 1:3 What is the Church of God - Part 3

The fourth thing that we are going to look at is the church of God is made up of those who are in need of God's grace whether they know it or not. I guarantee you the church of God did not realize it. When we think of grace we think, "Oh, that day when God saved me by His grace; I already have it. I don't need it anymore. But boy, it was good enough to save me." We miss the whole understanding of what grace is all about.

1 Corinthians 1:3 says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Even though Paul greets a lot of the churches this way, I think in this particular greeting down through 1Cor 1:10 Paul knows what he is about to tell them. He is about to lay a grenade right over in their laps. The church at Corinth had all kinds of problems. He had been hearing the reports. And from 1Cor 1:11 of chapter 1 to the very end of the book he is going to read them the riot act from A to Z. I mean, everything is out of kilter. Everything is wrong. Every time he comes to any kind of doctrine, he is trying to correct the wrong one.

I think, as the Holy Spirit of God is leading him in writing this letter, he is starting off by letting them know who they are and whose they are. He is also showing them what they are so desperate for by wishing for them grace and peace. Now so many times we read these verses and skip right over them and don't have a clue what they mean in our life every day. I want to take some time to look at it. Why would he wish them grace and peace? "Well," you might say, "it was just a greeting of the day. It was common, it was normal." Now wait a minute. This is God's Word. The Holy Spirit of God inspired it. So what is he saying and what do we need to remember from it?

The Church of God Is Made Up of Those Who Need the Grace of God Whether They Know It or Not

Alright, so the fourth thing that we are going to look at is the church of God is made up of those who are in need of God's grace whether they know it or not. I guarantee you the church of God did not realize it. When we think of grace we think, "Oh, that day when God saved me by His grace; I already have it. I don't need it anymore. But boy, it was good enough to save me." We miss the whole understanding of what grace is all about. Many, many Christians don't realize how much they need grace every minute of every day.

Let me tell you something about the church of Corinth. The church of Corinth was a rich church. It was an affluent church. In fact, Paul really gets on their case over in chapters 8 and 9 and some other places in the book because, you see, they are not willing to

give. Stingy! These were people who were popular and, if you put this in 20th century terms, well off financially. They were well educated, healthy and really had need of nothing. That is the attitude of the church of Corinth.

Now here is the Apostle Paul wishing something for them, praying something for them. And in his opening address he doesn't pray for anything that they can earn, anything that they themselves can come up with or anything that they can deserve. He prays for grace and he prays for peace. Oh, they can earn fame. They can earn all these other things. But he prays for something that only God can give to them. And of course, before God is going to give it to them, they have to come to the place of even recognizing how much they need Him. But the Apostle Paul brings up this matter of grace.

Do you know why I think he does that? Because the apostle Paul lived depending on it every day of his life. He had already been the route of the affluent. He had already been the route of the abased. He said over in Philippians, "I have been abased and I have learned how to abound but I have also learned to be content in whatever circumstance I find myself." This great man who lived depending on God's grace, not something he could work up in his life, but on God daily, calling upon the name of the Lord, this great man wishes and prays for the church at Corinth that they might have what man can't give to them, that only God can give to them and it is something that they would never deserve in a million years, just the very favor of God.

It would be kind of interesting to compile a list of answers of what people think grace is. I want to give you the history of the word to show you. We sing these songs, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound," and we don't have a clue what we are singing about. "I tell you what it is, it is God's unmerited favor in my life." Yes, it is. You are right. But oh, it is so much more than that. And if you don't understand there is so much more, you don't understand why it is the unmerited favor in your life.

Let's go back to the very beginning, the root understanding of the word. It started off when it first was used meaning "beauty," first in persons and second in things. If you looked at a person who had grace, it gave you pleasure. Beautiful. That was the whole idea. Are you ever around somebody sometimes who just makes you feel good when you look at them? That was the idea of beauty.

Later grace became to mean the lovely act that revealed the beauty of one's character and the loveliness of their heart. I just love to say those words: the loveliness of their heart, the beauty of their character. And since the loveliest act that a person can do who is beautiful inside as well as outside is to give to someone, it became the idea of a beautiful disposition exemplified by giving to others. But then since you are giving to someone, the greatest and most beautiful and the loveliest act of giving is to give to someone who doesn't deserve it. And so it came to be known as favor, the undeserved favor that comes from one who is beautiful and lovely in their disposition. So when you see a person give to someone who doesn't deserve it, that became known as an act of grace, you see. But it all was a reflection of an inner character. It is not the act itself. It is what the act reflects of the inner character and the inner beauty and the loveliness of someone. That is what it is all about.

Well, of course, you take that into the Christian vocabulary and you realize that God has shown His grace to us, you see, here on this earth. God, the beautiful God. You know, I wonder sometimes what people think about God. Periodically on television you are looking around and you come across some kind of program that is talking about God. You look at the expression on somebody's face and they look like they are ready to pull a trigger on a gun and shoot you, like God carries a sledgehammer around. The way they portray God is some mean animal somewhere who is in heaven, sovereignly in control and He is out to get you and you had better turn or you are going to burn! And yet you come back to the understanding of grace, which is the beautiful and lovely disposition of His character, and something is missing somewhere. You see, when we start thinking about God's grace you remember the God who gives the grace, the disposition, the beautiful character of God.

The grace that is given to us is that He did not bring us to the complete destruction that the sinfulness of our life demanded. "The wages of sin is death." We were born into Adam. Romans 5:12 says, "In that one man sinned, sin entered the world, death by sin," and everybody who is born on this earth is born with the virus of sin and therefore impending eternal death. There is no way out. You can't get yourself out of Adam. That is why we have to be rescued or saved. We are then lifted out of Adam and put into Christ.

And so what God did, instead of bringing us to the destruction that we all deserve, He showed us favor in building a bridge to Himself. But the only way to do that was for His only Son to come to this earth as a man because what was required of men no man born of Adam could produce. The law, therefore, condemned flesh and blood unless God could produce the miracle. He produced the miracle by the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born on this earth of a woman. He didn't enter a body as the Gnostics said He did at His baptism. He became flesh as John 1:14 says. And by becoming flesh there was a marvelous union of God and man together. He was a sinless man. There was nothing in Him that Satan could draw out of Him. And He lived on this earth to fulfill the law, not to destroy the law. The law required of men certain things. Man in Adam could not meet it. But Jesus met it.

Then He went to the cross, going way beyond what was even necessary. He took our sins upon Himself, died on the cross for you and for me, resurrected the third day, ascended and was glorified. And that was an act of the beautiful and lovely disposition of the heart of God to give grace to man that did not deserve it. The greatest demonstration of the love and the grace and the favor of God is Jesus Christ dying on the cross for you and for me.

You see, that made grace something else. Not only was it the reflection of the beautiful character and a lovely character, not only was it a gift to somebody who didn't deserve it, but grace was very, very expensive. It cost God His only Son dying on the cross. And so as we walk through it you begin to understand that grace is not something you throw away. Grace is an expensive, expensive word that God wants us to understand. It is a reflection of His character in our life.

Now, why would he wish grace upon the Corinthians who had already received that grace when Jesus came to live in their life? This is where I want to spend a little bit of time. Why do we still need grace if we have already received Christ and the grace that God showed by giving Christ to us? What is grace all about? We know that it is favor and that it reflects His character. Why do we need grace? Why are we desperate for grace?

The Corinthians found out just like the Romans found out, just like the Ephesians found out, just like we have found out, that just as their own human effort could not conquer sin and its penalty, neither could it conquer sin and its power once you have become a believer. You see, the problem is sin goes right on. We have a brand new heart. Yes, Jesus has come to live in us. However, He left us in human bodies which Romans 6:6 calls "bodies of sin". And the same grace that delivered man from the penalty of sin by Jesus dying on the cross is the same grace that delivers man from the power of sin by Jesus living in man in the person of His Holy Spirit. That is why He came to live in us, because we cannot conquer sin. We couldn't conquer it when we were in Adam and now that we are in Christ, we still can't conquer it. We have to learn to let grace conquer it. We have to learn to let grace continue to have its work in our life.

You see, all human effort to conquer sin in our lives is negative. Have you ever tried to conquer it? "Yes, I conquered it." You did? That is so good. I am so glad. "I conquered anger in my life." You did? I wish I could have you for about 30 minutes and I would show you whether or not you still had any in there! It is amazing to me how many people even preach a message that they themselves aren't even living. They tell their people, "Well, self-denial. You had better give up smoking. You had better not chew. You better not run around with those who do, you see. And if you do that, you have conquered sin." Are you kidding me? What about the roots and the desire of it which are still infested within the flesh? We think that grace is only for a moment at salvation. We don't understand that it is the same grace that is there for sanctification, delivering us from the power of sin every day of our life. Just as desperate as we were for the saving grace of God, we are desperate for the sanctifying grace of God in our life every day that we live.

Paul understands what he is about to tell these Corinthians, and he knows that they are going to respond one way or another. He is praying that when they respond it won't be in self-denial, but it will be in denial of self. He hopes they will understand what real grace is.

Let me see if I can explain some of that to you. Sin: do you know what sin is? Sin is a malignancy that attaches itself to something that is normal on our body. Sin is a perversion of something God gave us that was not perverted. That is all sin is anyway. Once the virus of Adam got in us, it perverted everything that God had given that was natural and normal. Now, if you don't understand grace, grace is the only thing that can deal with this problem before the cross and after the cross.

The Pharisees tried to become surgeons and cut out the malignancy. That is interesting. You might cut out the tumor but the problem is, in cutting out the tumor, you maim everything that is around it that is natural and normal. And you still haven't cured the problem because it is still in the body. Its tendency is still in the body. Now think with me about that for a second: a surgeon who goes in to do surgery on a person who has cancer in a very delicate area of their body, but in trying to attempt to take the cancer off that organ, ends up destroying not only the organ but everything around it.

Now listen to me. There are a lot of Christians still trying to do this. They are trying to cut it out of their life as if they know how, as if they even know how deep to cut, as if they even know where all the roots are. You see, you can't get the roots out because we still have a body of sin. They practice self-denial. They give this up. They give that up. They give this up. They give that up. They give this up. Some people in their religions even have a week of Lent and just give it up for one week. I guess they feel like they have conquered the tumor during that time. But the problem is in self-denial. Remember, you are trying to cut something out but you are maiming what is also good and what is also natural.

I thought about an illustration and worried about whether or not to use it. But it is the only thing that will keep coming back to my mind because it seems so practical. There is a person who has the sin of immorality in his life. That sin has grown to a malignancy. All of us have tendencies towards it because we have bodies of sin, but this has become a malignant area of his life. And in trying to conquer it, he tries to cut it out himself, rids himself of everything that he has possibly been around or anything that would feed it or anything that he can think of, whatever it is. All of a sudden, anything that even brings his mind that way he begins to try to cut out and cut out and cut out. Let's say that person is a married person. In doing that, he maims the normal physical union he could have with his wife which is perfectly right in the sight of God.

When I was growing up, you couldn't even mention the word "pregnant." When people got pregnant they would go off and hide themselves until the baby was born because some preacher in some pulpit made them think that which was natural and normal was

equated with that which was sinful. So by trying to cut it out, you maim what is good. That is what legalism does, folks. That is the bottom line pit of legalism. Cut this out, cut that out, cut this out, cut that out. And you leave a vacuum in your life. I want to tell you something. You may cut the malignancy out and stop doing something, but the desire to do it will be awakened one day. It has never gone away from you. It is still in your body. You are one man or one woman who is most miserable and everybody around you is suffering because of it.

That is the way most people try to treat sin. Every place you go, people are trying to become their own surgeons and cut out the malignancy that is in their life. You know, Jesus is the Great Physician. Did you know that? But as the Great Physician, He is not a surgeon. He doesn't seek to do surgery. He doesn't seek to come in and cut it out. He doesn't want us maimed and crippled in the things that are right and normal that He designed for us. No, as the physician, He is the healer. In the area of the malignancy, He comes in and creates that which is good to take its place. Not only does He heal the tumor, but He creates that which is good to take its place.

I hope you can follow my line of thinking. It has been really heavy on me. The human nature cannot stand a vacuum. The miserable people in this world are Christians who are sincere but who don't have a clue about grace, the enabling power of grace. They don't have a clue that God wants to replace you, not just cut the tumor out. When you cut something out of your life by self-denial you are so miserable and lacking. Come to God, instead of self-denial, and deny yourself by saying, "God, there is a problem here and I have tried cutting it out, but God, I am going to ask you to heal me in that area and replace me in that area." Then Jesus who lives in you becomes Jesus through you, and the power of the Holy Spirit of God creates the character of Jesus in your life. Where there was immorality, there is purity. Where there was bitterness, there is forgiveness. Where there was covetousness, there is contentment.

Somebody will look at you and say, "I not only see you not doing those things, I see you have become something different in those areas. God must be in you. God must be doing a work of grace in your life." Do you see the difference?

Have you ever tried to cut the malignancy out and maimed everything that is around it? Are you happy when you cut those things out, but do not allow them to be replaced and healed by the very presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ? Why do you think He came to live in us? He came to live in us not to reform us. You can reform yourself. He came to live in us to replace us, folks. We come before Him and say, "God, I can't. I have cut out everything I can think of. I have gone through self-denial to the point that I am blue in the face." Then God says, "I thank you because those things will be involved, about the things you say no to, but there is a different part that you are missing. Just say yes to Me. And when you say yes to Me, I in you am going to do something through you that you never dreamed could happen."

I used to have a list when I prayed. I really did. I would say, "Lord, you get rid of these ten people at this church, and I believe we can have revival here." I did everything I knew to do to make sure I wasn't bitter towards these people, but every time I would see them something would rise up inside of me. Now you tell me what that is? That is amazing. How many messages have you heard that say you can grow beyond this kind of thing? No, your flesh is as wicked today as it has ever been. It is not going to be any better until the day God glorifies it and gives you a glorified body.

But you know what? Every one of those people I prayed God would get rid of are still here. They are my friends now. But God had to do something inside of me that I could not have done myself. Oh, I could stop saying anything about them. I could deny myself the right to do that. I could do self-denial. I could stop doing all this other stuff, but I couldn't do anything about that which was feeding the bitterness. Finally I came to the point and said, "God, I can't." It was like God was saying back to me and we have said it many times. "That's right. I never said you could. But I can and I always said I would. Now, Wayne, bow before Me. Surrender all of this to Me. Just lay it at my feet and let Me fill you. Get in My Word. Renew your mind. I will transform your behavior and My Spirit will produce in you the fruit of the Spirit which is love that you cannot produce yourself."

All of a sudden, God began to put a liking inside of my heart for these people. I don't think there is anywhere in scripture that He tells you to like anybody. He tells you to love them. I am grateful for that. But there was even some liking that started moving in here. Some of my dearest friends now are people who God created something in me when I couldn't cut out that which was displeasing about me years ago.

You see, self-denial will leave you lacking all the time. It will always make you feel like you are missing something, and you are never happy. You go from church to church to church to church and you never can find what you are looking for. But grace will so fill you and overflow within you that even gives you the joy of walking with Him. That is what grace is all about.

Folks, this is where we are missing it. This is where we are missing it. I tell you, I can go into some churches, and I can tell you in a minute whether they are surgeons or just surrendered. Sometimes just by the way I am dressed I will know. When we first went to Romania we didn't wear ties. We still don't, and now they don't. But for the first year they watched us walk in without a tie on and you could see them, "Hmmm," and writing that little list down. Boy, it is amazing the people who are surgeons, trying to conquer sin

in their life.

Let me just help you, folks. Listen to me. Victory is not you overcoming sin. It never has been and it never will be if you are honest. Victory is Jesus overcoming you by your willingness just to get before Him and being honest with Him. "God, this is a problem. I am not going to beat around the bush. You know me better than I know myself. And I have done everything I know to conquer it, but God, the desire is still there. God, You are going to have to do something here that I can't do." And just like back when you got saved, that grace that saved you is that grace now that sanctifies you and creates within you something that wasn't there before that only God can put there.

Paul is wishing something that everybody needs every minute of every day. Grace and peace be unto you from God and from our Lord Jesus Christ. "Jesus, be Jesus in me, no longer me but Thee. Resurrection power, fill me this hour. Jesus, be Jesus in me." We have sung this song for years. I wonder how many even understand what we are talking about. It is my responsibility to get rid of sin in my life. It is my responsibility to obey Him, whatever that means. He is the One who deals with the sin.

That is what grace is. Nowhere does it tell me to show grace. It tells me to show mercy. Mercy is helping a person bear up under the consequences of the sin that he has committed. But grace is something God has to do. And it comes at my willingness to bow before Him and let Him do and create within me something that won't leave me lacking but will leave me filled and overflowing with the joy of the Lord Jesus in my heart.

Back in Romans 6 we were talking about what it meant to be under grace and not under law. I never will forget that. At the end of the service a sweet, sweet, precious lady came up and said, "Can I have a tape of the service?" I said, "Well, I am sure they can get you one. Can you tell me why you want it?" She said, "It is for my husband." I said, "Is that right? Where is he?" She said, "He is in the penitentiary in Nashville." I said, "Why is he there?" She said, "Pornography." I said, "How long is he there for?" She said, "Fifty years." I didn't ask her why. It must have been something really, really serious. But I said, "Why would you want this tape?" She said, "Because we have been every direction you could possibly think of and this is the only thing that has ever made sense to me. He can't conquer that in his life, but God can conquer him by His grace if he is just willing to surrender before Him."

Well, I need to hear this and you need to hear it. We all need grace, folks, to make it. We need it every minute, every moment, every second of every day in our life. Because God doesn't just cut it out. He heals, changes, transforms and replaces it with Himself. That is the beautiful thing of the Christian life.

A friend was in our house years ago and I said, "I am having trouble with my thoughts. I confess them and I confess them and I confess them." Have you ever done that? I said, "As soon as I get up off my knees, they are right back. I can't understand what is going on. I have done everything everybody has told me to do. Get rid of this, get rid of that. I got all these things out of my life, but it doesn't conquer it. What in the world is the matter?" He put his sweet hand on mine and patted it and said, "Wayne, son, you just don't understand, do you?" It was obvious that I didn't. He said, "Victory is not you overcoming sin, son. Victory is Jesus overcoming you in His Word."

It dawned on me that my focus for all those years had been as a surgeon and self-denial. I hadn't learned denial of self and walking with Him and letting Jesus be Jesus in me and putting my focus back on Him and not on the sin. Do you think it is important that Paul wishes grace upon the people? Oh, I think so. When he finishes with them, when he drops that grenade in their lap, they are going to have a choice they are going to have to make. How are they going to handle it? As surgeons who can conquer it themselves and who need God, or are they going to come before God and say, "God, we have got a huge problem here and You are going to have to make it right. And we are willing to obey. We are willing to do whatever you tell us, but only You can put within us what You want and require of us. It has to be you producing it. You are the healer, You are the creator, not the surgeon."

The book of Philippians talks about the times that Paul spent as a surgeon. Turn to Philippians 3. We have turned to this chapter a lot because it says a lot about Paul's life. There are not many chapters in Scripture that tell you as much as this one chapter does of the years that he worked as a surgeon in his own life. It really did him a lot of good, didn't it? It really got rid of the sin in his life. You see, sin, long before it becomes an activity, is an attitude. That is why Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Hey, you say you shall not commit adultery with a woman. I say unto you, if you have lusted after a woman you have committed adultery." What He was trying to show them was, sin goes far beyond the act. It comes inside. Legalism can cover the attitude and can stop the act. But only grace can deal with the attitude. Then what comes forth comes from Him and not from us.

Philippians 3:1 says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Present tense, keep on rejoicing in the Lord. "To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision." And then he talks about what believers are now and he includes himself because he used to be one of those people he is talking about. He says, "For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and we put no confidence in the flesh." None, not in our ability to conquer sin, no, sir. No confidence in our flesh. "Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the

nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law found," look at this, "found blameless." Way to go, Paul. "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him."

There it is right there. That word for "know" means experientially know. How do I experientially know Him? I will tell you how. When I present myself, as lousy as I am, before Him and say, "God, I have done everything I know to do, but I can't conquer this thing. Conquer me." He conquers me and produces in me something that I know could not have come from me and I experience Him on my own. I experience the very vibrancy of Christ that lives within me.

Why do you think Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ"? That has a double meaning there. I have also crucified myself with Him. I made a choice. "And it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me."

Now wait a minute. Look at Gal 2:21. How many times do we read verse 20 and never read verse 21? Verse 21 says, "I do not nullify." The word "nullify" is that of a grain inspector, somebody who says, "Yes, this. No, I don't want that one." "I do not nullify the grace of God." Now look what he conditions it with. He says, "For if righteousness comes through the Law." In other words, if there is a set of rules of things I can deny myself, self-denial, and I can cut out of my life and that produces righteousness, then Christ died needlessly. I do not nullify the grace of God. I don't consider it to be that which is not useable, but I let Jesus be Jesus in me. And where I can't, He can. I have learned to surrender and let Him overcome me instead of me trying to overcome me.

Well, like I said, human nature never tolerates a vacuum. There is one thing I want to show you about grace before we finish. God's grace, which obviously is housed in the Lord Jesus Himself, He is the embodiment of it, God's grace is exactly what you need in whatever circumstance that you are in, to transform you and make you what He requires you to be. That is what God's grace is. Look in 1 Peter 4:10. He is talking about spiritual gifts here, but that is not what I am looking at and it is not going to hurt the context at all. I just want to show you the company that the word "grace" keeps. He says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Now that little word *poikilos* there means multicolored grace of God. Now think about it for a second. When you see something that is color coded, what does that tell you?

I worked for the phone company years ago. After I was a lineman for about three months, they put me on as a cable splicer's helper. Now a cable splicer's helper doesn't mean a thing. It means you stand outside and freeze. You have to be the one to work the stove out there and to hand all the stuff down to the guy. He is warm and you are out there freezing. You are basically a go-fer. But I worked with them.

One night they left me alone on a pole. It was windy and cold, and the light was dimming. I was about 30 feet up on a pole. I was sitting on that little stool there on that platform we had strapped to the pole. I had a cable open and they told me just to splice it. Okay, here is the way you splice it. Color coded. That means the blue goes with the blue. Yellow goes with yellow. Purple goes with the purple. Orange goes with the orange. Whatever colors they were. Well, in that dim light, the blue looked purple to me. I started splicing blue to purple and orange to yellow. I mean I worked on that thing for about four hours and literally knocked out between 8,000 and 12,000 lines. It took three days to establish telephone power for what I did that night.

But I learned something about color coding. Whenever you see something in Scripture that says grace is color coded, you take note of it, because evidently it matches something else. Look in James 1:2. If this doesn't light your fire, then just get saved. I am telling you, folks, if you just understand how desperate you are for grace. You can't overcome sin. Why in the world do we think we can? Jesus has to overcome us. That is the key. He creates. He heals. He replaces where that sin, that malignancy was with the beauty of His nature and His disposition.

Well, in James 1:2 we read, "Consider it all joy." I remember we were preaching in James years ago. I was coming to church and my car had gone dead on me again. I had an old jeep that you could see the road through the floor. I didn't live far from here and as I was walking to church, everybody who drove by wouldn't give me a ride. They would roll the window down and say, "Count it all joy, Wayne." In other words, if you are going to get us with it, we are going to get you with it. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." Now why would they translate that "various"? That just makes me mad sometimes. That is the same word as manifold. It is the same word *poikilos*.

Do you mean to tell me that my trials, those situations where I have to choose against my flesh and choose Him, do you mean to tell me that they are color coded? Now I am beginning to figure it out. I may be going through a red trial, whatever that is. It may be an area of temptation, an area of sin, in the area of circumstance, who knows, but whatever I am going through, if I am going through a red trial and I turn to Him and say, "God, I can't and you never said I could. I can cut all the stuff out of here that you want me to cut

out, but you are going to have to heal this and you are going to have to replace me because I can't do it." If I am going through a red trial, God has a red grace to match the red trial. If I am going through the blue, He gives me the blue.

In other words, God's grace is sufficient. He lives in you, and He can give you the grace to make it. It is not you, it is Him. And the same God who saved you is the same God who sanctifies you. The same grace that was shown to you at salvation is the same grace that is shown to us in sanctification. He overcomes me. I don't overcome sin. I don't know about you, but I hope you get it. I hope I get it. I want to understand it and live it every day of my life. I know the wickedness of my flesh and the cancers that sometimes pop up, the malignancies that will pop up of sin because they are fed by the cancerous stream of my body. But now I am beginning to realize that you don't cut them out, you ask God to do a work there and heal them and in the midst of the healing replace you with Himself. And where there was bitterness, put forgiveness and where there was hate, there is love. And where there was impurity there is purity. It is Him. It is not us. He gets the glory for all of it. So the church at Corinth – grace be unto you.

1 Corinthians 1:3 What is the Church of God - Part 4

All humanity is born into eternal conflict, first with God and then with man. Because of Adam's sin, we are born into conflict. We are at enmity with God the very moment you breathe the first time. It is sin that is passed down from generation to generation to generation from Adam.

My precious Daddy is in heaven. He was just the kindest person who ever lived. Bless his heart, in World War II he got to smoking. That was a big thing to him. And they smoked Camels. You know, Camel cigarettes evidently are powerful, folks. They don't have a filter. He smoked two packs of Camels every day for 30 years of his life. He died at 60 years old of a heart attack.

I remember about five years before my Dad died, he quit smoking. Now folks, I want to tell you something, you can quit habits in your life. There are people who help you out. But I want to tell you what happens. Many times when we surgically try to remove sin in our life, what we do by trying to do it ourselves, we maim everything that was natural and normal about us because you see, we are not surgeons. We try to play that role.

I tell you what happens. When you stop and cut something out of your life, if you don't put something in its place, you are one miserable person. You know, the Pharisees have got to be miserable in the Old Testament and even in the New Testament in the gospels. There are people who are believers today who have cut out malignancies and have cut them out and cut them out and cut them out. And that is fine, but they have maimed everything else. They don't have relationships that are normal with anybody. Everything is sin to them. They walk around looking down their nose criticizing and judging everybody, and they are one group of miserable people. I will tell you why: because the human nature cannot stand a vacuum. If you are going to cut something out, you have got to put something back in. But what are you going to put back in?

You see, we love to parade around like we are spiritual. "I don't do this, and I don't do that. I don't drink, I don't chew and I don't run around with those who do. I am so spiritual it is just killing me." And it looks like it is killing you. Miserable people. When you stop doing something you are always feeling like you are lacking something in your life. I guarantee you, you are! There is nothing in its place because you don't understand grace.

Listen, Jesus Christ is not a surgeon. It is amazing the error that we make. He is not a surgeon. He is a physician, yes, the Great Physician, but He is not in the business of surgery. He is in the business of healing what is wrong. Living under God's grace after you are saved is something that a lot of Christians still need to understand. That is what Paul is saying. "I wish this grace for you, that daily when you come to Me, you come to Me with those malignancies. You come to Me with that fleshly body. And you come to Me just like you came to Me when you originally received grace from Me. You get on your face before Me and say, 'God, I can't save myself.'" And God does a work of grace in your life, transforms you and enables you to do what you never could do before.

You see, you come that same way every day. You come to Him and say, "God, there is a malignancy in my life. It has crept up on me again. And Lord, I have tried to cut it out but the desire is there and it is killing me. There is a lacking in my life and I don't know what to do. I get in the Word and it is like a newspaper. Nothing is helping me, Lord." Cry out to Him in desperation. Oh, and the grace of God is so powerful. It heals. But in the healing process it replaces, and grace never leaves you lacking. Grace leaves you in the joy that the fruit of the Spirit of God produces when He is working and operating in your life. That is what it is all about.

"But there is bitterness in my life." Listen, you can stop talking to anybody on the phone and maybe that will keep you from sharing it with anybody else. You can stop saying anything, but I tell you, you can't conquer it on the inside. But you can come to God and say, "God, I am desperate for Your grace. Lord, I can't." That is when you are going to discover that He never said you could. He is going to say, "I can. And I always said I would." In the area of that bitterness, when you surrender it to Him and confess it and acknowledge it and agree with Him what it is, God is able through His grace to replace you in that area of bitterness with His grace of love and

forgiveness, ability you didn't even know you had.

Folks, that is the Christian life. That is the good news of the gospel. That is being under grace every day of your life. Stop trying to cut it out yourself because you are miserable. I guarantee you that you are miserable. You criticize everyone who walks because you want them to be as miserable as you are. Come before God. The ground is level at the cross, folks. Come before God and say, "God, there is a problem of lust in my life, immorality, God. And God, I can't stand it because every time I try to cut out the activity that feeds it, something within me innately continues to desire it. God, I can't stop it. God, I am sick of it." You come before God and say, "Oh, God, with your grace would you forgive me and cleanse me and would you produce in me purity where there was impurity?"

You see, that is grace. That is God replacing you. You know, we think God came into our life to reform us. You can reform yourself. There are people who will help you. You can stop doing anything you want to stop. That is all external. He came into your life to transform you, to replace you. It is Jesus in you and He replaces you with Himself. And along with that comes the fruit of the Spirit which is love and joy and peace and patience and all the good things that you are looking for. It wraps itself around what He is doing and you are able to live under the grace of God.

I am not so sure it is taught, I am not so sure it has to be caught, when the Spirit of God just has to turn somebody's eyes on and they say, "Good grief, I have been going about this thing the wrong way ever since I ever discovered there was a sinful tendency to my body." Victory is not you and me overcoming sin. Victory is not that. Now, some of you will come up to me and say, "You are wrong. I have overcome sin in my life." No, you have overcome the activity, you never did overcome the desire. It is still resident in your flesh. You give it half a chance, and you will find it out. You will find it out. A lot of people are still trying to live as surgeons, aren't they?

In Corinth, they must have been living that way because they certainly weren't doing anything else right. They missed it on the first step of living under the grace of God. Victory is not me overcoming sin, victory is Jesus overcoming me. He lets me know that is why He lives in me. I can't and never said I could. He can and He always said He would. It is His beautiful disposition and nature, listen to me, that we get to tap into when we come the way of grace, not depending on our flesh and our ability but surrendering to His power and His presence in our life. We get to taste of the nature and disposition of God Himself as He begins to manifest Himself in our life and we are never found lacking. We need grace. We desperately need grace.

The Church of God Is In Need of God's Peace

Fifthly in our list from 1Cor 1:3, the church of God is in need of God's peace. In 1 Corinthians 1:3 we read, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Now let's define the word "peace." I have sort of a rough definition, but it is a beautiful definition. Peace is the word *eirene*. It is the word that means the absence of war and the absence of conflict in our life. You say, "I don't understand. What do you mean by absence of war and absence of conflict?" Listen to me. All humanity is born into eternal conflict, first with God and then with man. Because of Adam's sin, we are born into conflict. We are at enmity with God the very moment you breathe the first time. It is sin that is passed down from generation to generation to generation from Adam. Because in Adam all sin, Romans 5:12 says, and death comes because of that sin.

But not only is there a conflict with God, that conflict is with man. I have said this over and over again. Apart from Christ you have no normal relationships. You cannot relate the way God wants you to relate apart from Him because there is an inbred conflict with God and then with man built into the flesh. You cannot live it. It is always conditional, it is never unconditional, in any relationship you have apart from Christ.

This is illustrated in Genesis when Adam sinned. Immediately you see the conflict with God. Then in a few chapters you find out that Cain kills Abel. You see the conflict with man, and it has been that way ever since.

I was in the Cincinnati airport one day. I didn't have very long before my flight was to leave, and I saw this girl just bopping through the big concourse there. Have you ever seen people who just seem to be bubbling over? I mean, she really had it together. She was speaking to everybody. "Hi, how are you doing?" She started making a beeline right for me. Now there are seats everywhere. I am sitting there, and I don't want to talk to anybody. Do you ever have those days? I don't want to talk to anybody. Just leave me alone and let me get home! I was sitting there and she made a beeline right for me.

She came over and sat down in the seat right on the other side of my luggage. She sat down and said, "Well, I tell you what, on a rainy day I have always wanted to be in the airport in Cincinnati. Isn't this a great place?" I am thinking, "Oh, boy, here we go. She is going to talk my ear off." I said, "Yeah, me, too." She started saying, "Where did you come from?" "Des Moines." "Well, I came from Houston." She talked about where she lived in Houston and all the different things going on. She kept on and I am thinking, "The question is coming. The question is coming." It always happens. "What do you do?" It is amazing to me. You can have a CEO of a company talking about computers and rebuilding them and you ask me "What do you do?" and I say, "I am a pastor" and they break out in a rash and they can't even talk to you. I mean, you talk about conversations being suddenly either abruptly stopped and

ruined or completely turned, that question will do it.

"What do you do?" "I am a pastor." She sat there for a minute, kind of like she was thinking, "Hmmm, maybe I'd better go," or whatever. But she didn't. She turned back towards me. I was telling my wife that her whole countenance changed as we began to put Christ into the subject and what Christianity is all about. She came from a religion that was not an evangelical religion. It does not teach a relationship with God the Father through His Son. It is strictly a religion. You understand that Christianity is not a religion – it is a relationship. But she didn't understand that.

She started talking to me and she said, "You know, I try to go to church and I try to do what is right. Man, I just need to give more time to God. If I could just give Him a half hour in the morning. I mean, I just don't do it, though. It is a shame that I just don't do these things for God." I listened to her for a while and said, "In other words, you believe that Christianity is a religion. Is that right?" She said, "Do what? Certainly it is a religion." I said, "I hate to pop your bubble. I am going to have to catch a plane here in a minute, but I hate to tell you that it is not a religion. Religion may not work for you and it has never worked for me either. That is why Christ came, to solve the religious dilemma of people. It is not a religion. He came to give us a relationship with a Holy God, the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ."

I began to talk to her about what that meant. I said, "You don't give Him a half hour in the morning. You don't just give Him an hour here and an hour there. You give Him yourself when you come to Him. That is solved the moment of salvation and then He comes to live in you and enriches your whole life." Boy, she looked at me like, "Are you alright?"

Then they called my plane. That happens to me almost every time. About the time I really get into something, they will call the plane. So I told this girl, "Look, I have got to go." I wrote down the number of a ministry that could help her, and said, "You call this ministry and they will get you into the Word of God." I had to do something.

But I tell you, her whole countenance had completely changed when we started talking about a relationship, that she could actually be at peace for the first time in her whole life. That gal walking through the airport, you would think that she had it all together. But what she was hiding with the evident personality that she had and what she is hiding with the success she has had in life, is that she is in conflict. Conflict eternally with God and eternally with man. She lives with this inbred conflict. I don't care how successful they look to you, inside that is the desperation of a person who doesn't know Christ and understand His grace. They are everywhere around us.

Where do they find this peace? Again in 1 Corinthians 1:3, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." What she is looking for only Jesus can give her. The Father sends it to her as a love gift through His Son Jesus who died for her. Jesus Christ, who is the source of God's grace, is also the source of God's peace. In fact, peace is the product of grace. Whenever you find grace and peace together in a verse, you are always going to find grace first and peace second. Because unless you have experienced God's grace and unless you are experiencing God's grace, you know not of His peace. By experiencing His grace at salvation, you have peace with God.

Look in Romans 5. Remember in Ephesians, "by grace are we saved through faith, not of works lest any man should boast." Then we come to Romans 5:1. You experience the initial grace of God when you bow before Him at salvation, realizing you are in Adam and cannot save yourself. You put your faith in Him. Everything rests upon Him. But in Romans 5:1 we see, "Therefore having been justified by faith," acquitted, that which He did is written to our account, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is beautiful.

It is really twofold. First of all, it involves an attitude on my part, but secondly it involves an activity that God has done. People say there is no Lordship salvation. Now that term does bother a lot of people. But I want to tell you something, folks. The way I understand it, it better be. It better be, because what does this word "peace" mean? When Japan surrendered to America, they didn't walk forward and say, "We give up. We give up. Maybe one day we will stop fighting you." That is not what they said. The emperor of Japan took his sword out and handed it over to General MacArthur. In doing that he is saying, "I will give up. We surrender. We will not fight you anymore. We will not initiate conflict with you anymore." That is part of having peace with someone. That is the attitude of man.

But on the other hand, God the Father, through His Son has removed the enmity. He has removed the wall of partition. He has removed the demands of the law because they were fulfilled in Christ. That doesn't mean we still don't live under the law in the sense that we live obedient to Christ, but He has removed it in that it cannot condemn us anymore. God did His work to remove anything that would keep us in conflict with Him. But we also come with an attitude of saying, "We don't want to be in conflict with you. We lay our sword down." And at that very moment we are saved. That is peace with God.

That is what that girl sitting in the airport needed, and that is what is going to happen, I believe, one of these days. I don't believe it is an accident that we met each other in the airport. There is going to come a day she is going to lay that sword down and recognize

what God has done for her and receive Christ into her life. Now that is the peace with God.

But what Paul is talking about in Corinthians, I think, is a little different. It is the peace of God. Look in Philippians 4:7. Paul is talking to believers here. Just like the grace of God is not static, neither is the peace of God. And if you are walking under the grace of God, the transforming power of God, then you are living in the peace of God at all times. You have peace with Him, certainly in Christ. But this is the peace of God. Look at what it does. In Philippians 4:7 it says, "And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension [Go to any school, wherever you want to go, challenge your mind forever and you will never understand it] shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." In Romans 5 we have peace with God and in Philippians 4 we have the peace of God. The peace of God is for believers to draw from in the conflict of every day life.

Now you have to realize this in context because it is more than just Paul giving a greeting. Paul knew what was in Corinth. Paul knew the evil and the wickedness that was in Corinth. Remember there was a Greek word that says when you lived immorally, it didn't matter if you lived in Corinth or not, it said you are acting like a Corinthian. Paul knew that and as a result of that, Paul was writing to them trying to show them what could keep them from having their peace disturbed. Live under grace and live in His peace and you won't have that disturbed, you see. He knew what was trying to disturb and trouble that peace they had. And regardless of circumstances and people, once you start living in the peace of God, it doesn't matter what is going on around you. There can be with no conflict within you towards God and no conflict in you towards man. It is a beautiful picture here.

You know, there is nothing more comforting to me than the voice of the captain on a plane when the plane is going through turbulence. We took off one time flying from Kennedy Airport going to Johannesburg, South Africa on a big 747. You know, you fly on normal planes and they take off a long ways up the runway. You fly on a 747, and it is like flying a hotel down the runway. You are three stories up watching this thing. And it goes and it goes and it goes and it goes and goes and you are thinking, "Lift up, lift up, lift up." Everybody in the plane is waving their arms and saying, "Lift up." Right at the end of the runway they have these big cross marks and you know if you miss those, you are going to be in the third story of an apartment building across the field. "Come on, lift up." Finally it shoots you off.

We had just gotten to climbing altitude, and they had given us something to drink, they had given us the peanuts and all that kind of stuff. They were going to serve a meal in a little bit. All of a sudden we went into turbulence like I have never been through in a plane in my entire life. I mean, it was like a roller coaster. I had peanuts in a bag and they were popping out of the bag. They would pop out and I would catch them. The Diet Coke was sloshing all over the place.

We are thinking, "Good grief. What is going on?" And it went on for a solid hour. You could try to take a bite of something and it goes diving. You know, it is amazing, you watch your coke go up in the air and come back down. I mean, it is really bad.

About that time there is a little click of a microphone above you and the pilot comes on and says, "Good evening." Where is this guy? Is he on the same plane I am on? He has totally got it under control. "We are flying about 36,000 feet." I am thinking, "That is a recording. He is not even in here. He is in New York and we are all fooled. We are all messed up." "We are flying at 36,000 feet and I just want you to know that there is a little bit of turbulence out here." He says, "There is a little bit of turbulence out here, but everything is under control. We have a 14 ½ hour flight, and I hope you enjoy being with us,..." He gets off. But it was amazing. As soon as he cut the thing off, we were still bouncing around but it was like, "Hey, everything is okay. We heard from the Captain. He has it under control." It just soothes the heart.

Listen to me, if you are walking under grace, you are listening to the Captain all the time. And because of that, the conflict, the inner turmoil is gone. First of all, you know you don't have any conflict with Him. That is settled in Christ. But now the peace of God. It is wonderful. It is soothing. It doesn't matter what is going on around you, you see. It is that peace that carries you through whatever you have got to go through in your life. So Paul wishes the peace of God upon them. So as we choose to live daily in His Word, we hear from the Captain and that soothes us. This peace is God's gift.

I want you to turn over to John 14:27. Jesus is going to leave a will for His disciples. He is about to go back to be with the Father. What is He going to leave with them that would be the incredible gift to remove internal conflict? Look at what He says. I love this. "Peace I leave with you." Now, what kind of peace is this that you are leaving with us, Lord? I mean, you are leaving us." Remember Peter. They were not real excited. He says, "My peace I give to you. The peace I have with My Father and He and I are one. The peace that brings joy because you know that you are going to the cross, bringing pleasure to the Father. This kind of peace." Then He says, "Not as the world gives [because He shows you a contrasting peace here] do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

Oh, folks, how desperate we are for the peace of God. But I want to tell you, you can't have it unless you living under the grace of God. Unless you are depending on Him to be in you what you know you are not every day, the peace is not there. You see, the one hooks to the other. You have to be living under the grace to have the peace. That is why we went back and looked at this.

Look over in Luke 8. I love this story. So many times you talk about it and never read it. I want you to see it. I want you to see it right

in the Word of God. What a wonderful picture. We sing the song, "And He spoke to the waves and He said 'Peace, be still, Peace, be still.'" We sing those songs, but where does that come from? Well, it comes right out of the Word of God. Look at this. Luke 8:22 says, "Now it came about on one of those days, that He and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' And they launched out." I love this about the Lord Jesus. "But as they were sailing along He fell asleep."

There was another man in a boat that fell asleep, Jonah, but he had a little bit different situation here. He didn't have God's peace. As a matter of fact, he was totally out of the will of God. There was nothing more than apathy in his life and he had lost sight of what God wanted.

But this is a beautiful picture here of oneness with Jesus and the Father and the peace in His heart. He fell asleep. "And a fierce gale of wind descended upon the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger." You know, on the Sea of Galilee the fishermen would be in the shallow water. Any time you are in a boat in a storm, don't get in shallow water. Shallow water is the worst place you can get because the waves don't have that far to go down before they crash up. That is what will swamp a boat. That is what will bring you under. And Jesus is still asleep. I love it. In the midst of it, here they are, boom, bang and He is just asleep.

Lk 8:24 goes on, "And they came to Him and woke Him up." Now how many times do we disturb Him? "Saying, Master, Master, we are perishing!" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm." Wouldn't you have loved to have been a fly on the wall and watched that? Jesus said, "Stop it!" And the disciples are going, "Huh?"

Look at Lk 8:25. "And He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' And they were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, 'Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?'"

We say we want to be a fly on the wall and watch that. Well, friend, you can watch that every day of your life as you live under God's grace. Whatever it is that just absolutely is disturbing you emotionally and every other way, robbing you of the joy that God wants to put in your life, all you have to do is cry out unto Him and He in you speaks and the ripples and the waves that are going on inside of you calm. Now, the circumstances may never change, but inside the turmoil that has been created by what is going on out here just goes whew, and it is okay. There is no conflict. He is in charge.

You see, the Corinthian church needed to hear that they could have the peace of God. They are not living under God's grace and they are definitely not living in God's peace. You say, "Now how do you know that?" Let me tell you something. You may have peace with Him, but if you are not living depending on His grace, it is going to be evident in only one area of your life that is going to be so clear. It will appear in other areas, yes, but one area is going to be real clear. Do you know where it is? It is in your relationships to one another within the body of Christ.

He is talking to Christians here, the church of God at Corinth. He says there are divisions and factions. The very antithesis of what peace is division. The very thing Satan creates in our life is division. His very name is diabolos – dia, through; bolos, to cast – to cast in between and divide. And when you are living with relationships that are severed and bitterness and all this garbage that goes with it, it is very clear that you haven't seen yourself as a sinner yet as far as your flesh being able to sin. And you haven't seen yourself as a saint, separated unto His work. And you haven't learned yet how wicked the flesh is and how it can steal away in a moment what God wants to give to you. Therefore you have walked away from His grace and His peace disappears. The moment it disappears with Him, it disappears with somebody around you. And that is where all your griping, complaining, your criticism, your bitterness and your garbage comes from. That is all it is, garbage. It comes out of me and it comes out of you when we are not living up under grace, folks.

Look at verse 11, and I will show you. He tells them how they can live but then he shows them how they are living. 1 Corinthians 1:11 says, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people [friends of his], that there are quarrels among you." You go to the book of James and it says, "Why do you quarrel and what are the conflicts all about?" It talks about the lusting of their flesh and their own individual desires.

When we are not living in the peace of God, you can count on it, the first place it will show up is in your conflict with others. You are opinionated, griping, this stuff is just rampant. It is in me and it is in you. Over in Ephesians he talks about letting no unwholesome word ever come out of your mouth. I want to tell you, if you haven't studied Ephesians 1, 2 and 3, you can't understand Ephesians 4 when he says that. Because in chapter 3 he says, "You be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God." That is how grace operates. And when you are strengthened in the inner man, then you can be kept in such peace with God and peace with man, you don't have to utter those unwholesome words. The word "unwholesome" there in Ephesians 4 is the word that means rotten, putrid, smelly. Rotten. That is what comes out of people's mouths who are not walking in the peace of God, not living under the grace of God. That is what kind of garbage it involved.

Wouldn't it be something if somebody would call you up and say, "Did you know what I just heard?" And you say, "Phew! Oh, it is rotten. I can't stand that! I have got to go. I can't even talk." And hang up. You just stopped that. You see, when you are living in the

peace of God, a lot of people around you aren't and you have got to be real careful or they will get your focus off His grace and His peace and pull you right down and disturb the whole matter by their little opinions that they have to throw in here. That is the way it is. My life, your life, anybody's life.

You know, I heard an illustration and I don't know if it's true, but if it is, it is wonderful. I am going to tell it like it is true. If you have a pasture full of thoroughbred horses and a wolf or a dog is trying to bite them, they all get together with their heads in the middle and they all kick the enemy together. But donkeys, when a dog comes in after the donkeys, they all put their tail ends together instead of their heads and they kick each other!

That is the church at Corinth. That is people who don't understand that they are desperate for God's grace every day and desperate for God's peace. Because if you don't have that peace with Him and there is no inner conflict with Him, you can't have peace with others.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians 7:15. In a context of an unbelieving husband leaving his believing wife we find out that God is calling us to peace. It says in 1Cor 7: 15, "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." Anything else leads to confusion and all sorts of division.

Look in 1 Corinthians 14:33. "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."

1 Corinthians 1:4-6 What is the Church of God - Part 5

The sixth characteristic of the Church of God is that the church of God lacks nothing in Jesus Christ our Lord. Absolutely lacks nothing.

I hope you understand the importance of these first ten verses in 1 Corinthians. Do you realize what Paul's doing? Do you realize that this sets the foundation and the stage for all the rest of what he's going to say in 1 Corinthians? You cannot study chapter 10 without understanding what he said in 1:1-10. Very, very critical.

There's one thing we've learned so far. No matter what a man does or doesn't do, that does not change who he is in Christ and what he has in Christ. Now understand what I just said. It doesn't matter what he does. It doesn't matter what he doesn't do. That does not change who he is in Christ and what he has in Christ. It may change how much he realizes that and walks in the reality of it but it doesn't change who he is and what he has in Christ. The church of Corinth has nothing but problems but that has not changed who they are in Christ Jesus.

We've been looking at what the church of God is. He calls it the church of God at Corinth. First of all, then, they're not their own. They're bought with a price, fully possessed by Christ. Now we've read Acts 20 and 28 but I haven't read these to you. Over at 1 Corinthians 6, we're going to find the same thing – just to make sure you're catching the thought. It's the church of God, not the church of man. If anybody says that they're a part of the body of Christ, part of the church of God, that means they are fully possessed by God, blood bought. Therefore, we are His possession. We're not our possession. We're not to be about our business. We're to be about His business. In 1 Corinthians 6:20 he says, "For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." You're not your own possession. You're bought and paid for.

Look in 1 Corinthians 7:23. He says, "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men." So the first thing about the church of God that we have discovered is that they are fully possessed by God. They're His property. He has purchased us with His own blood.

Second, since we're not our own, we're separated unto His purposes. That's what is found in the next phrase in 1Cor 1:2. It says, "to the church of God which is at Corinth, [here's the phrase] to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling." The word sanctified means to be separated, apart from something else, to be set apart for something, a useful purpose. The word saint denotes the very same thing. Hagiazō is the process of being set apart. Hagios is a saint, one who has been set apart since he's been purchased by the blood. He's not his own. He only has one purpose in life and that's to let God use him as a vessel and let God do His work through him.

Third, believers are everywhere and they're not known by their position in Christ. That's not easily seen. They're known by their practice as a result of that position. Look at what he says. He says, "to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, [now here's the phrase] with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:" The people who consistently, present tense, call upon the name of the Lord in absolute dependence upon Him. Not confidence in their own flesh but dependence only upon Him.

Fourth, the church of God is made up of those who daily, constantly, depend upon the grace of God. He says in 1Cor 1:3, "Grace to

you.” The church of Corinth could make a lot of money. They were very affluent. Though they were educated and could earn a lot of prestige, they couldn’t conquer the penalty of sin in their life. They couldn’t conquer the power of sin in their life. They were desperate for the grace of God and only the grace of God that does this in their walk. We’re constantly, totally, daily depending upon the grace of God.

Fifth, the church of God also lives desperate for His peace. All of this is found only in the Lord Jesus. It says in 1Cor 1:3, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Remember this peace of God that we have? It’s peace with God. It’s the same peace but we take it a step further. It’s living in the reality of that peace, no conflict with God, no conflict with man every day in our life. If you are living under the grace of God, you can enjoy the peace of God. It’s there for you. It’s in Christ. In another place it says, “Christ is our peace.” All the grace and all the peace is resident in Him. But until we are living under it and in the midst of it and surrendered to it we cannot enjoy it, you see. You’ve got to be living under the grace of God before you can enjoy the peace of God. You don’t get the peace so that you can walk under the grace. You walk under the grace so that you can enjoy the peace. That’s the way it works.

Well, this brings us up to number six on our list. What is the church of God? Do you know what we ought to do? We ought to go out on the streets and ask people, “What do you think the church of God is?” People think it’s a denomination. That’s fine. That’s a good name for it. But what is the church of God? That’s what we’re looking at. This is what God says that we are. This is not what man says we are. It’s what God say we are.

The Church of God Lacks Nothing in Jesus Christ

Well, number six, the church of God lacks nothing in Jesus Christ our Lord. Absolutely lacks nothing.

You know, it’s amazing to be a grandfather. One thing I’ve discovered and one thing that her parents are discovering is that my granddaughter came fully equipped. She doesn’t know how to use everything yet, but she’s learning very, very fast. The cutest thing she’s doing right now is she’s standing up. She’ll just stand up right up in the middle of the floor. She hasn’t walked yet but she’s standing up. She’ll just stand there and not waver. I mean, she’s just got balance. She’ll just stand there for a while. I’m so proud of her. Isn’t it amazing what you’re proud of when you’re grandparents? Now she’ll stand there for a while and then she’ll just plop back down. But now one of these days she’s going to take a step.

So far we have learned that she has come fully equipped. Now she hasn’t gotten her words right yet but she’s found out that she can talk. As a matter of fact, she just sits there and babbles to herself. I know she’s saying something and somebody somewhere must understand her. She’s saying these little things like, “What’s that? What’s that?” I just think that’s so cute. It’s just wonderful watching her. But the longer she goes the more she discovers what she already has. It all comes in the package.

I want you to see that not only are we fully possessed by God, but we fully possess God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We don’t lack anything in Christ Jesus. That’s an important principle to nail down the first part of this study. Look at 1Cor 1:4: “I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you.”

The first thing Paul does is he lets these fleshly minded believers at Corinth, filled with factions and divisions and all kinds of problems, know that he prays for them constantly. He says, “I thank my God always concerning you.” It indicates not just a passing prayer but something that’s consistent in his life. As a matter of fact, the verb tense there is in the present tense. I consistently, constantly, thank my God concerning you.

Well, what does he thank him for? The word “thank” is the word, eucharisteo. The word means good grace. The word eu means well or good; the word charis of course is the word for grace. Good grace. The word came to mean to give thanks for that which man does not deserve. It’s just kind of giving you an indication of what Paul’s thanking God for concerning the Corinthian believers. He’s not thanking Him for their lifestyle for sure, because in 1Cor 16:11 he just skins them alive. But he’s thanking God for the fact that they have grace that they don’t deserve.

He says it in the verse. He says, “I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus.” Now, what I want you to see here is that he’s thanking God that they have Christ in them, who is the embodiment of all grace. You see, the gift that we don’t deserve is not just what Christ does for us, it’s Christ Himself who has come to live in us. He says, “for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus.”

Just remember something. You may feel lacking, but you’re not. If you have Christ, you have been enriched fully in all things and you have Him who is the embodiment of all grace and none of us deserve that.

Now, what is it that’s involved in this grace and about this grace that Paul is so thankful for and prays constantly for them? He introduces the whole thing, the whole sphere of what grace covers in 1Cor 1:5: “that in everything you were enriched in Him.” I

wonder how many of us believe that? In everything we have been enriched in Christ Jesus. There are a lot of people today who, like those in Corinth, feel like if they have to give up something or surrender something to Christ, they're going to lose or have to pay more than they want to pay. Have you ever known anybody like that?

I remember a fellow one time who told his mother, "Mama, I would become a Christian, but I feel like I'm just going to have to give too much up." There are a lot of people who still think that. They think if they come to God, they're going to have to pay what they don't want to pay, especially if they're well-to-do financially. I don't know how many times I've run across this in my meetings and places that I've been. People who are wealthy always feel like they don't want to hear this message because they're going to have to give up something that they don't want to have to give up. The church of Corinth was made up of wealthy, well-educated people. They would obviously think that having to obey Christ somehow was going to cost them more than they wanted to pay.

Do you know what, folks? We live in a world of affluence. We look at all the external things and think that this is something that maybe God has cheated us out of. Maybe not. Maybe you're fortunate to have all those things. We live this way all the time. For a person to not understand that he's been enriched in everything in Christ Jesus is the saddest thing in the world.

This is nothing new because when God saved us He did not remove our sinful bodies. We still have our sinful bodies. Look in Matthew 19:27. It's going to surprise you who says this: an individual who meant very much in the kingdom later on and an individual who God had to deal with quite often. The only time this person opened his mouth was to change feet. He was the most emotionally volatile disciple Jesus had. His name was Simon Peter. Look at what Peter says in Matthew 19:27. You think this is something new? This has been going on for centuries even when Christ was on this earth, thinking that if you have to surrender to Christ you're going to have to give up something or pay something you just don't want to pay. Are you kidding? Mt 19:27 says, "Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?'" Ha, ha. Woe is me for having to obey God. I've just had to obey You, Lord. What is there for us?

You know, the Corinthian church and Peter missed the whole thing. They have been fully enriched in Him. Yes, you must obey. Yes, you must deny sin. Yes, you must crucify yourself but in Christ you are enriched in everything.

Most of us have long weeks and you've probably had a long day. I have too. You get to church on Wednesday night and you think, "Oh, man, will you say something that'll crank me up? I've got to be able to go home." Well, let me tell you something. You have been fully enriched in everything in Christ Jesus, in everything. Everything has changed because Jesus has come into your life. Everything in life now is richer or fuller because Jesus is in your life. We're rich in a way the world will never understand. In the material world the rich people who have things don't really have them. They're owned by the things they think that they have. They own us. We don't own them.

Some folks gave us a car one time years ago, the first car that I've ever been given. It was a Chevrolet. It had upholstery like a couch. It was wonderful. I mean I thought I was in my living room riding in that thing. It was a Chevrolet Caprice. Man, it had power steering. It had a radio. It had big speakers in the back and speakers in the front, four doors. Man, we had been driving an old '73 Buick for all those years that would overheat 35 miles away from home. The church gave us a brand new car in another place where I served. I remember how automatically overnight that thing began to possess me. I wanted to make sure no leaves or limbs fell on it during the night if there was a rainstorm. I wanted to make sure that no bird got on it and no scratches got on it. All of a sudden it began to control us. Have you ever been in a situation like that and you thought you owned it? You don't own it. It owns you and robs you out of every joy you could have had otherwise.

I was riding Mississippi one day, and there was a piece of pipe lying on the road. I didn't see it until it was too late. I ran over part of it and it just made it flip up and when it flipped up it caught the side of my car. That thing had a big silver chrome strip all the way down the side. It caught right in the middle of it and just made a dent, I mean, an inch wide, all the way back to the end of the car. It scratched that thing like it has never been scratched. I pulled over to the side of the road, and I got out of the car. I stewed and pouted and got upset. It was almost like God was saying, "That's good, Barber. That's really good. You don't own that car. That car rules you. It rules your emotions. It rules your choices." You see the rich people of the world think they own this stuff. They don't own it. You wait until the stock market goes down one more time and you'll find out how they feel about the things in their life. It rules you.

But oh the difference in the riches that God gives us in Christ Jesus! We fully possess the riches that God has given us in Christ Jesus. We actually have them. They're our possessions in Christ Jesus. In His kingdom, in Christ, they're our possessions forever. You can be as poor as a church mouse and be wealthier than the richest person who lives down the street from you if you have Jesus Christ in your heart. You truly possess, and everything in life becomes richer and fuller because He lives in you.

Paul's saying that you may not be realizing it, but you have in you that which will make life what God intended it to be, because He's the added piece of the puzzle. You now have Christ in you. Love for people, love for life, love for your family, such that has never been known before.

If you haven't traveled much, you don't understand how desperate people are for what he's talking about here. The Corinthian

church didn't realize how desperate they were for what he's talking about here. He's just setting the stage. He's trying to show them, "Okay, you've chosen not to live in all of this and look at your divisions and factions and problems and quarrelling and all this stuff you live in." The rest of the book is what people live and that inner turmoil. They could have had the peace of God living under the grace of God, enriched in everything in Christ Jesus.

Like that fellow who came up to an airline ticket counter. A fellow was just chewing out this ticket clerk because something had happened on his arrangements and he couldn't take off when he wanted to take off. I mean you could tell this man had no peace inside of him. This was a man governed by his own flesh. When he walked away the fellow walked up to the counter and said, "How do you put up with people like that?" The ticket counter guy said, "You know, it didn't bother me. I just checked his bags to Hong Kong."

But there are people like this all around you. What they have controls them. They do not control it. We have something that adds the extra dimension to our life. You've been enriched by Jesus Christ. You say, "Well, my life's not like that." Well, hang on, we'll tell you why before this thing's over with.

Look over in Ephesians 3:8. He's talking about the riches we have. Good gracious sakes alive! You know all this talk. "I just grew up in a nonfunctional family. I had a dysfunctional family so bad." Oh good grief, man! So what? All of us did. We were born into the dysfunctional family of Adam but we've been born again in the functional family of God. We have been enriched in all things in Christ Jesus. We either have to live as if we're products of our past or live as if we're products of the cross. In Ephesians 3:8 he says, "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ."

I believe the longer you live the more you begin to understand some of these terms. When you think about the fact how rich is the forgiveness of God that He not only died for your sins, the sins past, present, and future, but He died for every person's sins in the world, folks, you start thinking about that for a while and it will boggle your mind as to who He is and what He's done and how rich we are in Him. They're unfathomable. They're unsearchable. You can go looking for them tomorrow and find things you didn't even know that were there. I believe a million years after we're in Heaven and we see Him and we know as we're known, one day a million years from now we'll walk by Him and we'll break out and just praise and praise and continue to praise for who He is and what He's given us in salvation. But we live down here like spiritual paupers.

Look in Ephesians 1:18 at Paul's prayer for the church of Ephesus. He says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Now how does he say you're going to find out? He said that the eyes of your heart are going to have to be opened. You can study it and study it until you fall in the floor and one day God's going to open up that search light and open the eyes of your spiritual heart and you're going to understand what you have in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 talks about the First National Bank of all the blessings of God. Look what it says. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." We have access to the very unlimited spiritual riches of Christ. We're the church of God, bought with a price, set apart unto Him, called saints, given grace in Him that we live under and experience His peace, but we also have everything. We've been enriched in everything in Christ Jesus. We lack nothing in Him.

You see there's fallacy about riches, that they satisfy us. Look over in Proverbs 27:20. I want to show you whether or not your flesh can ever be satisfied. If you're living this kind of life and think there's satisfaction, let me just show you what the Word says. It's very clear. Proverbs 27:20 starts off and says, "Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied [in other words, they just endlessly take souls into them. Then it says], nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied." They're never satisfied. As soon as you get whatever it is you think will make your life better outside of Jesus Christ, as soon as you get it, you're not satisfied because you're going to see something else that you want. The more you get, the more you want. That's the way life is down here and the flesh can never be satisfied in that sense.

Not only will it never be satisfied but everything you get on this earth and you call riches, compared to what we have in Jesus Christ, have wings on them. We mentioned that just a little bit a little earlier. Look over in Matthew 6:19. There's an inherent destructive end built into everything the world offers to you. Mt 6:19 reads, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal."

You know one person who learned that was the rich man over in Luke 12:20. You might want to mark some of these places because, I tell you, these are the things that you have to realize that are there before you can start being awakened to what you have that's internal and eternal that no man can take away from you, the riches that we have in Christ Jesus. In Luke 12:20 we read, "But God said to him [this is that rich man who stored everything up. He just thinks he's got it. He owns it. It's his.], "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'" Thank God that we own riches that can only be found in Christ that no man can put their filthy paws on and take away from us.

An illustration happened back in the second century really touched me as I was studying this. It's a true story. A Christian was brought before a pagan ruler and told to renounce his faith. And the answers he gave to this pagan ruler, I think, really depict what we're looking at in 1 Corinthians. First of all, the ruler said, "If you don't renounce your faith, I will banish you from this land." The man answered and said, "You cannot banish me from Christ. You can banish me from the land, but you can't banish me from Christ, because He promised He would never leave me or forsake me." The ruler said to him, "Then I'll confiscate your property and take all your possessions." To which the man said, "My treasures are laid up in Heaven and you cannot get to them." The ruler became angry. Not knowing what to say, he said, "Alright, then I'll just kill you." The believer said, "I have been dead for forty years since I first received Christ in my heart and my life is hidden in Christ and you cannot touch it." And history records the ruler saying, "What do you do with fanatics such as this?"

When you begin to realize what you have in Jesus Christ, folks, all of a sudden your pursuits in this world change and He enriches and fills every area of your life. We're rich. We lack nothing in Christ.

Go back to 1 Corinthians 1:4. The verb "enrich" is an important word to understand. It is a rare verb. It's only found three times in the New Testament. It's found right in 1 Corinthians in the first aorist passive. It's a causative verb, that the action of our being enriched took place in the past at a certain point and it was final. It almost has the sense of a perfect tense. Yet it still continues to affect our life.

It's in the passive voice. The passive voice means that all the riches we have in Christ are not because of us but because of Him. The action happened unto us. It's not something we deserve. It's not something we asked for. It's something He gave us as a free gift of His grace. It's all resident in Christ. It happened back here and it's supposed to be still having an effect in our life. When we're in Him, we become heirs of His family, heirs of all the riches He has. That's what He said. You're enriched fully in everything in Christ Jesus.

Look over at Galatians 4:7. When you're living out there in the turmoil and conflicting arenas of this world, it's good to know this, isn't it? It's good to know that we fully possess all of God in Christ Jesus through His grace. It's all there. All we've got to do is learn how to tap into it. Galatians 4:7 says, "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." You know, there's no greater riches on earth than we have in Christ Jesus.

Do you know what the difference is between a co-heir and a joint-heir? In my wife's family there are eight children. All of them are married. All of them have children. Good night! Anyway, she is a co-heir with eight children. She has six girls in her family and two boys. That's five sisters and two brothers. So she's a co-heir. So if anything ever happens to her mama, then she'll become a co-heir of that estate. She'll get one eighth of everything in that estate, whatever that is. That's a co-heir.

But a joint-heir is a little different. A joint-heir shares in the whole estate with anyone who gets an inheritance. In other words, we are joint-heirs of Christ, not co-heirs. Co-heirs, let's see how many millions of Christians are there in the world? Well, I'll get about a millionth of a share. No, in Christ Jesus we share it all. Everyone of us. We have access to it through the Holy Spirit of God and because of grace. We have been enriched in all things; that's constantly to be having an effect on our life every day that we live. Because of this enrichment there's no area of our lives that cannot be affected if we're willing to walk by His grace.

In other words, you may say, "I've got a problem and I don't know what to do about it." Well, I can tell you only one thing. You have been fully enriched in Christ Jesus and because of His grace, there's not any area of your life in which He cannot transform you, renew you, and do whatever it is that He desires to do in your life. There's not one single area, not one single problem He cannot handle.

I want to tell you something. In every situation of our life, God is able. God is able. God is able through the grace that He has given unto us. There's not one area of our life that we cannot be enriched in because of having been fully enriched. We acquired a brand new nature, 2 Peter 1:4 says. We're members of God's eternal family as Galatians 3:26 says. What else do we want?

Paul is trying to remind this church; and remember, this is the most fleshly-minded church in the New Testament. He's not bragging on what they're doing. He's boasting in what they have in Christ Jesus. That's what he's doing. That's going to set the whole foundation for the rest of the book. When you get over several chapters later, remember what he said in 1Cor 1:1-10 because it has something to do with everything he addresses in the rest of the book.

There are two examples that Paul wants us to understand of how we've been enriched in everything. He's trying to tell us something. Look what he says in 1Cor 1:5: "that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge." Now, why in the world would he narrow it down to those two things? Because he's going to zero in on a testimony they're supposed to be having amongst the Corinthian people. Paul remembers how wicked Corinth is. Led by the Holy Spirit of God, he's setting it up for the rest of the things he's going to say in 1 Corinthians about the testimony we ought to be having to others by what we say and by what we know and how we live.

First of all, he says, "You're enriched in all speech." The word for "all" here is *panti* in the Greek, and it means all. It means enriched in every kind of word. Now, you know, when we communicate with one another, we express ourselves by what we say. So we have been enriched. He says, "You have been enriched in all speech."

The word for "speech" here is the word *logos*. Now you know the word *logos*. That means word. Doesn't it? It means more than just word. You see, in the English language we only have one word for half of the things we say. They had several words and were specific in what they meant. It's kind of like we have one word for love. We love grandmother, the American flag, my dog, and Jesus with the same word. Who knows the difference in any of it? But when you hear them say it, they would put it in such a way that you would know exactly what they were talking about.

There are three words for speech we're going to look at in a moment. What does this word right here mean, the word *logos*? It's the word in the Greek that specifically refers to words that have meaning. Every time you ever see the word *logos* you never think of idle, senseless words. You never think of a word that's hanging out there with nothing behind it. It means intelligence, with great meaning.

That's the word God chose to call His own son Jesus Christ. John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, (the *logos*)," the divine intelligence of God. He understands what he's doing. There's thought behind it. There's sense to it. The very mind of God is incorporated into Christ: "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then in Jn 1:14 we read, "And the Word (the divine intelligence of God in the person of Jesus) became flesh, and dwelt among us."

So don't ever think it could be used in a sentence of something that is senseless or idle or has no thought behind it. It can never be used that way. It's always used one specific way. I told you there are three distinct words for speech in the Greek. We've got to understand them. You say, "Why do we have to understand them?" I'm telling you, this is foundational for what we're going to get into later on.

Look over in Matthew 12:36. It's very significant that you understand this. Only one of these words for "word" consistently means intelligent, thought through, with meaning speech. Only one, the word *logos*. The others, depending on their context, can mean that but don't necessarily mean that just on their own. In Matthew 12:36 Jesus says, "And I say to you,..." Now, what do you think the word "say" is there? That's the *logos*. Jesus was saying, "I say to you what I'm saying to you has thought behind it. It has meaning behind it. It has sense to it."

Look at the next word: "that every careless word." Now that "careless word" there is the word *rhema*. It is the spoken word but does not necessarily mean that there's something thought through behind it. For instance, here it's careless words. It can be a careless word. So *rhema*, even though some people say that it always mean with thought behind it, does not necessarily mean that. It can be a careless spoken word. *Logos* can never be that. It has intelligence and thought behind it.

Then there's another word for speech there. He says, "And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak." The "shall speak" there is another word. It's the word *laleo*. It simply means to make a noise and have no understanding whatsoever of what you're talking about.

You say, "Now, I know you camped out here for just a second. Why did you do that?" Well, folks, listen to me and listen to me carefully. We're going to wade our way through this book. We're going to take a long time because I want to make sure we get it good and down. I'm going to stay here until you're going to think I'm a broken record. But if you get over into chapters 12-14 and forget what was in chapter 1:1-10, that's going to damage what we're talking about.

It will be good for you to jump ahead of me. Jump ahead of me and take chapters 12-14. I'm not going to tell you what's there. Look up the words that are used for "speech" or "utter" or "say" or whatever and see which ones they are with the understanding of what I just shared with you and already you'll begin to understand what Paul is doing, led by the Holy Spirit of God, in 1:1-10. The only word there that always consistently is referring to intelligent, thought through, divine speech in the sense of the Scriptures is the word *logos*. The word *rhema* can be or cannot be, depending on the text. It's inconsistent. The word *laleo* simply means a noise that nobody understands.

So when we get to chapter 12, remember this. Write it down and hang on to it. It may come back to help you later on. So often, as in all of the books in Scripture, people jump into a book and do something without, first of all, understanding where it started and what was the intent of the writing to begin with.

When we become a believer in Christ, Christ comes to live in us and He enriches our words. In other words, as we're living depending on His grace, walking in His peace, living separate unto Him, Christ in us, then He fills our minds to the point that what we say is no longer idle or unclean or senseless. He changes the way we talk. If we do get messed up, He'll bring us back to the cross. We'll confess it, repent of it, and we'll clean it up for another time. In other words, He gives us speech that communicates to others that we know the living Lord Jesus Christ. This is part of the enrichment that Christ has brought into our life. Our words now become

seasoned with salt. When we're living under His grace, He takes control over our tongues.

James 3 says, "No man can control the tongue." That's right. For a man to be in control of his tongue, he's got to be under control of the One who enriches our speech. When you're living that way, even what you say has salt in it. Words that come from thought have meaning to them. That's the speech that he's talking about.

Now, the reason our words are enriched is because He enriches our knowledge with His word. Look at what it says in 1Cor 1:5: "that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge." It's not that we have been imparted all knowledge either. I've met several people who, once they get saved and get through one Bible study, think they've got it all together. No, no. We're continually learning. But in everything we learn now, Christ then enriches it with His word. You see, in every area of knowledge, it's not just spiritual knowledge. It's science and history and anything that you're studying. God now adds the missing dimension.

I don't know if you ever saw "Jurassic Park." There's a sequel coming out. The book is entitled The Lost Horizon. But the whole premise for the book comes from people who have the missing piece of the puzzle. They're trying to figure out why animals go extinct. They're trying to figure out the system of what causes the higher selection and all this kind of stuff.

But they don't have the missing piece. The missing piece is God's word. He enriches us in all kinds of knowledge, not just in word but in anything that we study. I guarantee you, woe to the person who studies and learns anything apart from adding in the mixture of what God does in His word and says in His word that enriches all that knowledge. When all human knowledge stops, that's when God begins to enrich us with what only He can reveal. That's when He enriches. Every single thing that we learn is enriched by the word and the wisdom of God in our life.

Now, you have to ask yourself a question. Wait a minute, wait a minute. Back up. I hear what you're saying, but I know Christians right now who live as if they don't know anything and their speech is not in anything what it's supposed to be. Now how are you telling me that we're all enriched in speech and knowledge? Look at the church at Corinth. They're not living that way. Huh! Good question. Hmmm! It's answered in the next verse.

Look at 1Cor 1:6. As a matter of fact, it's lost in the translation. He says, "even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you." That little word "even as" is the problem here. The little word "even as" is the word that should be translated "to the degree that."

Look over in 1 Corinthians 12:11. Let me show you this word. It's also translated, just as. It's the word *kathos*, and it means the degree of something, the measure of something. The phrase is used over in 12:11. Look at what it says. "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." Or to the degree that He chooses. You see, the word has the idea that to the degree of something.

Well, you have to put 1Cor 1:5-6 together. 1Cor 1:5 says, "that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge [to the degree] the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you." You've got to understand there's some people who aren't living under grace. They're not living as if they're separated for God's purpose. They're not walking in God's peace so their testimony has not been confirmed in them to the degree it has in somebody else. Even though we have potentially enrichment in Christ in every area of our life, there's some things here that are required for us to have our testimonies confirmed. One is that we listen to what God's word has to say and two is that we apply it to our life and we live according to what God's word has to say. Then as we do that, we tap in to what's there and then He enriches our knowledge and enriches our speech. The two tie together, you see. But it's to the degree that you've done that. This Corinthian church doesn't have a clue what he's talking about because their testimony has not been confirmed among the people.

The word "testimony," *marturion*, is the word that means something that is absolutely without doubt. That your living a life to the point that your lifestyle, as a witness would be on a stand, absolutely proves without a shadow of a doubt that you have been enriched in Christ Jesus and that you are the church of God.

The Corinthian church was not living as somebody who has a purpose of only that God would do His works through them. As a result, their testimony is clouded and not confirmed and it does not prove they know Christ Jesus. But others have come to that place of surrender and the place of living up under the power that grace has and their testimony is without question. It is proof beyond a shadow of a doubt. It has been confirmed and put in concrete. These people know what they're talking about. These people know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you remember back in the days of black and white television, and the "Beverly Hillbillies"? Jed is out hunting, trying to get a rabbit for supper, thinking he's poorer than a church mouse. He shoots at the rabbit, misses it, and what does he do? He shoots into a vein of oil. That oil spurts up and all of a sudden over night they're the richest people in town. That oil had been there all the time. He just happened to stumble into what he already had.

Let God so affect your heart that you're willing to start tapping in by faith and living up under grace to what you have in Christ and being enriched in all knowledge and in speech and having your testimony confirmed. If you choose not to, my prayer is maybe somehow in your life you'll stumble into it; maybe God will reveal it to you. I think that's what Paul was praying in Ephesians. I pray that the eyes of your heart might somehow be opened because evidently they're still closed to what you have in Jesus Christ, the riches you already have in Him. I hope you don't have to stumble on it like that because that's a little risky. My prayer is that you'll hear it by faith, receive it by faith, and start walking in light of it. When you start living up under it, it enriches your knowledge which enriches your speech which automatically proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that you're up under grace, bought with a price, and living in the peace of God and you've got a testimony to the world.

Corinth didn't have a clue. They didn't have a clue. So Paul is telling them what they have first before he starts showing them that they don't have a clue that they had it.

1 Corinthians 1:7 What is the Church of God - Part 6

The next characteristic of the church of God is they live eager for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me ask you a question. Are you really living this way? People live as if He's never going to come. They don't live walking righteously before Him. They don't live convicted by sin. All of us sometimes drift into that kind of apathy. We say that we look forward to the coming of Jesus. But our lives doesn't show it.

Have you ever been looking for something and you had it all the time but didn't know it? Recently I was looking for my glasses. I looked everywhere for them. I looked all over the house. I looked everywhere I could think of: pockets, drawers, anywhere I could find that I might have placed them. I went into the bathroom thinking I might have left them laying there. When I walked in, I happened to look up in the mirror and I saw something very strange. I had them on all the time. Has that ever happened to you?

You know, it's strange. You study the book of 1 Corinthians and observe, just simple observation, and you discover that the church of Corinth lived as if God had given them nothing, when in fact He had given them everything. A lot of Christians are that way. They live as if they lack something, not understanding they have everything in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wants the Corinthians to know that they lack nothing in Christ Jesus. They lack nothing in Him because of the grace given to them. Paul wants the church of Corinth to realize that what happened back in the past, salvation, should be affecting them in the present. And it was not doing that. He's reminding them, recalling them to what they have in Christ Jesus. They didn't get cheated, folks. Every believer receives the same thing when he receives the Lord Jesus Christ and that's everything in Him.

I want you to know today we're no different from that. You have received everything in Christ Jesus. There's not one ounce of God that you did not get in Christ Jesus. But the key is you've got to learn to appropriate that and begin to live in the understanding that you also gave everything to Him, you see. Full surrender is not a goal to work toward. Full surrender is what we come from, and we need to wake up and understand. We've already given everything to Him. We just haven't realized it yet and we need to do that. So, Paul is recalling them to the fact that they have everything in Christ.

1Cor 1:4 says, "I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus." Now, "was given you in Christ Jesus" is an important phrase. We were in Adam and had all the curse of that transgression, but now that we're in Christ, it's a different situation. And because of His grace all things been given to us in Christ Jesus.

Look at 1Cor 1:5. That thought that we have everything in Christ begins to frame these next several phrases. 1Cor 1:5 says, "that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge." That word "everything" means everything. He said in every area of your life, everything about you has been enriched with Christ Jesus. You don't need anything outside of Him. As a matter of fact, what he's saying is, all that you're required to do in Corinth has already been given to you. You don't lack anything. This is so important for all of us to understand.

Then he does narrow it down. He says, "in all speech and all knowledge." Their words were enriched because of their knowledge. But their knowledge was enriched because of their words. It's sort of a circle that keeps feeding itself. Think about what I'm saying here. The wisdom and the Word of God had been given to them. Now their minds had been enriched with that wisdom and the knowledge of God. You see, it's something that God adds as a dimension to your life that enriches every dimension of your life. And now since their minds had been enriched, their words had been enriched and they could teach and share and preach the things that their minds now have helped them to understand. But as they do that, that increases the knowledge. And as the knowledge increases and is enriched, that enriches their words. It just keeps going on and on and on because of the dimension that Christ has added to their lives.

In fact, he says to just document the fact that you have everything that you need in Christ. The testimony concerning Christ was

confirmed in you. Notice that in 1Cor 1:6, “even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you.” Right now it’s not being confirmed in Corinth, but it has been confirmed in them.

The word “testimony,” *marturion*, is that which gives proof without a shadow of a doubt. The word for “confirmed” is something that solidifies, that makes it firm. What he’s saying to the Corinthians is, “Folks, listen. It is settled. It’s settled. The moment you put your faith into Jesus Christ, you received Him, the embodiment of all His grace, and you lack nothing. You’ve been enriched with everything and that now is settled. Nobody can shake you from that.” You have everything you need. As Peter said in one of his epistles, “For life and for godliness.” Now, in 1Cor 1:7 he adds that you are not lacking in any gift.

Before we look at 1Cor 1:7, to put this into perspective, here is a church living as if they lack everything when in fact they have everything in Christ. You’ve got to realize that the testimony that’s been confirmed in them is only going to be manifested through them to the degree they live 1Cor 1:2-4. In other words, when they start living as if they’ve been bought with a price, when they start living as if they’re set aside for the purposes of God, when they start living under the grace of God which is not putting their confidence in their flesh but into confidence only in Him, when they start living filled and flooded with the peace of God, then that testimony that’s been confirmed in them can be made manifested through them. That’s the whole problem with Corinth. They live as if they’re lacking when they already have everything they need. They live looking for their glasses and they already have them on.

Well, let’s go to 1Cor 1:7: “so that you are not lacking in any gift.” Now why would they not be lacking any gift? Because they had the giver, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, if we have Him, we have everything. We don’t lack anything outside of Him. He’s the giver of all things. So they lack in no gift because they have Christ. The word “lacking” is the word *hustereo*. It means to be behind or fall behind in something. It means to be inferior or as it’s translated here, lacking. So the idea is you don’t lack anything.

Yet there’s another idea. It’s very subtle. It’s built right into it. It’s in the present tense and the passive voice. Present tense means that you consistently do it every day. Passive voice means nothing could be causing you to fall behind in any gift or in anything because you in Christ don’t lack anything. In other words, you have it, but now don’t fall short. Actually, what he’s saying is that if you do fall short, it’s your fault because you already have what you need. Understand that and learn to live out of it. If they’re not going to live according to 1Cor 1:2 and 1Cor 1:3 then they’re not going to experience what he says is truth that’s been confirmed in their heart in 1Cor 1:4-7.

Well, if you have Christ, He’s the supplier of all the gifts. The word for gift there is the word *charisma*. It’s an important word. We get the word *charismatic* from it. Everybody knows that word, but they don’t have a clue where that word comes from. The word *charis* is the word for grace. God never has charisma. He has grace. He’s the embodiment of grace. He’s the giver of charisma. Charisma is the result of grace.

The little *ma* at the end of the word means the result. So it’s talking about the gift itself. So God gives charisma. He is the embodiment of *charis*, which is grace. The word has that understanding. By the way, remember grace is the beautiful, lovely disposition of God to give something that man could never deserve. Whatever gift we have from Him is not deserved.

There is no definite article here. So, therefore, it’s all inclusive. It doesn’t just mean the spiritual gifts of chapters 12-14. It’s amazing how many people never study 1 Corinthians. They just go to chapters 12-14 and study that. Then they go back to chapter 1 and put everything in the light of chapters 12-14. You can’t do that. You’ve got to start in chapter 1 and then when you get to chapter 12 it will make a lot of sense. That’s just so important. When you think of gifts with no definite article, you can’t just zero in on the wonderful charismatic gifts of the church, the body, and how we minister to one another. That’s just a part of it.

The thing I want you to see is anything we receive from God is a gift of His grace. The very fact that I’m breathing right now is a gift of His grace. The fact that I woke up this morning is a gift of His grace. We do not deserve any of it. We’re living in a day when people have lost that awesomeness of the fact that we don’t deserve what God gives to us. We live in a day when society teaches us to expect something from somebody. We deserve, we want something. We even vote in elections for people who can do the best for us. That’s the way we live. But in fact we deserve nothing before God. As sinners we deserve nothing. Everything we have from Him is a gift of His grace.

When I was in seminary I went over to visit Asbury Seminary. That seminary at that time had some wonderful professors, one of which was Dr. Robert Coleman who wrote *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. I had been going to a seminary that taught the “J EDP” theory. They said the first eleven chapters of Genesis was a myth. They would start their classes by praying, “Our mother which art in heaven.” The statement was made in one of my classes that Browning’s works were just as inspired as most of the Old Testament.

BORROW [The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert E. Coleman \(read some of the reviews!\)](#) - This modern classic discusses “Jesus’ Master Plan of Discipleship” (See online article [The Master Plan of Evangelism](#))

I went over to Asbury just looking for something, for that added dimension. In our lives He has enriched us in all things and I wasn’t

finding that enrichment where I was going. I remember sitting in the class one day of Dr. Robert Coleman. I had never met him, didn't know anything about him. There were two to four hundred students in the classroom, a huge class, like an auditorium. I heard a voice singing down the hall and I thought, "Who in the world is that?" It was that song, "Amazing love, how can it be." I'd never heard that before in all my life. I guess that was their "Amazing Grace." But ever since I heard it, it's done something to stir my heart.

He walked into the room and it was my professor. When he walked into the room, everybody in there broke into four-part harmony. I want to tell you something, folks. I thought I had died and gone right into Heaven. When I hear our wonderful choir sing it, it just brings every bit of that back to me. He walked to the front of the room with tears streaming down his face. He said, "Folks, I want you to stand with me right now and raise your hands. We're going to walk into the throne room of a Holy God who allows us to come into His presence because of the grace that has been shown to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't deserve it, but it's God's grace. Let's walk in and let's experience the Holy God who has saved us." I thought, seriously, "God, don't ever take me out." I understand what Peter was talking about on the Mount of Transfiguration. Let's just build a tabernacle up here and let's don't ever leave this place because it was so real. He helped me in just a few phrases to understand what I didn't deserve. In just in a few words from Scripture lifting up our Lord, he helped me realize the disposition and beautiful character of God. That He would stoop so low that He would send His Son to give all of it to me.

You see, folks, you've got to live in light of that. If you think 1 Corinthians is all about spiritual gifts, get a life. Wake up and get real! The book of 1 Corinthians is written to a church that lives as if they lack, but they don't lack. They have everything in Christ. The apostle Paul is trying to wake them up and shake them up and get them back to living like they ought to live. So he says, "You've been given it all in Him and you lack in no gift."

Let me show you what the word "gift" means. Let's look in other places where the word's used because it covers all of this. First of all, it's the gift of salvation itself. Look over in Romans 5:15. The very gift of salvation is charisma. It's the gift of God. You don't deserve it. That's what he's saying. You have all the gifts in Christ Jesus. You lack in no gift, even though you live as if you do. "But the free gift [that's the word] is not like the transgression." He's comparing the first Adam. Really, Jesus is the first one. He's comparing Adam of Genesis with the Adam of Christ, the God-man Christ. He's comparing the two men who came and what they did for mankind. And he says, "But the free gift [charisma, that which man does not deserve from God] is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many."

So you see the difference in Adam and Jesus. When Adam sinned, all man sinned in him. But when Christ came, He died for us that all men might have life through Him. Through one came death. Through the other comes life. It's a gift. It's a free gift to us, but it's expensive to God, as we studied earlier.

In Romans 6:23 he uses the word again. He says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God [I love the way it's translated. The word "free" is not in there but it's implied in the word] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Of course over in Romans 11:29 he says, "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." So the first thing you see in the word "gift" is the salvation experience itself, that which has birthed us into the kingdom of God which we could not in a million years deserve. Now, it does refer to the wonderful grace gifts that God has given to us today. We have spiritual gifts. What are they for? For the building up of the body of Christ. You see, not only is the gift of salvation resident in Christ, but so are the gifts which are distributed by His Spirit. God, the Father, is the initiator of it.

Look over in Romans 12:6. It says, "And since we have gifts [It's in the plural here but it's the word charisma] that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly." And then he begins to give them a list of those gifts in chapter 12 of Romans.

Look in 1 Corinthians 12:4. The same word appears there. "Now there are varieties of gifts [The word is in the plural. It's the same exact thought of Romans 12] but the same Spirit." The Spirit of God distributes them. Jesus gives them their ministry, and the Father takes care of the effects.

Look over in 1 Timothy 4:14. Paul uses the word to Timothy, his son. He calls him "his son in the faith." "Do not neglect the spiritual gift [Where is that spiritual gift? Is it out here? No. He says it's] within you." The spiritual gift within you.

Look at 2 Timothy 1:6. It's saying the same thing in a different way to the same man. He tells him that the gift is within him and then in v6 he says, "And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." The laying on of his hands did not distribute the gift. The laying on of his hands simply recognized it and, as an apostle, he released him to exercise what God had already given to him. He's still talking about the gifts God has given us as the body of Christ that are different. They are varied, and they're there for the building up of the Body. This is part of it. Salvation is used for salvation. It's used for this.

In 1 Peter 4:10, Peter gets into the act. He says, "As each one has received a special gift [speaking exactly of that], employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold [or the various colored] grace of God."

Now, that's two ways in which the word "grace" is used. Let me show you a third way it's used and the gifts that he's speaking of here, the grace gift. In Romans 1:11 it's the gift given when it's imparted by instruction that somebody gives to somebody else. Did you'll ever think about that? When I stand up to preach, I want so much for God to make my mind sensitive to what He wants me to say. But at the same time He gives you grace to be able to hear what He wants to say to you. So none of us should walk away enamored with a preacher. We walk away overwhelmed by what God has done as we've come together to be in His Word. Paul says in Romans 1:11, "For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established." The word "established" has the idea of when you take a basketball goal and you cement it in the ground. The wind may come and blow that goal over and back and over and back but if it's cemented properly, it's not going to break. It's going to stand there even though the winds may blow it. It's going to make you more firm and more established where you are. The Apostle Paul was going to instruct them. He was going to bring to them the good news of God. That was going to be a gift of grace that God had given to the people in Rome.

In 1 Corinthians 7:7, Paul is speaking of his celibate lifestyle. He talks about marriage sometimes and it appears he's down on marriage. He's not. He just understands that because of what he's called to do, it wouldn't be very helpful for him to be married. 1 Corinthians 7:7 talks about the different distinctiveness of individuals and how everybody's not the same in this. It says, "Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am." Having the self-control to be able to overcome the desire to be with another of the opposite sex and to live in marriage. "However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that." He's talking about a different situation altogether than anything we've brought up.

Look in 2 Corinthians 1:11. This is the last one I'll bring up. What I'm trying to show you is when he says that you do not lack in any gift, he's not just singling out the spiritual gifts of chapters 12-14. He's singling out the fact that we have everything in Christ and should never live as if we're lacking. We live being enriched in all things in Christ Jesus, through His grace. 1Cor 1:11 reads, "you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many." In other words, the deliverance of the saints. How many times has God interceded and stepped in the area of saints because of somebody else's intercession, because of somebody else praying? He says, "Hey, these deliverances through which God has taken us out of this situation and spared us through that one are all grace. It's a gift of God and we don't deserve any of it."

You see, this whole first part of 1 Corinthians, to me, is so clear. Paul is trying to say, "Guys, listen. You're looking for your glasses and you've got them on. You've been enriched in everything. You don't need anything outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you come up lacking, it's your fault because you have these things in your life."

Well, the church of Corinth was not living this way. We tried to introduce it to you. The church of Corinth lived as if they're lacking. First of all, he depicts this one. He says, "You're chasing after men instead of the one God man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of you are of Peter. Some of you are of Paul. Some of you are of Apollos." What he's saying is, "Hey, when you find people who follow men around other than The Man, the God-Man, you've got somebody who doesn't understand what they already have." They live as if they're lacking when they don't realize they have everything in Christ Jesus.

But not only did they follow men and divide everything and everybody, they sought after the gift and not the giver. I want to tell you something, folks. When we do get to that area, you're going to find a group of people who live as if they're lacking, who do not live in the sufficiency of God in their lives, and they're chasing after gifts rather than holding on to the giver.

I was in a leading sign gift church in El Paso, Texas. I started talking about Ephesians and what you have in Jesus Christ. Folks, in every session that's all I talked about. We have everything in Christ Jesus. The same thing Paul was telling the Corinthians, I was telling them. You've been enriched in everything in Christ Jesus. Quit looking for something as if you lacking. Live out of that which you have.

Well, Saturday morning came, and they hadn't run me off. There was about four hundred or so people there. When I finished, they gave me a standing ovation. I had no idea until later on what this meant. These people were finally coming to understand you don't live chasing a gift. You don't live chasing people. Live in the sufficiency of what you already have in Jesus Christ.

One little lady chased me down in the parking lot and got hold of me. She had tears streaming down her face. She said, "Thank you! Thank you!" I said, "What for?" She said, "All of my life I've been praying for the gift. I've prayed for it. I've gone to people trying to give it to me. Thank God! It finally dawned on me. I don't need the gift. I have the Giver in my life."

Now, folks, this may make you sad, mad, or glad, but that's exactly what Paul's trying to tell the church at Corinth. Wake up! Grow up and live out of what you have. Quit living as if you lack. You do not lack. You've been enriched in everything and this testimony

has been confirmed in you from the day that you got saved. It's been confirmed. It's settled, put into concrete. You never change what has been done in a person's life.

Well, let's make our list again. Okay? Are you with me? The characteristics of the church of God are:

They're fully possessed by God. It's the church of God, not of man. They're bought with a price as we've already seen.

They're set apart for His purpose. They're sanctified, that's what it means. The only purpose a Christian has is to live for the purposes of God.

They consistently call upon His name. They're constantly, dependent upon Him, not putting any confidence in their flesh.

They live desperate for the grace of God.

They live desperate for the peace of God. You've got to have the two of those. You can't have peace before you have grace. You've got to have grace before you have peace. Living up under the grace of God means you live in His power, not in your power. And the peace of God is what God gives.

They lack nothing in Christ.

The Church of God Lives Eager for the Return of Christ

Well, we've finally come to the seventh characteristic. The seventh one is they live eager for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh boy! Look at 1Cor 1:7 again: "so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let me ask you a question. Are you really living this way? People love those songs, "The King is coming. The King is coming." They sing all these songs and then they live as if He's never going to come. They don't live walking righteously before Him. They don't live convicted by sin. All of us sometimes drift into that kind of apathy. We say that we look forward to the coming of Jesus. Has it dawned on you yet what that's going to mean in your life when you stand before Him one day, the eyes of Him who knows all and has seen all? Has it dawned on you what you're saying when you say, "I'm living expectantly waiting the return of Christ." I dare say to you that a lot of people aren't living that way though they say they are.

The church at Corinth wasn't living that way. This wouldn't have been in their life had they been living that way. He says, "so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly." The word "awaiting eagerly" comes from two Greek words. One is apo and the other one is dechomai, which has the idea of it's just that eagerness of doing something. Remember back when Paul went to the church of Berea and found those Berean believers who searched the Scriptures. It says, "They eagerly received the Word of God." The Scripture says that they were more noble-minded. They were of a higher class than the ones he had been to. They at least listened to him. And with eagerness they received. The word dechomai is used there.

Suppose I had a gift to give you and you knew about it. You were at home expectantly awaiting that gift to come because you saw me in the store. You didn't know what it was because you got there too late and it was in a box. You went home waiting on me to bring it by your house. You would be waiting eagerly to receive it. That's different than if you didn't know I was going to give you a gift. I dropped by your house and gave it to you. You'd receive it but not with the same eagerness. That's what he's talking about here. It's, "awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If the church of God is walking in the realization that Christ may come at any time, they live eagerly expecting that, trusting Him to have enriched them in anything, depending upon His grace and peace, and living with purposes that are only His as people who are His full possession. Now listen to me, they're not going to live as if they lack anything. When you find a person who lives as if he lacks, it's a person who's not yet lined up with what he's supposed to be. If a person's not living and walking under the grace of God, living a life that's for Him to use and trusting only Him and His Word, then that person lives as if he lacks and he is not eagerly awaiting for the return of Christ.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is associated with something we need to understand and that's our adoption as sons. You know, it's interesting to me. We've been adopted. We know that from Ephesians. We're enjoying the process of that adoption now, but one day the final chapter's going to be written because Romans 8 says, "We look forward to the adoption as sons." That's a strange thing. Isn't it? I've been saved. I'm being saved. I shall be saved. It all fits in the same kind of understanding.

Look at Romans 8:19. It uses the same word. Look at what it attaches it to. What is the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, His coming, when He comes for His church, associated with? It talks here about [[creation]], not necessarily humankind, but the animal life, the trees, the plants, everything's awaiting something here. It has to do with this coming of the Lord. It has to do with our adoption, the final act of our adoption. It says, "For the anxious longing of the [[creation]] waits eagerly [the same exact word we're looking at over in 1 Corinthians] for the revealing of the sons of God." Do you realize one day when Jesus comes for His church, we're going to look at Him and we're going to look at ourselves and we're going to look back at Him and back at ourselves and say, "This is what it was all about." Because God's going to give us a glorified body when He comes again for His church. That's when we get our glorified body. That's the final act of our adoption that we haven't experienced yet. It's guaranteed because Scripture says, "Those whom He called, He justified. Those whom He justified, He also glorified." He's already seen it happen. We haven't. He has.

It's guaranteed one day in that final act.

So the coming, the appearing of the Lord Jesus has to do with the final act of our adoption when we finally get our glorified body, when redemption has been made complete and then we can go on being about the purposes of God and live with Him forever.

Look over in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. This is really illustrated here, I think, as clearly as anywhere in Scripture. They're having a real dilemma. They didn't know what happened to the righteous dead. They knew Christ was coming. They believed in the eminent return of Christ. I totally disagree with those who say, "There is no imminence to the return of Christ." Are you kidding? They lived with this fear that maybe He'll come. What happens to those who have already died? They didn't understand. What happened to their bodies? Paul says in 1Th 4:13, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep." The word "asleep" always deals with death and the physical body. Some people say there's a soul sleep. Are you kidding? It says in Corinthians, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." There's not soul sleep. Your spirit goes right up to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "asleep" here has to do with the body and death.

You see, when you go to sleep, what do you do? You lay down, right? But what do you do after you've slept long enough? You get up. Every time you see that, remember what's going to happen to the body. A preacher one time said, "I'm going to plant a body." I thought that was kind of callous until I studied 1 Corinthians 15 and found out that's exactly what he did. The spirit went to be with the Lord. What did he do? He took the body out and planted it in the ground. What do you do when you plant something? You expect it to come up one day. That's exactly what's going to happen here. He said, "those who are asleep." He's talking about their bodies. They're in the ground. He says, "that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

I thought they were in the ground. No, their spirit is with Him. Their body is in the ground. There's been a separation here. In death the spirit goes to be with the Lord. The body goes into the ground. Then he says in 1Th 4:15, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep." Paul seems to suggest that he thought he was going to be one of them. You talk about imminence, "we who are alive." He thought he was going to be living when Jesus came again. What he's saying is some people are going to be living when this happens. Most, perhaps, are going to be dead. There are going to be many who are going to be alive. He said that we'll not precede those.

The first thing that's going to happen is that the dead in Christ will rise first. Their bodies shall be raised up first. 1Th 4:16 reads, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Now, they're going to come up first. Their bodies will rise. They'll be changed, glorified, and wrap themselves around their immortal spirit. 1Th 4:17 continues, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord." That word "caught up" is where you get the word "rapture," harpazo. It's never in Scripture as a noun. It's in Scripture as a verb. People say, "There's no rapture in Scripture." Well, which do you want it to be, a noun or a verb? I'd much rather be a verb. I'd much rather go up with Him in the air. That's what he's talking about.

The word in secular Greek was used of a wolf coming in amongst a flock of sheep and grabbing and snatching one out of there. We're going to be snatched up, taken up one day to meet Him in the air. That's what it says. Then it says, "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Over in 1 Corinthians 15 it gives you the order. We'll get to this. I can't wait to get to chapter 15. If you've ever feared death, you won't after chapter 15. 1 Corinthians 15:20 reads, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep." He set the pattern for all those that are coming after Him. "For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: [Here's the order] Christ the first fruits [He's already gone through it. What He did will happen to us? He raised from the dead, physically, not just spiritually as some people say. If He didn't raise physically then our bodies will stay in the ground because there's no hope for them], after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end."

Look what Paul's doing. Oh, my goodness! He's covered the past. He's given you all things. He's covered the present. Now live out of these. He's enriched your life in everything. And now he covers the future that one day Christ is coming for you. Let me ask you a question. You've got the past. You've got the present today. One day out in the future you've got Christ coming. What about from right now to then? What about that part? What about that mean time period? Does it cover that? Oh, yes. Look at 1Cor 1:8.

The Church of God Is Being Confirmed to the End

The eighth characteristic of the church of God is the church of God is being confirmed until the end. I want to tell you something, folks. If you've ever struggled with eternal security, you're going to really wrestle with this one. If you don't want to hear it, just close your ears, because this Scripture will not fit that doctrine. Once saved, always saved. Saved to the uttermost. He's going to nail it right here. Look at 1Cor 1:8: "who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, the One

who saved you will confirm you until the end. You say, "Well, what about tomorrow? What about next week?" Don't worry about. He'll confirm you until the end. Now, what does the word "confirm" mean? Well, when referring to person, it has the idea of strengthening. Now listen to this. It keeps us standing like we ought to stand. This is beautiful. This grace that we have received, we also stand in it. That's what Romans 5:2 said. That which you receive by faith in which you stand. Perfect tense means you're in the state of standing and nothing can stop you from standing in that grace.

What that says is God's going to keep us in that grace until the day He appears because it's all tied into 1Cor 1:7. He who saved us, keeps us. Have you ever been around those people who talk about you better hold on to God or if you don't He'll get away from you? Over in the Eastern European countries you have that a lot. I had a man in a conference come to me and say, "Oh, you guys, you come over here and preach about everything Jesus has done. Not me. I preach on everything man better do because it's up to us to hold on." Then he quoted out of Hebrews 6. I said, "Excuse me. Have you ever studied Hebrews 1-5?" That's amazing to me. It's amazing. The next time somebody takes a Scripture and nails you with it, ask them to hold it right there. Before you say another word give me the context of chapter 1 to where you just came to. Because if you had studied chapters 1-5 in Hebrews, it's already settled the issue. We're not anchored to Him. He's anchored to us and He's the anchor. He's holding on to us. How are you going to lose something when you didn't do anything to get it to start with? I want to tell you something.

The fear tactic in Communism kept people doing that they wanted them to do. That was their tactic. I want to tell you something, folks, the fear tactic in legalism is also a thumb that preachers will put on people to get them to do what they want them to do. It's the same thing. Buildings are built because of the guilt put on people to make them feel like their idiots if they don't to what God says to do. There are preachers who are gifted in preaching that way. That's what they use. It's a fear tactic. Put your thumb on somebody. Make them do what they're doing.

But I want to tell you something. In Scripture grace is overwhelming, folks. And grace does not have anything to do with you holding on to God. It has everything to do with God's choice to hold on to you. He will confirm you until the end. Now, you're going to have to wrestle with that if you don't like it. I didn't write it. He wrote it. He will confirm you until the end. Dwight L. Moody made a statement, "Trust in yourself and you're doomed to disappointment. Trust in your friends and they'll die and leave you. Trust in your money and it will be taken away from you. Trust in your reputation and some slanderous tongue may blast it. But trust in God and you never will be confounded either in time or in eternity." Martin Luther said, "I have held many things in my hands and lost them all but whatever I placed into God's hands, I still have."

How long is He going to confirm you? Until the end. The end of what? Hey folks, the context does have something to do with this. The end means the goal. It is the word telos. I ran track when I was in prep school. I played football and basketball and I could have played on the state championship basketball team but I decided I wanted to go out for track and the field events. Field events meant I could get a suntan, watch all the runners sweat and have fun. That's what I was going to do. The coach knew what we were doing. We were goofing off over there and we didn't care if we won or lost. We just had an enjoyable time. We got out of drills so we could go over here for track practice.

One day we were in a meet and the mile relay came up. Each runner had to run a 440 yard section. Do you know what running a 440 is like? It's suicide. If you want to kill yourself, go out and run a 440 as hard as you can. You won't make it 200 yards. You'll die. It's amazing. It's a 100 yard sprint for 440 yards. A mile relay means there are four of those. The coach came over to me and said, "Wayne, something's wrong with the guy who's supposed to run the anchor. He pulled a muscle, and I want you to run the anchor." He did this on purpose. I know because he knew we weren't in shape. He was just going to show us how out of shape we were. I said, "Me?" I had never even taken a baton. You know, you hand those things off in a relay. We went over and practiced a little bit. I'm thinking, "I'm going to die. I'm going to die." My life passed by me. It just flashed by me real quickly.

I remember getting out there and my turn finally came around. We were doing pretty good in the race until I got the baton. I got the baton. The first 220 yards, if I had finished that way, I would have broken ever world record that had ever existed. Man, I mean I came out of there and passed everybody 40 feet. Man, I was going. Somewhere around the 300 yard mark an 800 pound gorilla jumped on me. Do you know what I'm talking about? It's awful. All of a sudden I couldn't do anything. It was like, "I know I can!" They had the ambulance ready and all that. I know I can finish this race. I finished it.

The word telos means to accomplish a goal. What goal is it that He wants accomplished and confirmed in me? That's the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He comes, then He will change me and glorify. I'll live with Him forever and He will confirm me.

You say, "Well, wait a minute. Those Corinthians weren't living right. They had sin in their lives. How could God confirm them until the end?" Remember, He said, "I'll confirm you blameless," not sinless. That's where I'll pick up the next time. Nobody can bring an accusation against me. Well in one sense they can, but not in the sense of my eternal salvation. That's what Romans 8:33-34 is talking about. "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?... Christ Jesus is He who died." Folks, nothing can alter you from the course of grace God has set you on when you received Christ. He'll confirm you until the end.

Looking for your glasses? Then look in a mirror. You might have them on. What's the mirror we look into? It's God's Word. If you'll look in it, you may realize you already have what you've been looking for. That's the whole key of what Paul's saying. I'll tell you, pay attention because from 1Cor 1:10 on he's going to skin them alive for living as if they're lacking when they absolutely are totally complete in the Lord Jesus Christ, enriched in everything.

1 Corinthians 1:8 What is the Church of God - Part 7

The eighth characteristic of the church of God is the church of God walks and lives in eternal assurance. Now if you have any struggle with the assurance of your salvation, you listen up to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:8, "who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I hope you understand how important these first nine verses are to our study of 1 Corinthians. They form a grid through which the rest of the book must be looked at. When we leave 1Cor 1:1-9, and we start dealing with the divisions and the factions and the problems in the church, remember, Paul has already said some things that are very, very key to what causes life to be turned right side up.

What's happened in Corinth is their lives are upside down. That's why he's writing to them. It's a problem church. There are more problems in this church than in just about any of the New Testament that we study and love so much.

The Church of God Walks and Lives in Eternal Assurance

Let's go back to the eighth characteristic of the church of God. I want to redo that one and rename it. The eighth characteristic of the church of God is the church of God walks and lives in eternal assurance. Now if you have any struggle with the assurance of your salvation, you listen up to what he's about to say right here. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:8, "who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, that's an important, important verse. The word "confirm" there is the future indicative of the word, *bebaioo*. It's the word, when referring to persons, that has the idea of strengthening. But it also has the idea of keeping us standing in the grace that we already have. Man, this is beautiful. We have His grace, and we stand it.

But God promises this to the church of Corinth, who's living upside down lives. They're not living surrendered lives, but Paul tells them they will be confirmed all the way to the end, blameless until His appearing.

Now look over in Romans 5:1. Paul says the same thing in other places. This is so significant to understand. Believing you can lose your [[salvation]] can only come from a misunderstanding of what [[salvation]] is to start with. You do not realize what happened to you when you put your faith into Jesus Christ, and you don't understand the keeping power of the grace of God. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have [that's a present active infinitive, we continuously have] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Through Him we have peace with God. He became sin for us. He that knew no sin became sin for us that we might wear His robe of righteousness.

1Cor 1:2 continues, "through whom [speaking of Jesus] also we have obtained..." perfect active indicative. What does that mean? Something happened way back here, perfect tense, and we made a choice. Alright, now, it's affecting us way over here. That's the perfect tense. We're the state we're in because of something that happened back here.

He says, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained [perfect active indicative] our introduction..." How did we get this introduction, by the way, into His grace? "by faith into this grace [now look at this next phrase] in which we stand." In other words, when I received grace and accessed it by faith, then I was invited right in to partake of and to receive that which He's given me. Now way down the road here, because of that event, I still stand in the grace of God.

You know in the Old Testament they were always worried about God taking His Spirit away from them. That was a constant thing. Or God turning His face away from them was even worse than that. I remember when Cain sinned and was banished he said, "God has turned His face away from me." But you see, God turned His face away from His own Son on the cross. Why? So that He would never have to turn His face away from you and me. We eternally stand in the grace of God. He's consistently looking right at us. He does not turn away from us. He loves us through His Son, and His grace keeps us. We stand in that grace, the eternal favor of God that man could never deserve in a million years, that transforming enabling power that God has given us by giving us the Lord Jesus, the Spirit of God that lives within us, the loving marvelous grace of God.

You know, I hear people all the time talking about, "Boy, you better hold on to Jesus. You better hold on to Jesus." Thank God when we studied Hebrews we understand that it's Him who holds on to us. This covenant is not built upon my faithfulness to God. It's built upon God's faithfulness to me as we'll also see a little later on in 1 Corinthians 1:9. Dwight L. Moody said, "Trust in yourself and you're doomed to disappointment. Trust in your friends and they'll die and leave you. Trust in your money and it will be taken away

from you. Trust in your reputation and some slanderous tongue will blast it. But trust in God and you're never to be confounded in time or eternity." Martin Luther said, "I have held many things in my hands and lost them all but whatever I have placed into God's hands, I still have." Just like Paul said, "I know whom I have believed in and am totally convinced that He is able to keep that which I have committed."

You see, grace is something that keeps us. If we don't understand that then we're constantly worried about something that God's not worried about and constantly thinking, "Have I lost my salvation in case of failure in my life or whatever?" But the Scripture says that He will confirm us blameless until that day.

Look there at 1 Corinthians 1:8, "who shall also confirm you to the end." I want to make sure we understand what "the end" is because the context has already told you in 1Cor 1:7. The end there does not mean just until the day you die. That's nice to know that He will do that, by the way. It's not just until then. It's not just until He's finished with whatever it is He's assigned you or me down here on this earth. But it's all the way until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. That word *telos* is the word that means to accomplish a goal.

I remember when my son first played t-ball. Well, he didn't understand the bases. I had taught him all this stuff, but his mind froze up when people were watching him. He got up to the plate and hit the ball really well, knocks it. He didn't know which way to run. I'm going to help him. I came out of the stands and said, "Follow me, Stephen." You see the goal was to get all the way around the bases. When you touched home base you've accomplished the goal. I remember going by first base and I said, "Touch that bag!", and he touched that bag and kept on running. "Touch the bag!" We ran all the way around. When we came across home plate, they all applauded me. I'm just trying to help him out.

But you see, crossing the goal, finishing or accomplishing something. He wasn't accomplished if he just got to first base. He wasn't accomplished until he got all the way around to home. He finished what he set out to do. There was a task at hand and he accomplished that task.

Now the task is being preserved blameless until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. By the way, that day of Christ, the appearing of Christ, has everything to do with our glorified body. Do you know you're going to get a glorified body? We're all in desperation, aren't we? We need a glorified body. That's going to come when we see the Lord Jesus. When we see Him, He's going to give us that glorified body. When Christ comes, the final chapter of our adoption is going to be written. That final chapter is when we get a glorified body. So He's going to confirm us until that day, not just until we die. We may die before the Lord Jesus comes for His church. Not just until we finish our task down here. We may be taken out of here in no time. We don't know when that's going to be. But He's going to confirm us. He's going to make us strong. He's going to keep us standing in the grace that He has given to us all the way until the goal has been accomplished of our redemption which is that we get a glorified body.

The word *telos* is the word used in John 19:30: "When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine (on the cross), he said, 'It is finished!'" In other words, that which I came to do is finished. You see, man never took Jesus' life on the cross. He dismissed His own human spirit and gave His life upon the cross. "And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit."

In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul uses that same word. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." I believe what Paul is saying is, "I've won the battle over Paul and learned to allow God to use me the way He wants to use me. I know He's accomplished what He wanted to accomplish in my life, and now I'm looking forward to going to get the crown that God has for me."

So again, what is the goal of which He is confirming us until the end? What is the end? What is the goal? The end is, the goal is, the appearing of our Lord directly associated with our adoption and our glorified body one day. When you add 1Cor 1:7 and 8 together, it makes all the sense in the world: "so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We know that the day of our Lord Jesus Christ is something the church should be looking forward to. Do you know the differences in the terms, "the day of the Lord" and "the day of Christ"? There are two different terms there. The "day of the Lord" is something to be feared. The "day of Christ" is something to be looked forward to by the church because that's when He appears for us. That's when He takes us up to be with Himself and that's when we get our glorified body. Notice, He's going to confirm us until that end and that end would be that day.

But how's He going to confirm us? He's not going to confirm us sinless; He's going to confirm us blameless. That's all the difference in the world. How in the world can you confirm a bunch of people like the people in Corinth who made a meal out of the Lord's Supper and totally obliterated the meaning of it, who chased after gifts, who were calling Jesus a curse? How in the world could He ever confirm them? He couldn't confirm them sinless but He could confirm them blameless. That's very, very important. No accusation can ever be brought against us, now listen to me, which would threaten our eternal position in Jesus Christ.

Now to say that no accusation could ever brought against us against us, that's crazy. Any time you do something or I do something, somebody will bring an accusation against us. But whatever accusation comes against us, none of them can threaten the position we have in Christ and the position we have in His grace, under His grace because He's going to accomplish a goal in our life of taking us all the way to the finish line, of taking us all the way through to being glorified.

As a matter of fact, look over in Romans 8:1. The word "blameless" tells you everything. It's that accusation that can be brought against us, but it can never in any way threaten our position in Christ. We may fail, we may sin, we may blow it royally down here on this earth, but if you're a believer, you cannot have an accusation brought against you that would in any way threaten your life in Christ.

Some people think that's a cop-out. "Yeah, that's great. You just gave license to people to live like they want to live." No, no, no. Listen to it all the way through. That's just a statement I made right there concerning these verses. There are other verses that cover those bases and we'll get to those when it's time. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Where were you before? You see, before we were in Adam. That's where the condemnation was. That's when sin entered in the world and death by sin because all sinned. But what happens when you put your faith into Christ, receiving the grace that He has given to you, you are taken out of Adam and you're put into Christ and once you're in Christ, all the blame fell on Him. How can it fall on you? He took it for you. Therefore no accusation can threaten your position of being in Christ Jesus.

Look at Romans 8:33-34. If you've ever studied Romans, you know what he's talking about. He's talking about what Christ has done for us. Romans 6:7-8 are critical to understanding this whole message of grace. Romans 8:33 reads, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Anybody want to stand up? Paul under the leadership of the Holy Spirit is saying, "Anybody want to stand up and bring a charge against God's elect?" Look at what he said, "God is the one who justifies [Not man, God justifies]; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

In other words, it's almost like, who will bring a charge against God's elect? Who? Do you mean somebody would dare stand up and threaten that which Jesus Christ has done for us upon the cross? That's the idea here, that we're in Him. We will be preserved, confirmed, kept under His grace until the end, until He carries our redemption all the way through.

Now, let's go back to that question. Many, many people believe that if you believe in eternal security, then evidently you must give license to sin. That's what they think. But again, they say anybody who says they love Jesus is a Christian, too. They don't even understand what belief is all about and what it means to become a believer. But they use that as a blanket statement. You say, "Well, that's a pretty good statement, isn't it? Look at the church of Corinth. You're telling me they're going to be confirmed until that day?" No, I'm not telling you. That's what Paul's telling them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. How can that be? Does that mean when we see Jesus one day, then it's all going to be the same? Does that mean we're each going to get the same reward regardless of how we've lived down here? Not at all.

Look in 1 Corinthians 3:8. This is one of the verses. We'll look at more when we get there. 1 Corinthians 3:8 says, "Now he who plants and he who waters are one [But now look at this next phrase because it's so key and it's used many times. We'll study all those places when we get to this verse]; but each will receive his own reward according to his own [what?] labor." Just like it says in another place that we'll be judged according to the deeds done in the body. In another place it says it will be "wood, hay, and stubble, and precious stones." In other words, the wood, hay, and stubble is what we did after our own flesh offered it back to God, but precious stones will be that which we allowed God to do through us as we found our purpose was to be a vessel through which God could work.

But all who are in Christ, regardless of their immaturity, regardless of what they do or don't do, will be kept blameless until that day. No one can bring an accusation against us that would threaten in any way what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross.

Now, let's talk again about that day of our Lord Jesus Christ, the "day of Christ" versus the "day of the Lord." There's going to be a great day that Christians are looking forward to. We're all looking to His return, to His appearing, to the day of Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the one who came to pay the penalty of our sin. We're looking forward to that or at least we say we are. I hear people all the time saying, "The King is coming. The King is coming." Everybody's talking about the coming of the Lord and nobody's living as if they expect Him to come. It's interesting to me. But the day of Christ is what we focus on.

Now, on the flip side of that, the day of Christ begins something else. Once the church has been taken out, there's another day that's going to start and it's called the "day of the Lord." It's interesting here that Paul writes "the day of the Lord Jesus Christ." You've got the whole thing built into this. You've got the day of the Lord. That's when He, Himself, is going to come and put an end to sin on this earth. It's going to be a seventieth week of Daniel, the seven year period of time. We all know that's another study. But that's the day of the Lord. Remember, the great day of the Lord is the last three and one-half years of that seven year period of time.

But the day of Christ is what we look forward to. He's going to confirm us until the day of Christ. That's going to be His appearing. That's going to be when we get our glorified body. We live in an evil day, but the day of Christ is coming. Thank God for it. He's going to take us out. That word in 1 Thessalonians 4 when it says, "He will take us up," is the word *harpazo*. It means to snatch. It's like a wolf coming in to a flock of sheep and snatching one out. It's imminent. It's sudden. He's going to take us out of here and we'll meet Him in the air. Then begins the day of the Lord.

Go over to Philippians 1:6. Paul says the same thing. He talks about this day and what we have to look forward to. It's a wonderful, wonderful day to look forward to if we're living set apart for His purposes. If we're living as those who depend upon His grace and His peace, as if we lack nothing in Christ, we look forward to it. You don't look forward to it when you're not living that way, if you live as if you lack. Notice the wording in Philippians 1:6. "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it [or perform it or carry it to its fullest accomplishment] until the day of Christ Jesus." Here is that day again, the same day he mentions in Corinthians to the church of Corinth. There's a day coming when Jesus is coming for His church.

Somebody asked me recently, "How close do you think we are to that day?" I'm going to be honest with you. Every time I go to Israel it just pumps me up and fires me up one more time. I believe that we're so close to it, folks. If we really understood how close we are, it would change every bit of our living tomorrow. If we really believe this, how close we really are. Nothing has to happen except the fullness of the Gentiles. When that last Gentile comes to know Christ, whenever that is, buddy, that's it. That's when Jesus comes for His church, the fullness of the Gentiles. Then He turns His eyes from the Gentile world and turns His eyes to the nation of Israel that He has not forgotten. You see, the day of the Lord is something that unbelievers would fear but the day of Christ is something that believers look forward to.

Look over in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 just to make sure that you understand that we do not have to receive the wrath that is coming. We won't receive it as believers. I'll tell you why, because Christ has already received that wrath upon the cross. You either receive the lamb or you receive the wrath. The Psalmist says, "Who has known the wrath of God?" Only one. That's Jesus Himself. When God the Father turned His back to Him when He was on the cross He understood the full wrath of God upon sin and then was raised from the dead. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 says, "For God has not destined us for wrath [By the way, that's not even a definite article there. For any type of the wrath of God to fall upon us] but for obtaining [[salvation]] through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Remember, salvation is in three tenses. We have been saved. We are being saved, and one day we shall be rescued from this evil world that we live in. Then starts the day of the Lord and the wrath of God will fall. And during the last three and one-half years, the great wrath of God will occur. So I'm going to say it again. The day of Christ is what we look forward to and we'll be confirmed until that day. It is on that day, when we see Him, that we'll be given a body, a glorified body which will close the book on redemption as far as the three chapters are concerned. It will be the final chapter. Then another one will be written from that point on because now we're with Him, and we're like Him. We will be confirmed blameless until that day.

You ask, "Can we be sure that we're going to escape that wrath? How can we know for sure that we're going to be confirmed until the end? I know I just read it but what can you tell me that might somehow make me sleep better at night?" Well, let me just go on to 1 Corinthians 1:9. The first phrase of 1Cor 1:9 shows you the character of the one who says this through the apostle Paul. This is so important to understand. What are the first three words of chapter 9? "God is what faithful." I could say, "Now listen, folks, you can trust me. I'm faithful to tell you the truth." But I'd go home and lose a lot of sleep. I'm not saying that to you. I didn't write it. I didn't say it. God said it through His apostle Paul and it's based upon the character, not just the conduct, of Almighty God who said it. God is faithful.

There's no verb there. "Is" should be in italics. Actually faithful is an adjective describing the character of God. The word for faithful is *pistos*. It can be used in an active or passive sense. When it's used of man, it's in an active sense because man must put his trust into God. That's something man must do. But when it's used of God, it's never used in an active sense. It's used in a passive sense and it means that God is worthy of our trust. What he's saying here is, write this one down, "God is worthy of our trust." Don't you dare trust Wayne Barber. Don't you ever trust what I say. You go back to the Word and let the Word of God be the foundation. If you think I'm wrong then study it out, reason to see if that's what God says. And I'll tell you what, if that's what God says, you trust what it says and you trust the One who said it and the character of the One who said it. God's reliable and God is worthy of our trust. He is faithful. Again, it's not a reference to His conduct but a reference to His character.

When we think of the faithful and trustworthy character of God, look at what Paul has already told us. To the Corinthian church he says, "God has enriched you in everything." He was faithful to do that. He says in 1Cor 1:6, "He confirmed His testimony in you and among you." Then in 1Cor 1:7 and 8 it extends all the way to the future. "I'm going to confirm you," He says, "all the way to the day of Christ, to the day of the appearing of the Lord Jesus." Listen to me. In the changing world we live in, thank God, there's an unchangeable truth and that truth is God is faithful. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. The very word "faithful" has the idea of something that is steadfast, immovable, never changes. Something that is trustworthy.

In a silly way a compass can be used at times to be trustworthy although there are times when the compass gets off, especially if there's anything that can pull it off. But you can trust that most of the time to take you a certain direction. The idea of being faithful is that God will never vary, not like a compass. God is always going to be who He is. He's going to stand upon that which He said and will carry us all the way through just like He said He would do.

Peter uses this word. The reason I'm saying that is the changeable circumstances of our life sometimes turn us upside down and all of a sudden we get everything out of kilter. "God, do you even know what's going on?" Habakkuk did it. Jeremiah did it. Go through the Old Testament. "God, where are you?" You see, they don't seem to understand that God's always there and God's always faithful even though life's circumstances sometimes may be so unchangeable it can throw us off course.

As a matter of fact, it happened in Asia Minor when Nero burned Rome and blamed the Christians for it. The persecutions swept the continent of Asia Minor, so Peter sat down and wrote them a letter, as he, himself, was looking forward to being a martyr for the faith. Look at what he said in 1 Peter 4:19. He uses this word "faithful" in a context that I think should speak to every one of us. Again, the context is the worst time believers had ever gone through. He says, "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls...." Now, he's talking to people who are suffering. You see, just because God is faithful doesn't mean we won't suffer. But in the midst of our suffering God is still faithful. That's what he's saying. He goes on to say, "to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."

Now folks, I don't know what's going on in your life. Maybe everything has calmed down a little bit in your life and you can say, "Well, I can accept that." But I want to tell you. Everything could turn upside down. Everything can change but don't lose sight of that which is unchangeable. God is faithful. God is faithful. Like that old lighthouse that stood out on the point. I love that song, "If it wasn't for the lighthouse." I love that song because that lighthouse is a picture, again, of something that's steadfast, immovable, something that's always the same. It gives you direction, and you start anchoring your life to these truths. God is faithful.

I'll tell you. The faithful character of God is seen in all He has sovereignly established. The laws of nature, for instance, and the law of gravity. You know, if you throw something up in the air, it's going to come down. The laws of gravity haven't changed, folks, and God established them. Look at the seasons of the year. They come, don't they? Aren't you glad every morning the sun comes up? You can set your watch by it in certain seasons of the year. Sometimes it can change a little bit because we have daylight savings time and Pacific time and so forth. Who cares what time zone you're in? The sun still comes up and the sun goes down at night. You can rest assured that those things won't change because the God who established them is unchangeable, you see. You can look around you and see the faithfulness of God.

There's a beautiful picture of the faithfulness of God in the Psalms. Look over in Psalm 36:5. The King James translation, to me, picks it up better than the New American Standard. It says in verse 5, "Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens." And then it gives you an idea of the limitless of it. It goes on, "Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies." That's a precious thought, but the King James version doesn't say, "the skies." It uses the same Hebrew word, but it translates it "to the clouds." When I looked it up it seemed like it has more the idea of clouds, not just skies. I like that better.

Think with me for a second. "Thy faithfulness extends to the clouds." Think for a second what he's saying here. Is there anything any more uncertain than a cloud? Have you ever laid on your back on a day when a rainstorm was coming and looked at the clouds? I have and found little animals in the clouds or faces or whatever. How quickly you find it and how quickly it changes. Which direction is the cloud going? Well, you think it's going that way, but suddenly you look and it's going that way. Is there any rhyme or reason to a cloud? There's nothing structurally that you could put there. There's nothing direction-wise you could put there. That's just totally out of sorts. But God's faithfulness reaches unto the clouds. In other words, behind what you think is unstable up there in the skies is a sovereign faithful God who's in charge of it. What looks to us as uncertain, to Him is not uncertain. For He is faithfulness and His ways are steadfast.

What could the Psalmist be saying to us in our life? Look at your life right now. What's going on in your life right now? I guarantee you, somebody is about ready to check out. You've probably said, "God, if this is salvation, just take me home." Have you ever done that? I prayed one night to die. I did. I'm glad God doesn't answer all my prayers the way I ask. Life sometimes gets like those clouds. You don't know where it's headed. You don't know what's going on. You don't have any answers. And you start going to man, which is the worst thing you can do. Behind all that uncertainty, like the clouds that are in the sky, God is in control.

Do you know how I know that? Because He's faithful and that which is faithful is immovable and steadfast and never can be questioned. That's the character that you trust. That kind of God will carry us all the way through to His appearing, to the day of Christ. His sovereign power orders those things.

You know how a storm can bring terror in your life. We can talk about that literally or figuratively. I used to love storms when I was growing up. My daughter never liked storms. Whenever there was thunder I would have to go lie down with her for a while because she just couldn't stand it. But I love storms. Recently we've had a storm I'm not so sure I'd love. But I mean, a typical thunder storm.

But what is the first thing a child thinks of? It's terror. He hears the thunder, the noise and the lightning and the wind and it strikes terror in that child's heart. But if that child understands who the God of the storm really is, then that child, by trusting in the faithful character of God, which is steadfast, immovable and trustworthy, that robs that storm of its ability to put terror in his heart by trusting the One who is faithful, not in the uncertainty of the storm. We rob it, take it right away from it.

How quickly life will turn on you. How quickly that storm will move in to your life. How quickly that thunder will roar and all of a sudden you think God is as changeable as you are and you forget and you move off dead center that He is faithful and He is faithful to do that which He has said He'll do. Behind every circumstance of your life, no matter whether you planned it or didn't plan it, God's behind it. Don't turn to man. Turn to Him and remember He's the God of the storm and will confirm you blameless to the end. You're going to make it. That's what Paul's saying to them. You're going to make it. Now get in line with what God says instead of what your mind's telling you and let God be who He is and do what He wants to do through your life. He confirms us to the day of Christ. He's bringing us through. His faithfulness anchors our trust. That's what he's saying.

I don't know about you but if you live fully possessed by God, you've been bought with a price, if you live set apart for His purpose, you wake up every day and say, "Okay God, let's go. What do You want done in my life today?" You live trusting and depending on Him for everything, particularly His grace and His peace. You live as if you lack nothing in Christ. He is your total sufficiency. There's nothing you do not have in Him. You live eagerly awaiting His coming and you walk in the assurance of your salvation, you're going to be one different kind of person than the people we find at Corinth and in the letter of I Corinthians.

So my question to you is also the question right back to me. "How are we living?" How are we doing? We ought to get a T-shirt and put the word "But" on it. Isn't that a word we use a lot in our vocabulary? I can hear people saying it to me all the time. "But, Wayne." Or my kids used to say, "But, Dad." Hey, folks, get off that kick. If God said it, live under it and watch how your life will be different. You watch. He anchors us. He's faithful.

You say, "Well, I don't see how you can say all this stuff." I can say it because I've studied the Word of God and that's what I believe it says. You check it out and see if I'm right. If I'm wrong, I'm wrong. I'm not the authority but I rest in what I know the Word of God has to say. He tells me that He's going to confirm me all the way to the end, failure or no failure. Now, it's up to me to understand the goodness of God and what brings a man to repentance.

1 Corinthians 1:9 What is the Church of God - Part 8

The final characteristic we will see in this passage is that the church of God is made up of those who have fellowship with Christ: "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Years ago I was in military school. They told us what we were going to wear. They told us how we were going to act, how we were supposed to talk. I had to be reminded of who I was, whose I was and the responsibility that went along with that.

They gave work details called work gigs for misbehavior. Usually for the first offense they gave forty minutes of work during your free time, cleaning floors, washing windows, something like that. I had fifty offenses the first time they ever gave them out. So that whole semester of school I spent my free time washing floors and so on. When you misbehaved in rank they would make you put your rifle up over your head and run about one and one-half miles around this big circle. Everyone else would march around; you had to run around.

One day I was coming from the post office and had a big package from my mother. I had it up under my right arm. An office passed me in the car and I snapped to and saluted with my left hand. Man, he screeched to a halt and spent the next thirty minutes helping me to understand who I am now and whose I am and how I'm supposed to behave.

I believe that's what the apostle Paul was doing in 1 Corinthians. He's trying to bring these Corinthians back to who they are and whose they are and the responsibility they have to live like it. Now if you're not living like it, you're upside down. The apostle Paul, in the first nine verses of 1 Corinthians 1, puts them right side up. Then he's going to begin to address how they have obviously walked away from that kind of lifestyle. If you call yourself a Christian and you're a member of the church of God and these things are not in your life, obviously you've departed somewhere. This could help you understand and pinpoint the reason for the problems that you're dealing with even right now.

The Church of God Has Fellowship with Christ

Well, we come to the ninth and final characteristic of the church of God. What is the final characteristic of the church of God? What are we supposed to be? Who are we? If the Holy Spirit of God stops us in our tracks and says, "Okay, soldier; let Me tell you who you are. Let Me tell you whose you are, and let Me tell you how you're supposed to live." That's what He's doing. What's the final

thing he would say here? The final thing would be that the church of God is made up of those who have fellowship with Christ. Now this is a powerful verse. I want you to look at 1Cor 1:9. It says, "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

We don't just walk into the presence of a dignitary. Have you ever noticed that? You don't walk into the President's office: "How are you doing there, Pres? My name's Wayne from down in Tennessee. I thought I'd drop in and say hello to you." You have to be invited into his presence. God has invited you and me into fellowship with His Son. You don't walk in. You don't just decide one day, "I'm going to have fellowship with Him." No, it comes as a result of a calling, an invitation, that our God has given unto us.

He says in 1Cor 1:9, "God is faithful, through whom you were called." Now that word "called" is the same word we saw back in 1Cor 1:1 when it said, "Paul, called as an apostle." So if you take just the word "called," it was saying that Paul was a believer, obviously, before he was ever an apostle. That was the first step. He was called as a believer.

If you know anything about the testimony of the apostle Paul, you know that has to be right. He was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians, and the Lord Jesus stopped him in his tracks. He wasn't seeking Jesus. Jesus was seeking him. That's amazing to me. He came after us. People take their Christianity so for granted and live as if it doesn't mean anything. God called us. He invited us.

In 1Cor 1:2 we have the word for church, ekklesia. Ek means out of, and klesia refers to the called ones: the called out ones. You can't be a member of the church and not understand the fact that God called you.

Paul gets in some words in Romans 8:30 that are exciting, real exciting. As a matter of fact, in Romans they don't even appear until the eighth chapter because they're secrets of the family. If the family knows it, it will motivate them every day. God knew everything about me and still accepted me in the beloved, in the Lord Jesus Christ. It says in Romans 8:30, "and whom He predestined, these He also called (by the way, this is before the foundation of the world); and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Do you realize what that's saying? That's saying that He already sees it done. People think you can lose your salvation. Friend, before the foundation of the world, He knew you and predestined you. He called you. He justified you, and He glorified you. You're not even there yet. He sees it as done.

Think about this for a while, and it might rattle your cage. All of a sudden it begins to make salvation a little bit more than being a member of a church on a corner somewhere. You're in an eternal relationship with God, and He gave the invitation to you. He called you. That's the whole key here. We must never forget this.

As a matter of fact, if you'll look at 1Cor 1:9 real closely, it shows you the agent of the calling was God Himself. 1Cor 1:9 reads, "God is faithful, through whom [God is the subject] you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." The word "through" is the word dia. It's the word that is used to indicate the agent of calling. Then to make it even more emphatic, the word "call" is in the passive voice, indicating that God did the calling. So it's God who has called us into fellowship with His Son. I just think that's important to start off with, to realize that all we have in Christ initiated with God. It did not initiate with you and me.

Well, He has called us into fellowship. This is an important little "into." There are three prepositions you've got to know. Ek is motion out of. If I have a pen inside of my pocket, the motion coming out of my pocket, that's ek. En is a little preposition that means that which remains in something being affected by that which is remaining in; in other words, all the properties of that which it is. Then the word eis is motion from something and into something with a result in mind. That's very, very important.

He called us into fellowship with His Son. But now if He called us into something, then He's calling us away from something. Are you with me on this? I want you to think about this for a second. It's God who's doing this. Remember grace is, first of all, the beautiful loving disposition of the Father who does this. You've got to see this. It's out of His love that this whole thing has been planned. We're products of His love. That's what salvation is all about. Now, this is important. We were not even longing for this fellowship when we were in Adam. Do you realize you're either in Adam or you're in Christ? No religion will get you out of Adam. Only Christ can get you out of Adam. The way He gets you out is that He came as a man to do what men could not do. He came as our representative, as the God-man. The law required certain things man could not live up because of the virus of sin. Therefore, He came as a man, did not destroy the law but fulfilled the law, went to the cross and took my sin upon Himself. I put my faith into Him, then what He did is written to my account and I'm no longer guilty as I was before. He takes me out of Adam, puts me into Himself and calls me into fellowship with His dear Son. That's what salvation's all about. I had been invited into fellowship with His dear Son.

You see, before I got saved, I thought I had it all together. As a matter of fact, witness to somebody who doesn't know Christ. You say, "Brother, have you been saved?" Have you ever asked somebody that? They look at you and say, "From what? I didn't know I was lost. I've got a great job, got money in the bank, my kids are healthy. Saved from what?" You see, until they understand what they're missing, they just don't look for something they don't even know they need. That's what lost people are like. That's what we were like. I think sometimes we have forgotten what it was like to be lost and that's why we've lost the wonder of our salvation.

Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." The act of conception wasn't sin. What he's saying is the virus began with Adam, the sin virus, and it was to spread to all men. It's in the blood of mankind. And a person is born into sin.

Psalm 58:3 reads, "The wicked are estranged from the womb. These who speak lies go astray from birth." Every child born on this earth is born into sin. That's what he's saying. He's born not understanding that he has a need that's actually crippling his life. He does not know that. Thank God He does and knew it all along.

Romans 3:10 says, "There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, there is not even one." You see, the saddest thing about being lost is that we didn't know what we were missing. We didn't know what we were lacking. We live life thinking there was something somewhere, but we never could find it.

The key word to understand here, I think, that's really going to light your fire is "fellowship." It is the word *koinonia*. You've heard the word used before in different places. The word needs to be understood. It's an abstract noun that comes from the adjective *koinos*, which means common. The word "society" actually has its roots in this word. It's a group of people who have the same things in common. You see, there's a society here.

There are several things that I want you to see. First of all, the moment you receive Christ in your life now you have the opportunity of being in a new society. We're in the world but not of this world. There's another world in the world. We're part of a brand new family. We sing that song, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God." I wonder if we understand what we're talking about. Jesus is the common denominator that draws us all together. How much rejection have you had in your past in the dysfunctional family of Adam? That's one thing. But how much acceptance do you have in the functional family of God, you see? You're in a brand new family. Jesus is what binds us together. He is our common denominator. You've got brothers and sisters all over this world. That's the key. You've become a member of a big family. It doesn't matter where you are.

When we're in our conferences in Romania, they'll start talking in Romanian, and I don't know what they're saying. But somehow the Holy Spirit of God is binding our hearts together, and they'll start laughing and I'll start laughing and people around me will say, "Did you understand what they said?" I say, "No, but yeah."

I don't know. It's just fun. You're in a family now and you don't have to speak each other's language. You don't have to be in each other's houses. Christ is the One who draws you together. This is why, I think, the author of Hebrews say, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." Why would you want to go anywhere else? Man, you've got a family and you come together to enjoy that family. That's part of being in fellowship with His Son. That's what it's all about.

We're a family now. You can go all over the world. It doesn't matter where you go. So many people live as if they're alone. No, you're not alone. You're in the biggest family you ever thought about in your life. That's part of having fellowship with His Son.

It says in 1 John 1:7, "but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship [*koinonia*] with one another." If you live out of 1Cor 1: 1-9, you will enjoy fellowship with one another. When you get any of them turned upside down you're going to see the problems that Corinth was having.

Well, we have a brand new family. But we also have a brand new well to drink from, a brand new resource in our life to draw off. We've never had this before. The word *koinonia* also means to be a partaker of something, to share in something. Look over in 2 Peter 1:3. You need to see this. Second Peter 1:3 says, "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness [This is all another resource that we have] through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers [that's the word *koinonia*] of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." That word means to partake in. We can partake of Him and His character. His Spirit even produces His character in us. We experience Him in that light. We have a new well to drink from.

I was in a conference one time and I preached on the fact that Jesus was the only well that you would ever need to drink from and that's part of having fellowship in His Son is to be able to drink from that well, to draw from me. A man came up with me after the service and said, "You've offended me and you've offended the third person of the trinity." I said, "Oh my goodness. I'm not worried about you, but I am worried about the third person of the trinity. What did I do?" He said, "You've offended the Holy Spirit of God." I said, "Excuse me. How did I do that? Jesus is the only well you ever need to drink from." He said, "You did not mention the Holy Spirit." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I have a conference every year, a Holy Spirit conference, down in this particular state and you just absolutely walked right over Him and said that Jesus is the only well you ever need to drink from." I said, "I beg your pardon, sir. I love you in the Lord but you hear me straight. Jesus said, 'When He comes will never speak of Himself, He will only speak of me.'" And I said, "I did not contradict anything. I complimented what the very Word of God has to say."

If you're going outside of Jesus for anything, you have missed it, folks. It's all in Him and the Spirit is His Spirit. There's only one God in three persons. There are not three Gods. It's amazing what's going on in Christianity today. We don't seem to understand that it's all in Christ, appropriated to us by the means of His Spirit. His Spirit lives with us.

First Corinthians 10:16 talks about that word in the area of sharing in. Some people take this literal and think that the bread that you have at the Lord's Supper is actually His body and the blood actually becomes His blood. But no, it does not. It's symbolic of that. First Corinthians 10:16 tells us, "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?" What he's talking about is it helps us to remember that which we now have become partakers in. In other words, He is the well we drink from. We fellowship with His Son. We partake of Him. We experience even the divine nature of God Himself.

I was in another state speaking at a conference center. They asked me to go and speak to a particular church. It was the hardest group I've ever spoken to in my life. You talk about dead. When I told them to open the Word, everybody just stared at me. After I finished, I tried some humor to try to get them laugh a little bit and to show life, that their hearts were still beating.

I preached about a forty minute message and of course that's twenty minutes too long in their terminology. One man had a burr haircut. He was a mean looking dude. Have you ever noticed people like that? They just love Jesus. Stomp all over you, that's what they say. He walked up to me and said, "Preacher!" I said, "Sir?" He said, "I was in mission work all my life. I've been preaching in rescue missions all my life." I said, "That's great." He said, "If you can't say it in twenty minutes, then don't even try it. By the way, I didn't come to church to be entertained either."

Before I could say a word he had wheeled around to leave, so I grabbed him. And when I grabbed him, I had a choice to make. My choice was, "Are you going to become a partaker of Christ or are you going to partake of the six months penalty for assault and battery? I mean what are you going to do right here?" I wanted to jerk him up and say, "Hey, listen God, this man says he loves you. I'm sending him home." And bam, just put him out! That's what I wanted to do but inside of me the Holy Spirit was saying, "Easy, easy, easy. Partake of me. Partake of me." Some people talk about this stuff as if it's so easy. Not for me. I go kicking and screaming. I grabbed him, turned him around and said, "Would you pray for me?" And he said, "What?" I said, "You just need to be patient with me. God is not finished with me yet. If I've offended you in any way, I didn't come here to do that." I thought later on, "Boy, that's a switch from back before I knew Christ."

Isn't it good to have another well to drink from, a resource to grab hold of and experience the divine nature of God Himself and know that it's not you, to know that you have fellowship with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Folks, I wonder if we understand any of that. Everybody's got their own problems and they bring Jesus in at the last minute, when you could be sharing in Him right now. I guarantee you that His way is not your way. You go back to 1Cor 1:1-9 and this is when it becomes important to you now, living as His people.

Once you start partaking of His divine nature and fellowshiping with Him, with that comes the wrong side of that, the bad side of that. That means you're going to start partaking of His sufferings. This is the part nobody wants to hear because when you start walking in light and He's in the light and you start partaking of His character and His divine nature, then it's going to begin to offend the darkness that's around you. We have to be willing to understand that part of it, and until Jesus comes that's going to be part of it. That's the key. We're going to have to live with that.

That's not a common message. That's not what people want to hear but that's part of it. Let me show you what Peter says about this in 1 Peter 4:13: "but to the degree that you share [koinonia] the sufferings of Christ [you see, you're only going to share the sufferings of Christ to the degree you're surrendered to Him to start with], keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation." He's encouraging us to keep on rejoicing, because this is just temporary. It's like Paul said in Romans, don't even speak of the sufferings for the eternal weight and glory that they're bringing to us, they're something we're headed towards. So the sufferings are worth it. Don't bail out. Keep a balance in your life. If you're going to experience His nature, you're going to also equally experience His sufferings. You're going to have to experience that.

I heard a guy give an illustration at a conference that just struck me right where I needed to be struck. He was talking about mowing his yard. That got my attention because you know how I love to mow my yard. He was mowing the grass and said, "Do you know how your mower shakes and vibrates. Mine was vibrating and it was fine because it's always that way, then all of a sudden it began to shake. All of a sudden it broke loose from the housing and kept running. It fell completely out of the mower. He had to figure out how to cut it off. The whole thing had just dropped out of the housing, just shook itself loose." He finally got it turned off. He was halfway through in his yard. He went around the neighborhood and finally found somebody who would loan him his lawnmower.

The two of them walked over with the lawnmower to his yard and he said, "Listen now, I'm going to take care of your lawnmower. I'll make sure it's gassed up." He gassed it up and he checked the oil to make sure the oil was there. He said, "Now, the next thing I'll do before I cut is sharpen the blade." So he started sharpening the blade and he said, "Now, it's ready to go." The guy said, "Wait a

minute. You've got one more step." He said, "What step? I've never done anything else." He said, "You never have balanced the blade on your mower?" He said, "No." He said, "Well, if you don't balance the blade, it starts shaking. And if it shakes really bad, it will break loose from the housing." Then he realized what had happened to his mower. He said, "Isn't that interesting? I was more interested in sharpness than I was balance."

You think that's not where we are today, folks? Some folks can tell you straight but they're not balanced in what they say. They're not telling the whole message. Yes, you can participate in Him, but that also includes participating in His suffering. Get ready for it. It's there. "Those who desire to live a godly life", he says in 2 Timothy, "shall undergo persecution." It's not a question of if, it's a question of when. It's not directed at you. It's directed at the One who's in you because He said, "If they hated me, they're going to hate you." That's what He told us. We should not be surprised. But He said, "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

Well, we're running right down to the last phrase. Let's look at the comprehensive title he gives to the Lord Jesus. This is the most comprehensive name you can find. "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Jesus," what is that? That's His earth name. You have to come to grips with the fact that Jesus was a man. He was the God-man, came in the flesh, born of a virgin. The Gnostics couldn't grab that, so they couldn't be saved in the sense of the word. They had to understand that He was virgin born but the God-man. Remember, the angel said to Mary, "And you shall call His name Jesus." That's His earthly name.

But it was Jesus what? Christ. Do you know what the word "Christ" is? It's the word for Messiah, the Anointed One spoken of in the Old Testament. So you've got to also understand He's Christ and any time you see Christ Jesus, the emphasis is on the resurrected Lord Jesus. When it's reversed many times, it's referring more to Jesus Christ and what He did on earth, etc. But when you see the Christ Jesus many times it's very significant in the New Testament. This is the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. If you only had Jesus here in His earthly part of His ministry, you'd have a good man but you wouldn't have salvation. You have to add "Christ" to it, the Messiah, the One promised in the Old Testament who is Jesus. He's Jesus Christ and you've got the resurrected Lord Jesus, the One who ascended glorified and the One who's the door of our salvation.

But look what he goes on to say. He says, "our Lord." "Oh but Brother Wayne, you don't have to do that. All you have to do is accept the other stuff and you can make Him Lord down the road." Where did you get that? Because until you come to grips that He's God in the flesh and yet at the same time God manifested through His resurrection and ascension and glorification, being vindicated by what He had done, will you ever bow down before Him as your Lord and that's when salvation takes place in your life? Drop the sword. Peace and Lordship start at the very moment. You may not understand this much of it, but it's settled right there. You don't work toward Lordship. You come up from it.

Many of us think, "One of these days I'm going to give everything to Jesus." Friend, you already gave it to Him but you just don't realize it yet. You gave it to Him when you got saved. He owns every bit of it. That's the struggle many people have. "Well, I'm working on it." You've already worked on it, friend. You just need to get lined up with where He says we ought to be.

1 Corinthians 1:10 Division Among God's People - Part 1

Paul is talking to a body of believers he loves, a body of believers that he, through the Holy Spirit's power in his life, started and initiated there at Corinth. When he tells them, "be made complete" it has the idea of repairing something, mending something. It also has the idea here of fitting something together so that it comes back into unity and oneness.

Division among God's people is the problem Paul is dealing with in the first six chapters of 1 Corinthians. The whole book of 1 Corinthians has to be looked at through this grid of the first nine verses. Let's make sure we have down what it means to be a member of the church of God. If you tell somebody you're a believer, this ought to be in your life. If it's not in your life, something's upside down. Go back to where you departed, get it right, and go on. Things will shape up like they ought to be. But there are certain things that have to be there if you're a member of the church of God. So, what are they?

First of all, we found that the church of God is God's possession. That's the easiest one of all of them. Secondly, we learn from 1Cor 1:2 also that the church of God has but one purpose, to be set apart unto His purpose. Then, we've seen that thirdly, the church of God has a predictable behavior. The fourth characteristic of the church of God is totally proficient in Christ. There's nothing we lack in Him. Fifthly, from 1Cor 1:7 we learn that the church of God has a promise for the future. Then the sixth thing that we looked at is that the church of God has the privilege to partake of Christ.

That's what the church of God is. That should be the predictable behavior of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you get

this out of kilter, that's when everything gets confusing and chaotic in your life. That's when division comes. That's when everything turns upside down. The church of Corinth was upside down. This is right side up. That's what he's trying to say to them.

Let me just put it another way. I know many people who do not live under the authority of the Word of God and are not accountable to anybody but themselves. They live as if they can call their own shots. If you're not living about His purposes and you're living about your own, you've chosen your purposes above His and somehow you're rearranged the priority here. If you're living with confidence in your own creative flesh ability instead of being predictable to depend upon God in everything, if you're living as if you're lacking instead of living in the sufficiency of Christ, if you're living in your own temporary goals in life rather than in the coming promise of the Lord Jesus, you see you're living temporarily with temporary goals rather than the eternal goal of His coming for you and one day what that will be. If you're living instead of partaking Him, you're finding fellowship outside of Him and His people, then look out. You're upside down. If you'll come back to that grid, it will get you right side up. That's what Paul says to begin the letter to make sure the church of Corinth knows how they're supposed to be living.

Now he's about to address the way they are living. One is going to be such a contrast to the other. I was at a conference and a lady came to me and said, "You know, the longer I'm in the Word of God, God just gets bigger and bigger, but His Word, even though it's richer and richer gets smaller and smaller." I said, "What do you mean by that?" She said, "The more I study, the more I see that God says the same thing over and over and over and over again." Whether it be in the Old Testament, whether it be in the Gospels, whether it be in the Epistles, it's always the same thing. He wants us to lovingly surrender to Him, to be about His purposes, to live in His sufficiency and not our own, to look forward to His coming." You see, that's just the bottom line. It's what almost everything in Scripture points to. It's Christ. It's not us. I have to believe that. It's like a well that has no bottom. That truth is still there. No matter how you come at it, it's there. It's not like it says seven different things in the Word. It says the same thing seven different ways. You just keep seeing it and seeing it and seeing it.

A Plea for Unity

Well, division among the people of God, division in the church, this is what we're dealing with. This is where Corinth was when the apostle Paul wrote this letter. First of all I want you to see a plea for unity in the church of Corinth. 1Cor 1:10 says, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Now that word "exhort" is a very important word. It's the word *parakaleo*. It has the idea of coming alongside someone, to comfort them. He's going to rebuke them from 1Cor 1:10 on. Well, he does but he does it in a very loving way. He's not doing it to repel them. He's doing it to attract them back to where they ought to be. He's not trying to overlord them in any way. Remember Paul started that church. He's coming alongside them and saying, "Guys, I've got something to tell you and I want you to sense the warmth from me. I want you to understand that I really do love you. But I want to come alongside you now to help you understand some things."

That word "comforter" is also the word used for the Holy Spirit of God. It's a tender but a firm word. In other words, if the rod of correction has to be in my life, I'm thankful it's in the hand of One who loves me and gave Himself for me. If He's going to come alongside you through the people and the Word He uses, thank God that it's with love that He does that. He beckons us back to where we ought to be. He wants to turn the church back right side up.

He said, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,..." Now, again, that's that comprehensive name of Jesus. We've seen it earlier. It's the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by which and through which the apostle Paul gets his authority. In other words, he's saying, "I couldn't tell you how to live. I'm not coming into your life to play God. But in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I come alongside you." It's His name that gives him the authority. It's His name that can get it done. As a matter of fact, it's His name that makes them automatically have a responsibility to listen to what the apostle Paul is trying to say. "I come to you in the character of Christ. I come to you representing the name of Christ. I come to you as an apostle of Christ."

You see the idea here. It's just like a loving parent coming to a child who's been rebellious. He's coming alongside them but he's got some tough things that he has to say. "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree,..." Now the King James translates that "speak the same thing." That doesn't really give you the idea here. It's taken out of the Greek political life and it means that you be at peace with one another. That's what he's saying. "Hey, come on, folks, be at peace with one another."

Don't you want to do that sometimes? Just stand up and shout when people are arguing and fussing and quarreling and conflicting and all this kind of thing and say, "Time out! Be at peace with one another." That's what he's saying to them. Be at peace with one another. Make up your differences. By the way, that would be a good word for us. Wouldn't it? If there's conflict in your life, make up your differences. Be at peace with one another.

He's not saying to say the same thing. The churches would say, "Uh-huh, see there. Everybody comes together. We all say the

same thing.” That’s what they’d take it to mean. That’s not at all what he’s saying. He’s saying, “Come on, guys. Make up your differences. Be at peace with one another.” This is seen in the following phrase. He just continues to explain himself. “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you.” You see, you can’t be at peace if there are divisions among you. He knew that there were divisions at Corinth so he’s easing into it. He’s making a plea for unity before he starts addressing the disunity.

The word “divisions” is the word schizo. It’s the word that means to rend or to tear something in half, to rip something in half, to divide something. As a matter of fact, let me just give you a few verses here where it’s used and you might get a visible picture of what the word has to be. Matthew 27:51 says, “And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split.” Torn in two, that’s the word. In Luke 5:36 says, “And He was also telling them a parable: ‘No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.’” That word “tear” means to rip. It’s an aggressive, abusive type of thing. In John 21:11 we read, “Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three, and although there were so many, the net was not torn.” That’s the same word.

So you get the idea of something that’s ripped, something’s that’s just grabbed and rent asunder. In Acts 14:4 you see the word “divided.” It says, “But the multitude of the city was divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.” So you see a ripping apart of a fellowship of people there: some siding this way, some siding that way. Acts 23:7 says, “And as he said this, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.”

So when you get the word “division” it’s not just something that suddenly happens. It’s something that’s ripped, something that’s torn apart and it’s something that’s damaged as a result of that. He says, “I don’t want you to have any divisions among you. I want you to make up your differences. I want you to have peace with one another.”

Then he adds this phrase in 1Cor 1:10. He says, “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Now this is when he begins to show what his intention is. He’s given the grid in 1Cor 1:1-9. Now he’s saying, “I want you to be made complete.” He’s talking to a body of believers he loves, a body of believers that he, through the Holy Spirit’s power in his life, started and initiated there at Corinth. “Be made complete” is the word katartizo. It’s the word that has the idea of repairing something, mending something. It also has the idea here of fitting something together so that it comes back into unity and oneness.

Have you ever worked on a jigsaw puzzle? I’m talking about the ones with thousands of pieces in it. One of the things you do is put all the ones of darker color over here, and the ones of lighter color over here, and the ones with blue and the ones with yellow. You try to separate the pieces before you start the puzzle. You put them in these different little piles and even though they look divided what you’re going to do is you’re going to start pulling from each one of these piles. Even though it is all divided before you start it ends up being united when you finish. Each one of those pieces, though different, can be fitted together.

The apostle Paul is saying to the church of Corinth, “I’m not asking you to be clones of each other. I know that you’re different.” He addresses the different gifts of the body in chapter 12: “I know that you’re different but come on, man, make peace with one another. Come out of your little groups over here. Come back together and fit the way God wants you to fit. Be made complete. Be mended. Be healed.” That’s what he’s saying to them. The same thing anybody would say to a group of people he loves, that he knows have been ripped apart and torn apart because people won’t live 1Cor 1:1-9. They won’t live under the lordship of Jesus Christ. They become a cancer in the body and would rather divide than unite, you see. So he pleads for them to do that.

This is the same word that’s used in Hebrews 11:3. This is a key verse to understanding this word katartizo. What does it mean? It says in Hebrews 11:3, “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God.” That word “prepared” in the New American Standard is this word. And the word for “worlds” is ages, the ages of time. What he’s saying is that the ages of time have been fitted together by the very word of God. What is it that fits man together? It’s that very same word, folks, that fits us together. When we get up under the word and the will of God, it fits us back together like we ought to be and all of a sudden the division stops and they’re healed. All of a sudden people come back to unity. That’s what he’s praying for. And the Word is what draws them back. You come back up under the authority of the lordship of Christ, under the authority of His Word, and God fits us into His Word. That’s what he’s saying here. Be fitted back together. You’re divided. You’re broken up. You’re ripped asunder.

Now the next two phrases in 1Cor 1:10 continue to add to the thought. He says, “in the same mind and in the same judgment.” “In the same mind” means with the same understanding. “The same judgment” means to have the same discernment that affects the same character. Now, again, what is it that fits us? Look over in 1 Corinthians 2:16. We have something that if we submit to, will immediately produce the unity that’s already there. It brings it back. It’s something that when you get up under it, it gets in you and you’re fitted into the Word. That’s what happens. He says, “For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.” We have the Word of God ourselves. We have the Holy Spirit of God who gives us the wisdom from the Word. And so, when you’re fitted back together, it takes the Word to do that, just like the Word fitted the ages together. The

Word fits us back together.

Drop down to 1Cor 1:11-12. "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." Now look at this. "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.'" Now think with me for a second. What is Paul saying here? "Guys, be fitted back together. Don't be fitted into my mind, be fitted into Christ's mind. Be fitted back up under the authority of His Word, fitted into that which God has taught you. No difference. Don't be fitted into Paul's mind. Don't be fitted into Apollos' mind. Don't be fitted into Cephas' or Peter's mind. But be fitted back where you need to be, in the mind of Christ." Get men out of your focus and get Christ into your focus. That's what Paul is saying.

See, what's happened is they have gone after these people who mean much to them, with good intentions, and as a result of that have excluded one another because, "You're of him, but I'm of him." It's brought a division right down the middle of the body of Christ.

Paul is not saying, "Say the same thing. Wear the same clothes." Thank God, he's not saying that. He's not saying that at all. He's saying to be controlled by the same hand. Suppose I played a middle C on the piano. Some people think that's what Paul is saying. Everybody be the same. Everybody be the same. Would that ever get monotonous after a while? So I add another note. Then I add another. Oh, that's better. Oh, that's better. I wouldn't be playing the same note because every note was different, but every note was be played by the same hand.

That's what Paul's saying. Come back to the place where you're played by the same hand. In other words, you're controlled by the same Master. You're fitted in to the mind of Christ, not the mind of man. You're fitted back where you ought to be. Let the Word of God put you back together because you're a disjointed group. Make peace. Settle your differences, come back together and let God play your life. Let Him rule your life. Come back to the lordship of 1Cor 1:2. Understand who it is that owns you, purchased you, and bought you. Start living that way. Then immediately you'll discover the unity that's already been there. You see, it's not at all that we have to be the same. It doesn't even mean that we have to agree on everything the same in the sense that we're all studying and growing, etc. But we do agree that this is God's Word and there are certain things that hold us together. That's what Paul's recalling them to so that they can have the oneness in the body.

In Ephesians 4:3 the apostle Paul says something. He says, "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Paul does not say, "Produce it," Paul says, "Preserve it." We can't produce it. We've tried it and it never works. I don't have to be in your house or even know your name to be in oneness with you. If I'm walking right with God (1 Cor. 1:1-9) and you're walking that way with God, you and I are already one because the unity's there. We don't work toward it. We come from it, you see. He's saying, "Folks, come on back to that which draws you together. Fit yourself into the mind of Christ. Let Christ fit you back together. Let Him make the puzzle make sense instead of being provided with schisms there amongst you."

Well, what a beautiful picture of how God can always bring that unity back into His people. It's there. He can just manifest it if we'll come to Him.

I was in a meeting in another state and they had been having quite a bit of trouble. Two members of the staff had resigned. I knew there were problems when I got there, because neither one of the two came to the meeting although both were friends of mine. What does that tell you? That tells you there are hard feelings. That tells you they're not going to come because there are some really bad things that have happened. I want you to know that while I preached the Word that week, we didn't address the problem. We just addressed the Word, and the Word addressed the problem. As we were going through it that week God put on my heart, "Don't you go in and address anything because you don't know. Just go in and teach." So I decided to teach Judges. That's what I did, and one guy told me at the end of the week, he said, "You must have talked to somebody." I said, "I didn't talk to anybody. Why?" He said, "You just about addressed every single thing we have been through for the last six months but you did it through the book of Judges." I said, "Now, I didn't do that. God's Word did that." But under the teaching of the Word that week we saw people break and come back together. It's amazing.

That's exactly what Paul's saying. You come back into unity. You be fitted back together. Let there be no divisions among you. This is not what I'm looking for in you. I want to see that oneness. It's a plea for oneness in the church of Corinth.

The Problem of Disunity in Corinth

The second thing I want you see is the problem of disunity in Corinth. You see, even though he pleads for it, he knows it's not there. Now we're going to address a little bit more fully what we read a moment ago. This is the problem they're having. He addresses it just about all the way through chapter 6. In 1Cor 1:11 he says, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." Imagine this. This is the church of God at Corinth feuding with one another. How does it hit you when you hear about some church that's split again? They've had another fight in the business meeting, and they're feuding

with one another. Well, that's exactly what's going on here. I want to tell you. Flesh is flesh. It doesn't matter if it's in their day or in our day. It's the same thing and when a person gets his life out of synch and stops living surrendered unto Christ, automatically he becomes the instrument of division in the body, you see. Flesh is just flat out flesh.

Here's the church of God at Corinth fighting with one another. Peter had to address the same thing in 1 Peter when he says, "Hey, I want to remind you of something." Peter had to remind the most persecuted believers in all of Asia Minor. You can find that in the whole New Testament. He had to remind them. "Get your eyes back on the Lord because, evidently, something's going on in your relationship." He had to remind them of that. They couldn't grow until they made their relationships right with God and with one another.

1Cor 1:11 says again, "For I have been informed concerning you." Now that means it's not heresy. It means it's not secondhand. He knows for a fact this is going on. This is not some rumor that Paul picked up on and then lambastes the church for. He knows firsthand from a person by the name of Chloe. We don't know exactly who that was but it had to have been a prominent member of that church who either wrote him or came and told him of what was going on there. She tells of the quarrels that are among the people. Later on he talks about others who have informed him so it's not just this person. Others have brought the news to him. But he knows. He says, "This is what has been going on. I know this for a fact. There are quarrels among you."

The word "quarrels" is a stronger than the word for "division." It is *eris*, and it's found in some strange company. You don't want to ever have this. It's something that's inside first but it's being manifested on the outside. When people are conflicting kind of folks and contentious kind of people, quarreling kind of people, what they're doing on the outside is symptomatic of what's going on on the inside, you see. That's what the word has to do with.

Let me show you some of the company it keeps. It's not real good. In Romans 1:29 we read, "being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips." That's a great family of words to be involved in. Galatians 5:20 says, "idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions." Look at the company it keeps. It's a flesh word. So whenever we become contentious with one another, it's very obvious that one or both of us have stepped outside the grid of 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. Somehow we're not living up under the lordship of Christ and somehow we have allowed the flesh to dominate. And when the flesh dominates this is what's produced. It won't be just quarreling. It will be other things that will go along with it as a result of not living what Paul has already said the Christian life was all about.

We know the strife was that they were lining up behind individual leaders in the church. 1Cor 1:12 again, says, "Now, I mean this." In other words, this is what I'm saying. It's a fact that each one of you say that "I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, and I of Christ. Now, some people would say that this is the cause of the problem. They chased after men. That's their whole problem. No, I don't agree with that. I think it's a symptom of the problem. I think their whole problem is they've stepped out of line with that grid we've already formed in the first few verses and as a result of that they start chasing after men instead of after God.

He says, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying,..." Now it's natural to be close to somebody who has ministered to you. Some people, though, take it to an extreme. The apostle Paul started the church, so naturally they would be close to him. Isn't that right? But the apostle Paul reprimands them for putting him above Apollos who was the second pastor. He says, "Don't do this. This is not what you're supposed to be doing. You're supposed to be following after Christ to let His mind fit you back together. Don't put me on a pedestal. Don't do that with men."

When I was in another church that I pastored, I was told how much the former pastor had visited. Most of the time people compare pastors with a pastor they had before or with the pastor in their life who has ministered so much to them. They keep waiting for somebody to come in and clone him and be that way to them again. They don't realize that every pastor is gifted differently, called differently. Everything's different in the body of Christ. Well, when I got there they told me that he visited the shut-ins every single day. But then there was one statement that was made to me. "His sermons weren't much. He didn't teach us much but, boy, he sure did love us and he sure did visit us. He sure did come by when we were ill," or whatever.

Well I'm a little bit different cut. "I came in a little bit different way. I felt like I loved the people by spending my time in the Word. When I got in the Word, then when I stood up before them, I had something to say. I loved them through the gift that God had given me to love them and I would teach them. That's the way I've always looked at it. But they couldn't stand that. And as a result of this first pastor, there was a division that began to grow in our church. Some were of him, but some of the newer ones were of me. Automatically there was a division in our fellowship every time we would come together.

That's exactly what Paul's talking about. Now, folks, I want to tell you something. If you've got somebody on a pedestal who's ministered to you in the past, get them off that pedestal and put Jesus up there where He belongs, because it can divide and conquer a church if you're trying to measure everybody the same way. You see, that's the whole problem he's dealing with here. Some are of Paul, some are of Apollos, the next pastor who came along. I wonder what Apollos did that Paul didn't do that made these be after Apollos instead of after Paul, the greatest missionary in the New Testament. I felt better, by the way, when I read that.

Even he had that problem.

But then he mentions another group here that I think to me is the problem and that is, "and I of Christ." Now, how do you handle that phrase? Is he saying, "Some of you really are of Christ and these are the ones. You ought to be following after Christ instead of following after mere men"? That's an idea, but I don't think that's what the text is saying. He mentions the "I of Christ" in the same censure that he mentions the other three. So it seems to me like what he's saying is that you're the toughest ones to reach. Some of you are saying, "Yeah, they're after these mere men; we're after Christ and if you're not like us. We're excluding all the rest of you."

By the way, do you know anybody that way, who says, "I am of Christ."? Do you know anybody like that? I have a relative that way. As a matter of fact, he told me one day that since we didn't do it the way he did it that I'm going to Hell. That's what he said. Well, bless his heart. When we get to Heaven one day there's going to be a fence built around these folks and Saint Peter's going to say, "Shhhh, don't speak loudly because they think they're the only ones up here. Shhh." And we're all going to walk by, you know, and enjoy Heaven for a million years while they're over here with a fence around them thinking they're the only ones up there. I am of Christ, real exclusive. You say, "Wayne, how can you draw that conclusion?" Well, there may be a reason. Look over in 2 Corinthians 10:7. There's a group of preachers who come along and they're trying to exclude Paul as even being worthy or of any value whatsoever. I want you to see this and how Paul deals with them.

In 2 Corinthians 10:7 he's dealing with a group of preachers who is just trying to exclude him altogether. They're very exclusive people. People of the flesh are always that way. They're divisive, contentious and exclusive. He says, "You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we."

Paul is beautiful the way he handled it. He didn't handle it on the same level they were handling him. He just sort of very kindly said, "Now, go back and rethink this thing now because just as you're in Christ, so also we are in Christ. Quit excluding us because we're not doing it the same way you're doing it." Who were these people? Well, we don't really know but they could have been some of the legalists in that day. Paul understands this and simply says, "Hey, guys, I just want to tell you. You go back and rethink this thing because just as you're in Christ, so we also are in Christ." He's not mean at all. He's very kind but just drives a nail right there where it ought to be, you see.

Go back to Acts 21:20-21. We find a situation where there were new believers who were Jewish but they stuck with the Law. They could be these people he's talking about. I don't know. It says, "And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, 'You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law.'" Wait a minute, now. Whoa. They have believed and they're all zealous for the Law. They have been told about you, Paul, that you're teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and you're telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk according to the customs. In other words, they're still hung up under Law. They haven't moved up under grace yet. The apostle Paul constantly had to deal with people like this. But they always wanted to exclude Paul because when you're that immature, you'll try to exclude everybody else. Perhaps that was what was going on in Corinth, that kind of division, that kind of thing. "I'm of him. I'm of this other. I like what he says. I've got all of his tapes. I bought all of his books." Tape-ites and book-ites, you know, instead of "I am of Christ and of His Word and I just want Him to dictate in my life His will and I want to line up under it and fit where I belong in the body of Christ."

Many times we think these other people aren't even believers. Yeah, they're believers. They just may not be where we are. The way Paul treated them was precious. They could have been the ones he's talking about. They could have been the very ones he's mentioned that had come into this church back in chapter 1. The point is whether you've been ministered to by Apollos or you've been ministered to by Paul, or you've been ministered to by Christ, don't put them up here. Put Christ up here. And as you put Christ up here, back where He belongs, get up under His will and up under His word. Then He will cause you to fit in the body where you belong. You can even tolerate and accept others who are different who won't tolerate and accept you. But there can be peace and unity in the body one more time.

Something had drawn a great division in the body there of believers at Corinth, a schism. They had been ripped and rent and torn. The fellowship had been totally devastated because somebody wasn't living under the grid of 1Cor 1:1-9. Paul says, "Please, I'm begging you. I'm pleading with you. Please settle your differences. Have peace among you and let God fit you back where you belong so that you can be one together and enjoy the unity that He has."

One of the things I'm discovering by going to different denominations is that denominations aren't bad. They're different but just not really bad. Everybody hates denominations. Well, it's not necessary to hate them. If you become nondenominational, you've just become the denomination of the non-denomination. Did you know that? Where are you going to go that you're not going to be a denomination? One of the things I've discovered is if we're looking at Christ and not them and their denomination or us and our denomination, we're just looking at Christ, it's amazing how many people of other thoughts that you can begin to have fellowship with and the unity that God will give to the body.

If you look at all the things that you have different, look out. Look at Christ and let Him fit you together. Now there are going to be places where doctrine will divide you. I don't have a right to divide but the doctrine will. It will divide you at times. But you see, when it comes to contentiousness and quarrelsomeness and these kinds of things, that's what Paul's dealing with. That's flesh. And he says, "Men, get back up under Christ. Get back up under His Word and just let Him fit you where you belong so that the big puzzle that's been in different blocks of pieces, now, can come together and make sense. This is the body of Christ. Now I know that you are my disciples because you love one another."

He's going to deal with this for quite. If you've got a problem with somebody who you're excluding, look out. Look out. You may not be focused on the One you need to be focused on. All of us do it. I've done it many, many times. You have to be so careful and let God bind you together. We sing that song, "Bind us together, Lord. Bind us together." That's a great song because we can't bind ourselves but He can bind us if we'll let Him have control in our life one more time.

1 Corinthians 1:12-16 Division Among God's People - Part 2

We have physical bodies that have many members which are different. It's that way in the body of Christ. Isn't it amazing? The first thing that happens when you live surrendered to Him, not perfect but predictable, when you're about His purposes in your life, is you become inclusive of others, not exclusive of others.

I know that sometimes I sound like a broken record. But I'm going to keep right on sounding that way. I don't mind if you can just grab it. 1Cor 1:2-9 are the grid you've got to look at. That's the Christian life right side up. You get any of these out of order, you get them out of whack, and what happens is you get upside down, and that's when the division comes. That's when all the confusion and chaos comes into your life. When we live separated unto Him as His own possession, living for His purpose, not ours, not driving our purpose asking Him to bless it, then what happens is we start opening up to others that are around us.

Romans 12 says, "I beseech you therefore brethren that you present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service of worship. And don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove for yourself what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Then he goes on and immediately says, "Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. There are other people in the body of Christ besides you."

We have physical bodies that have many members which are different. It's that way in the body of Christ. Isn't it amazing? The first thing that happens when you live surrendered to Him, not perfect but predictable, when you're about His purposes in your life, is you become inclusive of others, not exclusive of others. 1 Corinthians 1:2 says, "to the church of God which is at Corinth [God's own possession], to those who have been sanctified [set apart for His purpose, not their own] in Christ Jesus, saints by calling [now look, immediately] with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours."

Paul was saying, "Hey, guys, there are others out here in the body of Christ besides you and we're all in it together." You become inclusive, not exclusive of others. Now, listen to me. When you talk about division, be real careful how you handle this. We're talking about, in our own way of spiritual pride, excluding others. The very stand you have on the Word of God itself will divide you at times. It's one thing for you to exclude them, and it's another thing for your life and the Word of God in you to cause that separation. There's a big difference. If I offend you that's one thing; if God's Word offends you, so be it. You see, there's a difference in the attitude of the individual. You don't willfully exclude, but sometimes those exclusions are there. In 1 John 2:19 John said, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us." That's going to happen in life. It's not because we pushed them out but because they made that choice themselves. You become inclusive when you're living about God's purposes, living in God's power, depending upon His grace and His peace. If you're at peace with God, you're at peace with man.

I had the most incredible experience out in Colorado. I was in a little church that averages 33 on Sunday mornings. I met the pastor up at Ohio and he asked me, "Would you come to a little bitty church out in the middle of nowhere." I said, "Well, if God tells me to go, I'll come." We were just praying that God would cover the airplane ticket. I knew if He didn't I was going to have to pay for it myself. That's the way we went out there. We averaged 125 every night. People came from Denver and from Colorado Springs. Some people drove four hours.

When I got on the plane to come home, I was sitting there in my seat reading the USA Today and this couple got on the plane. I thought, "I know them. I've seen them before." It was Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey, the father and mother of that little girl who was murdered in Denver. They sat right in front of me.

Well, we took off and something in my heart stirred when I saw them. I didn't know I would handle it. When you listen to the news

media you don't know what kind of things you'll end up with. But they're people, folks. They're people who have hearts that beat. They've got lungs that breathe air. They're people who face an eternal destiny whatever's going on in their life. Something inside of me just reached out to them. I don't know what it was. I couldn't do anything but pray for them almost all the way to Atlanta.

We got to Atlanta and he had put a bag up above my head. I knew he was going to have trouble reaching it because when everybody jumps up to get off the plane it's real crowded there. I prayed. I said, "God, give me an opportunity just to say something encouraging to these people." Look at the trauma they've been through, folks.

When we got up, he reached up and got his first bag. I said, "Is this your bag?" I thought I had seen him put two up there. He said, "Yes, it is." I had my hand on the seat after I picked the bag up and handed it to him. I said, "Sir, I just want to tell ya'll something." Automatically he was defensive. They're like, "What are you going to say to me?" I said, "I just want you to know that I'm praying for you." And as tenderly as I have ever been touched by a father or any person who loved me, he put his hand down on mine and just tenderly patted it. Moistness filled up his eyes and he said, "Thank you. Thank you so much."

You know, folks, I want to tell you something. The days when I'm not living according to what God wants in my life and the days when I get callous, opinionated, that kind of rot that we all do, are the days I wouldn't give you a plug nickel for anybody outside my little own realm of opinions and my own little realm of hurts. But when you start loving God, God turns something on inside of you that you can't exclude anybody, I don't care who they are. You become inclusive, not exclusive.

If you'll listen to what Paul's saying here, he's nailing every one of us to the wall – in love. The way he does it is beautiful. It's the Holy Spirit of God in him. He's not trying to just rebuke them harshly. I have said that before and I repent of saying that. He's coming alongside them. He did rebuke them, but he did it in such a loving way they could receive it because he loves them. He really does love them. He issues a plea for unity in the church of Corinth.

You see, here's a church. The church is filled with the Lord Jesus Christ living in them. He fills all in all. Here they are grumbling and all kinds of division among them, quarrelling with one another, and he issues a plea for unity there. He knows they're not living in peace together. It says in 1Cor 1:10, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment."

That little word "I exhort you" is *parakaleo*. It is that word used for the Holy Spirit of God. It's a firm word, but yet it's a very comforting word, a very precious word, very tender word. What he's saying is, "Hey, folks, listen. Come alongside me." He started the church. He loved these people. He said, "Come alongside me. Get up as close to me as you can. I want you to sense how much I love you. I've got some hard things to say to you so I want to make sure you understand as I say them to you, I'm correcting you out of love for you. That's why I'm telling you what I'm telling you, you see." That's the whole manner of how he approaches it. He wants them to settle their differences. He doesn't want them to wear the same clothes and say the same thing and walk around like little clones of each other. But what he wants them to do is to come back to what he's already told them. Live up under the purposes of God. Live separate unto Him. That's the thing that unifies you. You don't ever end up agreeing with everybody on everything but you have to agree upon the fact that we're His property and we're His possession and we are to walk according to His will in our life.

This division was the problem in the church of Corinth and it manifested itself in quarreling among the brethren. It says in 1Cor 1:11, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." Now the word for "quarrels" there is not when you have a heated debate with somebody. The word for "quarrels" here is the little word *eris*. That word has nothing friendly in it, not one thing friendly in it. It's contentious from its very motivation. These people are beginning to fight with one another with their words and they're contending with one another. It's a strife kind of word that never, ever, ever is the character of a person living as God's own possession, living surrendered to His purposes. It can't be because the Holy Spirit of God produces a different kind of character in that individual's life.

What were they quarreling over? 1Cor 1:12 says, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and [the hardest group of all] 'I of Christ.'" The tendency of our flesh, folks, if we're not living attached to Him, is to attach ourselves to something we can see, touch, and feel. If you're not living that way in the fullness and the sufficiency of Christ, you will attach yourself to somebody who has somehow ministered to you in life. Perhaps there's been a mentor, pastor, or whoever, and you'll attach yourself to them. For some reason they become your focus. What's happened is they've gotten their eyes off of Christ and they've moved out of the realm of where he wants them to be.

Now they are of Paul and Apollos, and so on, as he mentioned there. Paul is about to address this common error. I say common error because everybody does it when they're not walking the way they're supposed to walk. It's not just the Corinthian church. I've been that way, and you've been that way at times in your life.

When he says, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying,..." the only thing I can conclude from that is each one of you is saying. In other words, it's affected the whole church. It's not just a certain group. It's the whole church that's divided. They've been divided by this kind of stuff. Paul was the founder of the church. Many of them, perhaps, took up his cause. Apollos followed him as

the second pastor. Maybe they liked him better than Paul. That happens sometimes, doesn't it? Sometimes it's the other way around. Some liked Cephas. Who's Peter? Everybody knew who Peter was. Of course, again, the most difficult was the ones who said, "I am of Christ." Now, listen. They had the right man to follow, the God man. They had the right one, but they had the wrong motive in following Him. Because when your motive is to exclude, then evidently you haven't got the right pathway yet in how to follow Him. They had the right man but they had the wrong motive. They were doing with Christ what others were doing with Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. They were dividing over the fact that they felt like they had a corner on Christ, you see. Paul puts them into the list of those he's chiding for their behavior. Again, their focus was set on man and not on God.

One of the things you learn about the apostle Paul, at least I'm learning, is he's the most brilliant man in the New Testament other than Jesus, an incredible man. I can't wait in Heaven one day, after a million years when I can just leave Jesus for a second, I want to go over and talk to the apostle Paul and just be around him. Man, the guy was incredible. The way his mind worked was far beyond anything. I can more identify with Simon Peter who said in one of his epistle, "You know our brother, Paul. He says some stuff sometimes that's hard to understand." That's me. I'm on his side.

But Paul was an intelligent man. He was a master at reasoning with people. Who else would go down to Athens and get up on Mars Hill and take on all the Greek philosophers? Only the apostle Paul. I mean nailed them to the wall: "I saw this sign. It said the unknown God. Let me tell you who He is. I'd like to introduce you to Him." This guy's incredible. He was just sitting down there waiting for some of his buddies to come and meet with him and he just happened to see all the idolatry and it made him mad. So he goes up on the hill and takes the whole town on. It's amazing. And held his own. That's the kind of man he was.

He was able to take a proposition that somebody had and jump ahead of them and show them the dead end street they would face if they followed that proposition. Incredible ability to reason out something. I wish I had more of that. You know, when you start seeing some people say certain things and you say, "Hold on. That sounds good right there. Let's just keep following that on down and see where it ends up." That's what Paul was able to do. In 1 Corinthians 15 he says, "Hey, you don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, bodily? Well, hey, if you don't we don't have anything to look forward to because we're not raised bodily either. If you don't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, then you don't even have a salvation. You're all lost. We don't have any hope at all." He just said, "It sounds good, what you say, but it just doesn't jibe with the Word of God. If you follow it out, it falls over the edge of a cliff before it's over with, you see."

I'm overwhelmed at what the Lord has taught me in my study. Hopefully you can get some of it. The problem of division in Corinth had to do with their confused allegiance. In other words, they were following after man. They were not as God's own possession living separated unto Him. That's what happened to them. This was symptomatic but at the same time Paul's going to have to address that, a believer's allegiance to Christ, not to man, not to preachers, not to whoever baptized you, not to whoever meant a lot in your life. Yes, you'll always appreciate them but don't ever put them on a pedestal that Jesus deserves to be put. Don't ever put them in His place. That's what people do all the time.

Well, he begins by taking this last group, "I am of Christ." He takes them first and tackles it straight on. Look at what it says. To those that say, "I am of Christ", here's what Paul says in 1Cor 1:13. He asks a question. "Has Christ been divided?" Now when you first read that, you think, "What in the world is he talking about?" You've got to remember how he thinks. You've got to jump to the fact that he sees the whole picture. They don't; they're very narrowmindedly thinking they've got a corner on Jesus. This is the group that I talked about last time. When they get to Heaven, they're going to put a fence around them and when Saint Peter walks us by he'll say, "Shhh, be really quiet. They think they're the only ones up here." They've got a special corner on Jesus.

Paul just beautifully nails them. First of all, he'd already told them, "You've got other believers every place." Just because somebody maybe doctrinally doesn't agree with you doesn't mean he doesn't have Jesus Christ in his life. That's the key. The doctrine we'll have to work out later. Sometimes that will separate us, but we don't exclude others because they believe differently. Sometimes that happens. But what he's saying is that these people have Christ, too. Sometimes when you hear something from somebody that doesn't sound like you heard it before, just listen again. There might be some truth in it. If it doesn't, don't throw them out of the window and say that they don't know Jesus because Jesus is bigger, bigger than our little doctrinal things that we come up with sometimes. He's much bigger than that. So what he's trying to show them is, "You don't realize this, folks, but Jesus is bigger than your little group. By your saying that you're of Christ, if you take it all the way down and reason it back, you're saying Christ is divided and you got something of Him that somebody else doesn't have. Can Christ be divided?" No. What he's basically showing them is the absurdity of the whole idea.

He jumps from that to himself. I respect him for this because he could have left himself out of it and picked on Apollos, because that's the one who followed him. He could have picked on Simon Peter because, you remember, when Paul came out of that desert experience, the first place he went was right to Simon Peter. He said, "Simon Peter, you're a hypocrite. You won't even eat with the Gentiles. Get your life straight, man." He tried to teach him about grace. He could have said some things about Peter. He didn't. He doesn't even mention those two. He makes himself vulnerable and puts himself up there in the focus of what he's about to do. He

doesn't even address the other two. I think that one of the reasons he does this is because he's horrified that the church that he started would ever, ever, ever put him on a pedestal and exclude other people if they didn't agree with them. He's horrified by that. That is a scary thing when people deify men rather than deify God and live under that. I'm telling you it's a tendency if you're not living and walking as God wants you to. "I'm of him, I'm of him." Not only will that in itself exclude you, you become exclusive in yourself and you'll stay right within the framework of what you want and exclude everybody else.

For those who said, "I am of Paul," here's what he has to say in 1Cor 1:13. He says, "Paul was not crucified for you, was he?" Man, I'll tell you. That's a powerful statement. In other words, "What in the world are you looking at me for? I wasn't crucified. I'm not the man you need to be looking to. I'm just as simple as anybody else. You need to be looking at the God man. He's the one who died for you." He's saying, "Man, you're putting me in a class that I would never in a million years want to even touch. It would be total blasphemy for me to be there."

As a matter of fact, if you have ever studied much of the writings of Paul, you know that Paul shows this. He's never pointing at himself unless he says, "Imitate my faith or whatever." And that's only in a way of helping to explain what he's teaching. In 1 Corinthians 2:2 he says, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." There's the heart of the man. He's saying, "Why would you put me on a pedestal? The only heartbeat I have is to know Christ and Him crucified."

Look over in Galatians 6:14. This is just the heart of the man. He's really a man who's upset. He's a man who says, "Man, don't you ever do this to me. Don't you put me up there where Jesus belongs. I'm not worthy to be up there. I didn't die for your sins." It says in Galatians 6:14, "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." That's the heart of the man. Can you imagine how he must have felt when he found out that some of them said, "I am of Paul", and by that excluded everybody else if they didn't agree with them, thinking that Paul was something that Paul never professed to be and knew he wasn't? It was a terrible thing in his heart.

Paul wants them to know that worshipping Paul is totally ridiculous. Basically he's saying, "I didn't die for you. Christ did. There's only one man we should elevate." In other words, "If I died for you, all you'd have is a dead man. I didn't do anything for you. I was just a vessel. God stopped me on the Damascus Road. Don't ever put me up there because I'm a man who has to deal with his own flesh every day just like you do." If we elevate Christ, then you can't exclude others and become that way in the body of Christ. You can't narrow yourself and draw a little fence around yourself and say, "This is who I'm following." You can't do that if you're following Christ because that always becomes inclusive.

Well, Paul ties the whole thing that he's dealing with here, the quarrelling, the contention, the divisions in the people, back to their baptism. This is incredible to me. How in the world? The Holy Spirit has to be the author of Scripture. The apostle Paul ties everything back to baptism. He stays a while on himself and for the next several verses he's going to talk about this one subject. Look at what he says in 1Cor 1:13. "Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Now what is he doing? Why in the world would he bring that up? He's already talked Jesus dying. Why would he go back to their baptism? You know what, folks? It would be good if you'd go back to yours. You may need to do it again because you missed the whole point of why you did it in the first place. You see baptism speaks of the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus but what does baptism also speak? It speaks of my identification in that death. I have been buried in the likeness of Christ and raised to walk in newness of life. So it has something to say about a separated life that I have chosen to live. You see, this is so important to remember. It's not in the name of Paul, he's saying. It was in the name of Jesus that you were baptized. You weren't baptized in my name.

You would think in this world today some people who are so of men, you would think they died on the cross for them. You'd think that they were baptized in their name, you see, identified with them, to follow them wherever you go.

Let's read in Romans 6. That's really what's in the back of Paul's mind, I believe, as he's using baptism. What an incredible genius of the Holy Spirit of God to work in Paul to come up with baptism to prove his point that you should never be attached to men. You live attached to God. There's a huge difference, folks. There's a huge difference. Romans 6:3 says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Immersed into and identified with. Ro 6:4 goes on, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Baptism does not only picture Christ's death on the cross, but it's our outward testimony of our discipleship to Him, our attachment to Him. When we're baptized, we're saying to the world, "I've already been saved. It happened inwardly but outwardly I want to give a picture. This is the first step of my testimony that Jesus is my Lord and that I'm going to live unto Him, separated unto Him and His purposes because I died with Him and I've cut off the world from me, as Paul said in Galatians 6. I'm dead to that and I'm raised to walk in the newness of His life.

Now listen. Paul in no way is downgrading baptism. Don't think that. Paul asks, "Were you baptized in the name of Paul?" That's not his point here. He's just taking them back and having them recall that experience so they have a basis to understand what he's saying. You never follow men. You've been cut off from that kind of thing. You now have chosen to follow Him – period – and for all eternity, you see. He's the focus of your life, not man but God.

As a matter of fact, Paul himself had gone through baptism. That's what it meant to him too. Look over in Acts 9:18. I want to make sure you understand he's not playing down baptism. By the way, there are those who struggle with baptism. They say that it doesn't mean immersion. That's okay. I'm not going to fight with anybody. Secular Greek used the word baptizo when a person drowned, which was transliterated to give us the word "baptized." Now maybe you can drown in a cup of water. It takes a little bit more than that for me. It means to be immersed in water. It does mean identified with. But you've got to see the picture. If it's just identification and you don't see the picture of immersion, you missed the whole point. You go down into the water, dying and being buried with Him and you come up out of the water, raised to walk having been washed in the newness of life, not by the water. It's just symbolic. You're washed in the blood of Jesus. This is a spiritual experience.

You ask, "Well, Wayne, if a man's not baptized will he go to Hell?" No. When you're saved, you're saved to the uttermost. Not being baptized is not going to send you to Hell. But baptism is very important and Paul does not downplay it. Paul himself was baptized. Listen, Jesus was baptized. Now if you want to get on this kick that you don't ever need to be baptized, help yourself. But Jesus was baptized and Paul was baptized. In Acts 9:18 it says, "And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized." He's already been saved and then he's baptized.

The Corinthian believers were baptized as a result of their faith in Christ. Look in Acts 18:8. This is the church of Corinth there that he speaks of, the same church he's writing to here in 1 Corinthians. Acts 18:8 says, "And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing [look what comes first] and [then were what?] being baptized." So they were baptized. He's not playing it down, but he certainly is bringing it up to bring them back to it.

Let's recall. Why were you baptized? This is going to prove his whole point about the divisions and the factions of following after men. Baptism always follows belief. In other words, baptism cannot be substituted for faith. Baptism comes as a result of someone having placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It cannot be a substitute for salvation. The Corinthians had evidently forgotten what it meant. I wonder if we've forgotten.

Let's just take some time and talk about baptism. Why does he bring it up? I think when we get through with this you may see the wisdom and the genius the Holy Spirit has in Paul's bringing this up. First of all, go to Matthew 28:19. What does Jesus say about baptizing? Who do you baptize? It's very important. Jesus gave the directions Himself to the disciples. Now Paul has made the statement, "It's not in my name you were baptized. It's in His name you were baptized." That's significant. Jesus says in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them [not in the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit but] in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Some people get all bent out of shape about that. Should it be in the name of Jesus? Should it be in the name of the Father? If you use all three of them are you doing something wrong? That always has sort of tickled me. I know I have a simplistic mind and approach things that way. That's all I know how to do. But it just seems to me that it's kind of idiotic if you ask me. There's no jealousy in the Trinity. Have you ever seen jealousy in the Trinity? So if you want to put all three names in there or pick one out it doesn't bother the Trinity any, because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is God. There are not three Gods. There's one God in three persons.

I hear this argument all the time. I'm thinking, "What? Give me a break and get a life." It's name, not names, okay? The phrase "in the name of" is significant. It means with respect or regards to something. That's one of the meanings.

An illustration of how it's used is over in Matthew 10:41. The same phrase is used but in a different context. We're not talking about baptism here. We're trying to show you how it's used. Matthew 10:41 reads, "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet [there's your phrase] shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." It means he who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. That's basically what he's saying.

So in our text in 1 Corinthians Paul is saying that when the Corinthians were baptized, they were baptized because of their belief in the fact that Jesus was the Christ and died for their sins, because of the fact of who He is, because of His name, they were baptized into Him, you see. That's what the whole thing is about.

There are two absolutes that Paul seems to be saying. First of all, "There is a God." Secondly, "I'm not Him. You're weren't baptized in my name. You were baptized in His name. He's God. I'm not God. So, therefore, it's significant that you don't put me on a pedestal. You keep Him up there where He belongs.

Now to return to our text, there's another meaning of "in the name of." I think this is what Paul is alluding to. "In the name of Christ" means we have attached ourselves to Him. It's not only an act of witness of what has happened inwardly to me, but it's an outward testimony of my allegiance to Him. It speaks of my discipleship. It speaks of Him. It's lordship. It's the whole thing. Lordship was salvation, yes, but now I'm affirming it in my witness by saying, "I'm attached to Him and I'm going to live my life attached to Him. I've cut everything else away from me and have now been raised to walk in the newness of His life. He will be the one I'm going to

live attached to for the rest of my days.”

Paul said, “You didn’t get baptized in my name so that you could live attached to me. You were baptized in His name so that you could live attached to Him.” Now you think about it for a second. Who are you attached to? Who do you listen to every single day of your life? If anybody walked into your house and said that they didn’t like them, you would exclude them and slam the door in their face because whatever that person says, that’s what you believe because you just think that person is right. I’m telling you, folks. That’s America in the twentieth century. If you ever cross somebody who somebody’s living attached to, watch how fast they’re going to exclude you from their presence.

So Paul is saying, “Hey, you weren’t baptized in my name. You were baptized in His name. You’re attached to Him. You’re not attached to me. Don’t you dare live your life attached to me. I’m His apostle and whatever I tell you, you have to listen because He gives it to me. Don’t live attached to me. Live attached to Him and His Word.”

Go back to 1 Corinthians 1. We’ll keep the flow. That’s where we’re talking about baptism. Why is it so important to what he’s trying to tell the Corinthians church? They’ve totally forgotten what baptism is all about. 1Cor 1:14 says, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.” He’s looking back and saying, “Hey, I don’t even know why you’re attaching yourself to me. I only baptized two of you.”

Well, in 1Cor 1:16, he talks about Stephanas and his household. In other words, “Why in the world would there be a faction over there? You weren’t baptized in my name. In fact, I only baptized a few of you.” It was not founding for the unwanted allegiance to him.

I run into people everywhere I go in the country who say, “I’m of John MacArthur.” Have you ever been around people like that? John MacArthur has been in our church. He’s one of the most precious men you’ll ever meet in your life. He would be horrified at how people are attached to him and not attached to the Christ he’s attached to. But there are people like this, folks. As a matter of fact, I’ve been in conversations with people before and somebody said, “Do you know what old John said?” And I said, “You know, I don’t think I agree with that.” You can see it. You can see the shield go up. “What do you mean you don’t agree with John MacArthur?” You know, again, John would be horrified if that ever happened.

Some people say, “Well I’m of Swindoll.” I like Chuck Swindoll. “I want to tell you, don’t you ever touch my little Chuck Swindoll. He’s my preacher and if you ever say anything he doesn’t say, you’re out of here, buddy, because he’s right. So I’m going to attach myself to him, you see.”

When in the world are we going to wake up and smell the roses? What Paul is saying is that this kind of stuff means you don’t even understand yet that you’re attached to Him. You’re to live filled with Him and you’re to live separated unto Him, not separated unto anyone else. That’s the way people live, isn’t it? Think about it.

Let me ask you a question. Who is it that’s caused you to become exclusive of others because you don’t think they have the same corner on Christ that you’ve got? Folks, if you can find anything in your life that way, that’s exactly what he’s talking about in 1 Corinthians. You better get your heart straight because those people in the body who might not agree with what you agree with. They still have Christ living in them and never do you have the right to exclude them from the fellowship. As a matter of fact, you can’t if you’re living right. They may exclude you. Your attitude should be to not push them out and exclude them just because of who you say you’re following. “I’m of Christ.” That’s the ones, “You’re just not spiritual enough for me.” That’s the worse ones. I can’t even illustrate that one. That’s the group to look out for. It’s the sign of pride and immaturity when we attach ourselves to men and not to God. The only way you know you’re attached to them is if you’re excluding people who disagree with the one who you agree with or disagree with the conviction you say you have.

You don’t exclude them. If you’re right, God will bring them to your understanding. Pray for them, but don’t exclude them. If the doctrine excludes you, so be it. But we don’t have the right to offend and exclude. That’s what happens with the flesh.

Paul goes on to say in 1Cor 1:14-15, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name.” “You don’t live attached to me. You live attached to Him.” 1Cor 1:16 goes on, “Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.” It sounds like Paul really kept records, didn’t it? He walked around with a little pad in his pocket. “Uh-huh, baptized him. Write that name down and put the address down and the date because I can send that in to the convention. Listen, put this thing down because I’m keeping score on this whole thing.” Paul says, “I can’t even remember if I baptized anybody else.”

A lot of people say that baptism is necessary for salvation. Do you see what Paul is saying here? If it’s so necessary to salvation, then why is Paul so nonchalant about it? He said, “Man, I can’t even remember if I baptized anymore.” Then in 1Cor 1:17 we read, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.” Wait a minute! Wait a minute! He didn’t send you to baptize? But he sent you to preach the gospel? What does that say

to people who say that you have to be baptized to be saved? It says that you better rethink what you're saying because you're wrong. He's saying that the gospel does not include water baptism. However, once you're saved, it follows salvation and it's a witness, a statement you make to the world that you're going to live attached to Christ because He's already attached you to Himself and you've chosen to let this be your testimony to others. It becomes the first platform of your testimony to others about this.

I have a relative who says that I'm going to Hell because I've not been baptized by a member of a certain faith. Now it doesn't mean you're not baptized. They take it a step further. You've got to be baptized by one of them or you're not going to go to Heaven. That's interesting to me. You examine every text in Scripture and you'll never find anything to support that. There are two texts that they use more than anything else. Look at Acts 2:38. These are the two texts I've heard so many times and I just get tired of hearing them. When somebody walks up and asks me about that any more, I say, "Listen, whatever you think. However you feel." I just walk off. I'm tired of arguing. You can't get to first base with them. They don't reason with you. You can bring up another Scripture and they just flip the page and come up with another question. It's amazing.

Acts 2:38 says, "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins [that's what throws everybody] and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" Now people jump to the conclusion, "Uh-huh, see there. See there, for the remission of sins." First of all, the word doesn't mean in order that you might receive it. However, there's something else. We just covered it. I want to make sure you see it. Look up in the verse again: "let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." We've already told you what that means. That's valid baptism. What does valid baptism mean? It means that your baptism didn't save you, but because you had already been attached to Him, now you have chosen out of obedience to make a statement of that attachment. That person has received the forgiveness of his sins. He didn't receive it when he got baptized. He received it when he got saved. But the baptism proves the fact because it's in the name of Christ. It's not just getting wet.

Look over at 1 Peter 3:21. This is the same guy writing about the same thing. "And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh [He clarifies that], but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Now without getting too far into that you can already see something. Is the immersion in the water going to save anybody? Peter's analogy had to do with the flood. What happened to the people who got wet in the flood? They died. I mean, from that point on, folks, it's just ridiculous to even follow the argument. But, remember, it's in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the key. It's whose name you were baptized in. That signifies you're already been attached to Him in salvation and now you're confirming and bearing witness of that attachment and you're going to live that way for the rest of your life. That's valid baptism.

Well, for every such statement, you're going to find hundreds of others. Look in Mark 1:15. This is so important to understand. If baptism is critical for a person to get saved, look in Mark 1:15. He says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Do you find the word "baptized" in there anymore? Let me give you some more. In Mark 2:5, Jesus said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." It says, "And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven.'" Do you think Jesus would have shortchanged him? He didn't say, "Seeing his faith and the fact that he was baptized." He said, "seeing his faith." That's what saves you, folks.

One of the passages misunderstood is Jesus and Nicodemus when he says you must be born of water and the Spirit. People take that water and the Spirit and go crazy with it. What Jesus is trying to show Nicodemus in his confusion is there are two kinds of birth and you've got to separate them. Physical birth is birth of water. I remember when my wife said, "My water broke." That helped me understand that passage.

But then there's also spiritual baptism. If you're born once, you die twice. If you're born twice, you only die once and maybe not that time because He may come before you die. You see, you have to understand what he's talking to Nicodemus about. It has nothing to do with the fact that you've got to be born of water, meaning baptism. Good night, you'd have to stretch the Scriptures completely out of shape and contort it to try to make it say that and it still wouldn't say that. Jesus is showing us then the difference of those two births.

Then in John 3:15 He says, "that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life." He didn't say for whoever believes and has been baptized. In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." He didn't say, "and be baptized." You can just walk right down through Scripture. John 3:18, Ephesians 2:8, Romans 3:23-24, you just go right on through it.

Why did Paul bring up baptism to start with? First of all, you can see by how he's using it in 1 Corinthians. He's not talking about their salvation. He's talking about their witness amongst the people and their willingness to say, "Listen, folks, I want everybody to know that God has saved me inwardly and I want you to know outwardly I've attached myself to Him and I'm going to follow Him all the days of my life." That's what he's taking them back to.

1 Corinthians 1:17-20 The Fallacy of Following After Man

The church of Corinth, because of their fleshly living, were much divided, and it was because they weren't living attached to Christ. They were attaching themselves to men. That was their problem. Paul is saying to them, "The fallacy of attaching yourself to me. Don't do it. Don't do it. There's a fallacy in it."

The church of Corinth, because of their fleshly living, were much divided, and it was because they weren't living attached to Christ. They were attaching themselves to men. That was their problem. There are two points that I want to cover this time. First of all, Paul is saying, "The fallacy of attaching yourself to me. Don't do it. Don't do it. There's a fallacy in it." Let me show you what it is. You see, all of these men had a message. Remember that. You wouldn't attach yourself to Paul if he didn't have a message. He wasn't a great athlete or anything like that, he was a great preacher of the day, as were Cephas and Apollos. Christ's message, of course, is what we all embrace. They had a message.

Now, think with me. What is Paul saying in 1Cor 1:17? He says, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void." Paul points to the fact that he's been commissioned, not to baptize, now listen, but to preach the gospel. That's another nail. But let me just hit another nail here. If baptism is a part of the salvation message, why does Paul say, "I'm not called to baptize but to preach the gospel"? You see, you'd have to put baptism into the gospel for it to be a part of the salvation message.

The word "send" is the same word we've seen earlier in the book. It's the word used back when he calls himself an apostle in 1Cor 1:1. He uses the word apostello. This is the word that comes right out of it. In 1Cor 1:1 you find he was sent to preach; in 1Cor 1:17 you find what he was sent to preach. His message, which was what people were using to separate themselves unto God, is the very thing that he uses to prove that men should never be put on a pedestal. Stay with me. It's very subtle. Don't let me lose you. By saying what he says here he's showing you why you never put your faith into man. You put Christ where He belongs. Look at the verse again. "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech."

You've got to understand who we're dealing with here. This man, the apostle Paul, could take an auditorium and pack it out every single night, five hours at a shot. This man was an eloquent speaker. This man was educated. This man had integrity, had something to say, and when he stood up he immediately drew people to him.

Look over in Acts 14:11. There was a lame man at Lystra who was healed, and the pagan people of that area made a statement about the apostle Paul. You've got to see this. There are many men who can stand up and preach with intellect, with education, etc., but never put those men up, and I'll tell you why. Because the message they're preaching, if it's not God's message, absolutely says nothing and will do nothing of eternal value in your life. "And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done [this is when the lame man had been healed], they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have become like men and have come down to us.'" Look at 1Cor 1:12, "And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker."

Who in the world was Hermes? Hermes is the name for Mercury in Greek mythology. In Greek mythology, Mercury was the son of Hercules and was the eloquent, educated messenger of the gods. In other words, when Hermes or Mercury would speak, he was the greatest of all the orators of that day. And everybody was wooed and wowed in their mythology and their thinking of that day. Look at what they say. They say, "This man is super! He's Mercury and has come back to visit us." He was such a great speaker, an orator, with education and with intellect when he would speak. The pagan people of Lystra actually thought it was the mythological god of Hermes or Mercury. "He was the chief speaker," Acts 14:12 says. So, though Paul was educated, clever and full of wisdom, as far as man was concerned, the message that Paul would preach outside of the message of Christ would absolutely pale from nonexistence.

What Paul is saying is, "You don't ever put your faith into a man." There was a time in Paul's life when he did not know this message. This message didn't come from Paul. This message came from God. He was not sent because of his own choice. He was sent because of the choice of God, by the will of God, to be a speaker of the message, the gospel of Jesus Christ. And this message was wisdom that would come from above in contrast to the wisdom that could come from eloquent and educated men of that day, you see. Man's wisdom was nothing compared to God's wisdom. Paul is saying, "Just because I'm speaking a message to you and you like the way I speak don't you dare put me up there. It is not my message. It is not me. It is in demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit of God."

Well, look at 1 Corinthians 1:17 again, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech [Why is it not in cleverness of speech? Look at the last phrase], that the cross of Christ should not be made void." I'll tell you, folks. This is sobering when you think about it. If we could be saved through the eloquence and education of man, then all humanity would nullify the gospel which is synonymous with the cross of Christ. It would be made void. The word means to be emptied out. Boy, I'll tell you that really convicts me. He's saying that if all it takes is the ability to speak well, if all it takes is education, etc., and a man could get up and people could get saved then automatically it would nullify the message of the cross. You see, there are a lot of

people who can get up and speak well and people are enamored with the speaker but they still walk out the door and die and go to [[Hell]]. He's saying, "The message I'm preaching doesn't come from me. It comes from God so don't ever put me up here. I wasn't smart enough to understand it until God stopped me on the Damascus Road. I didn't understand it until God saved me. Now He's commissioned me to take it to this world. Don't you ever put me up here; Christ belongs up here."

Did you realize the message of the cross is something that's repulsive to the educated man of this day? They can't stand it. As a matter of fact, they don't even like considering one of the hymns that says, "For such a worm as I." They want to change that because it somehow devalues humankind. The cross is something that the human logic cannot figure out. They exclude it in their mind. The cross is a glorious message, but it's a gory message of how the Son of God died and bled and suffered on a cross because of our sins. Take all of our education, take all of our eloquence, take all of our good deeds of righteousness and they're nothing more than filthy rags in God's eyes. Jesus had to come and die for us as sinners and that's a message the educated world today absolutely is repulsed by. There's nothing in it that they want to hear.

Therefore, when you stand up in man's wisdom, just by the very fact that you're standing up with your message of what you want to say to people rather than God's message and what He wants to say to people, it nullifies the whole message. It nullifies the cross of Christ. People don't like to hear about the blood that was shed. Hebrews 9:22 says, "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Do you see what Paul is saying? He's saying, "There was a day when I did not embrace that message. There was a day when I myself lived foolishly as an educated man, rejecting that message. But today I understand the difference. And to put a man like me up there on that pedestal is absolutely absurd. The message didn't come from me. The message came from Him, and it changed me and it will change you. But it's not me in my education. It's not me in my eloquence. It's God working through me a message that he came up with. I didn't come up with it."

Charles Spurgeon once said this about the futile attempts of man to either duplicate God's [[creation]] or to somehow enhance it. "Foolish man would paint the rose and enamel the lily trying to make it better, add whiteness to snow and brightness to the sun, [and I like this one] with their retched candles, they would try to help us see the stars. [[The cross]] of Christ is sublimely simple. To adorn it is to dishonor it." Take all of the accolades you want to take of man's wisdom and try to add to it. You can't add to it. It's just a simple message. We're sinners, [[hell]]-bound, and Jesus Christ became man, died on a cross for our sins, resurrected the third day, ascended, was glorified and is the only way of [[salvation]]. You can't adorn it. You can't help it. It's just left like it is. It's God's message. That's the message Paul preached. He didn't use all his background to fill in with. He just preached what God had put on his heart. Therefore, he said, "Don't ever put me up here. Don't ever put me up here."

Paul goes on to explain the saving power of the message of the cross. Look at 1Cor 1:18. He says, "For the word of the cross [which is the message God has given to him, so don't attach yourself to me] is to those who are perishing foolishness [exactly what we just said], but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Now listen to me carefully. They saw the cross as a victory. In other words, when Jesus died on the cross in the pagan man's mind they thought, "Good. We're rid of Him." [[The cross]] was a just penalty for a futile and reckless life. When they saw the people hanging on the cross, they knew well they deserved what they got. When Jesus died on the cross, they saw it as victory. They saw the whole message as being foolish.

But Paul said, "The message of the cross." Have you come across this in your study of Scripture? When the definite article is used it's very significant. I could lay a pen down on this desk and say, "Pick up a pen." You could just look around, there are several pens, and just pick up this one. Big deal. But I could use the definite article and say, "Pick up that black pen, that specific black pen with a little gold on it." You would reach over and pick up that pen. That's a definite article. They looked at a cross, but Paul looked at the cross and the man who died on it. That's the difference in the message, you see. They couldn't see the difference. They didn't realize who it was who died on it. They didn't realize it wasn't because of His sin, it was because of their sin. So it's foolishness. It's absurd to those who do not believe.

They live in a world that thinks it's going to get better. Have you heard that lately? It's all going to get better. All we've got to do is keep on doing what we're doing. Take care of the environment. Take care of the animals. Take care of all these things. Get the ozone layer leveled out and everything's going to be better. But you come to the Word of God, and you see it's not going to get any better. God is such a holy God He even considered Heaven not to be completely pure. Therefore, there's going to be a new Heaven and a new earth. Who in Heaven today accuses the brethren day by day? Satan himself. God is so holy He's not going to let this world stay like it is. It's not going to get better, folks. It's going to get worse before it gets better. He is going to come back and give us the new heaven and earth, yes, but not in the existence of how we're headed right now. "For the word of the cross," he says, "is to those who are perishing foolishness." The word "perishing" is in the middle voice. The idea is they're perishing because of their own choice. It's not a matter of just dying. That's not what he's talking about. Those who are perishing are heading headlong into hell and they're doing it by their own choice. Do you know why? Because they take the wisdom of the world and reject the wisdom of God. Therefore, because of their own choosing they are perishing, middle voice. It has that idea.

"For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness [look at what it says], but to us who are being saved it is the

power of God.” The word dunamis is the word that means force that initiates change. Boy, when you preach the word of the cross, the gospel of Jesus Christ, unbelievers can get saved because they realize they’re sinners and there’s no hope except that Christ came to die for them. Believers can be delivered from the power of sin because they can take their identity with Jesus, deny self and say yes to Jesus. Also we have the hope that one day we’ll get a brand new body and be delivered from the very presence of sin. When you preach the cross it is to us power. It’s ability. It effects change in our life. But to those who don’t believe, it does not.

One day Benjamin Franklin was talking to the great atheist of the day who wrote *The Power of Reason*. This atheist said to him, “Benjamin, what do you think about the Bible?” Benjamin Franklin said back to him, “Listen, those who spit into the wind, spit into their own face.” I thought that was a good answer. You don’t believe the Bible, buddy? You will one day, but it’s going to be too late because everything you’re throwing out at it is going to come right back to haunt you one day. Your wisdom that you think is so smart, compared to God’s wisdom and the message of the cross and the gospel, is absolutely contrasted in such a way that one day you be overwhelmed by it. You spit into the wind and you spit right back into your face.

The Gentiles saw the cross as foolishness. However, to those who believe, it’s the power of God and salvation. I told you it was subtle. You’ve got to stay with me. What is Paul saying? He’s saying, “This is the message that I preach. Now, where did it come from? Did it come as a result of my seminary training? Did it come as a result of all the years of growing up in an educated family? Where did it come from? It didn’t come from him. It came from God. And because it came from God, don’t you ever put me on a pedestal because the very message I preach and have been changed by is not my message. It’s His message and I must preach it in demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit of God.”

That’s a good word for us today, isn’t it? You hear a good preacher on the radio and you say, “Man, I’m going to buy every tape he has. I’m going to buy every book he’s put out.” That’s wonderful. That’s fine. But, my friend, don’t you ever put that man on a pedestal and don’t you ever start being enamored by his wisdom; because his wisdom apart from the demonstration of the Spirit of God in his life is not worth a plugged nickel when it comes to eternity. If there’s anything good about that man and anything good about what that man says, you take it and give praise to God and keep Jesus up where He belongs. You appreciate the man, but you praise Him because if you don’t, you’ll attach yourself to that man and when that man is wrong, and I’ll guarantee you he’ll be wrong sometime, somewhere down the road you’ll become so exclusive of the body of Christ, the pain that you’re going to reek within the body, it’s going to be overwhelming to you. Be real careful what you’re doing. Be real careful.

Let me ask you a question. Who is it or what is it in your life that you feel like is so right has already caused you to make a choice to exclude somebody else in the body of Christ? I guarantee you if you’ll just be honest with yourself, there are many of us who have already fallen in this trap. We’ve dethroned Christ. We’ve either put a man or a message up there and we’ve forgotten who’s the focus of our life.

Let me give you just a real personal example. Some people are those who are of public school. Now listen carefully to what I’m saying. Some people are those who are of Christian school. Some people are those who are of home school. I applaud all three groups as long as it’s a conviction of your heart that that’s where you ought to be. But, my friend, if your conviction ever gets to the point that you exclude somebody else in the body of Christ, you have dethroned Christ and put your conviction ahead of Him. That’s exactly what’s going on in the church of Corinth. I say that with all the love in my heart, without any kind of agenda whatsoever. But come on, man, put Christ back up there and Christ will cause you to be inclusive, not exclusive of other believers. Our message is a person: it’s Christ. And He’ll tell you what to do and you do what He tells you to do, but you don’t do it excluding everybody else in the meantime. Don’t put your conviction, your message or your messenger up where Jesus belongs in your life or you have made a terrible mistake and you’re rendering and ripping and tearing the very body of Christ. Please understand what I’m saying. These are the days we live in, folks.

We have to remember to keep Jesus up there, and He will bring the conviction to your heart. It may exclude you but it won’t be you excluding you, if you understand what I’m saying. It will be others having to walk away from you because they didn’t see it the way you saw it. But you didn’t walk away from them. You still love them, care about, pray for them, and let them be a part of your life, you see. That’s part of it.

Secondly, Paul said, “There’s a fallacy in following me.” The fallacy of following any man. Put any of them in there. It doesn’t matter who they are. Look at what he says. It all has to do with the message they bring and the wisdom from which this message comes. That’s why you don’t follow men when it comes to eternal things. 1Cor 1:19 says, “For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’” Paul quotes from the Old Testament. I love him because when he says, “It is written,” that’s perfect tense. He had no confidence in the oral traditions of the day, not one single bit of confidence. When he would reference something, he would go back to what is written. I love that. We have the complete Word today. He did not have all of that. In fact, he was writing three-fourths of the New Testament. He always went back to the written word. What does the Word of God say?

Romans 15:4 gives us a clue as to why he did this. He says, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our

instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Now, he said, “Whatever was written was written for our encouragement.” So he goes back to the Old Testament when he quotes this verse, to Isaiah 29:14. This was at a very critical in the life of Israel, when Israel had a choice to accept the wisdom of God or accept the wisdom from man. They had a choice, and God said where they should make that choice. In verse 29 of chapter 14 it says, “Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous [that’s the way He deals with us, isn’t it? Then he says], and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed.”

Now what in the world’s going on? Sennacherib had threatened Judah and God had come and spoken to the leadership and said, “Listen, don’t put any faith whatsoever into the wisdom of men. The wisdom of men will tell you to get an alliance with another country. The wisdom of men will tell you this and tell you that. I’m telling you don’t you do that. You trust in Me. You put all of your focus into Me and the wisdom that I give to you.” But did they do that? No. As a matter of fact, as soon as God has spoken to them they got a council together, a committee, and they said, “Listen, what can we do to help ourselves out? Let’s make an alliance with Egypt.”

Well, that made Assyria absolutely furious. As a result, they ended up in captivity themselves. God told them, but they chose not to go with His wisdom. You see, man rarely chooses God’s wisdom. That’s our problem. They chose to go with man’s wisdom so God said, “I’m going to deal with these people marvelously. I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to make the wisdom of their wise man perish and the discernment of their clever shall be concealed.” Once again man had made that mistake.

Paul goes on in 1Cor 1:19, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.” The word “I will destroy” means to completely destroy. The word “set aside” has that same characteristic about it, just to get it out of the way, completely remove it from man’s mind. Now, does he do that? Well, in 1Cor 1:20 he says, “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe?” He still has this in mind. Did God do it? “Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” He’s saying, “Did I do what I said I was going to do? I tell you how He did it. He did it in the gospel of the message that Paul is preaching. He took every bit of the wisdom of man and just made it perish. He took every bit of the cleverness of man and just set it aside all in the gospel of Jesus Christ because what man said could bring a man to salvation. God absolutely turned that off. He just covered it up and put it aside.

You see, man’s trust in his own wisdom can never do anything there. But with the gospel it completely shuts man’s wisdom out. It’s a wisdom from God Himself. He said, “Where is the wise man?” Look back in history and find me a wise man who’s still hanging around with wisdom that’s eternal. Hitler made this statement, “Nothing will prevent me from tearing up Christianity, root and branch. We’re not out against 101 kinds of Christianity but against Christianity itself. All people who profess creeds are traitors to the people, even those Christians who really want to serve people we have to suppress.” And then Hitler said, “I myself am a heathen to the core.” That sounded great to the German people at that time. My friend, do you think he was a wise man? Did he make it?

A chaplain in a German prison camp where they had Germans as prisoners made this statement, “I wish you could have been present to see with what avidity the Bibles were received by the German prisoners of war. I’m here to tell you that Hitler has not succeeded in irradiating the hope of Christian faith in the hearts of his people.”

So Paul says, “Where is the wise man? Stand up out there somewhere, those of you who have claimed yourself to be so wise and oppose the wisdom of God.” God had done exactly what He said He would do. He caused the wise man to perish. The word for “wise” is sophia. We also get the word “philosophy” from it. Philos is lover of or friend of, and sophia is wisdom. So the word “philosophy” means lover of wisdom, but whose wisdom? It’s always man’s wisdom, friend, unless you’re a believer and love the Word of God.

We live in such a world that they’ve got their own answers. Paul would say, “Okay. Where are all those wise philosophers who gave us those philosophies that have never yet turned out as compared to the wisdom of God?” Then he says, “Where is the scribe?” The word for “scribe” had to do with the theologians of the day. Paul himself was a theologian at one time. We know that for a fact. You had to be a scribe in order to have a vote on the council. He did have a vote. He says in Acts 26:10, “And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests but also when they were being put to death, I cast my vote against them.” You had to be a scribe in order to have a vote in those situations. Paul at one time in his life was a theologian.

Now listen to me. He was a theologian, but he didn’t have a clue about God because he wasn’t saved. He didn’t know the wisdom from God. So Paul is saying, “Where are the theologians? Where are the scribes of that day? Look at me.” He said, “I went around from place to place persecuting Christians.” He says, “Listen, according to the law I was blameless. I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. I had my “theology.” I was a scribe of that time. But now look. Because of the Damascus Road I’m totally different. All of my gifts of eloquence and speaking and my education doesn’t mean a whole lot when it comes to preaching because it’s got to be in the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit of God. The message I have now is so contrasting to the message I had then. God has concealed. He’s caused the wisdom that I used to have to perish with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Then he makes one final statement, “Where is the debater of this age?” Well, the word for “debater” is the word that I think a lot of people fall in this category. It means those who love to argue just for the sake of arguing. It doesn’t mean that they ever come to any conclusions. They just like to argue. How many of you know somebody like that? Aren’t they fun? When I see them coming, I just turn and go the other way because you’re never going to answer anything. All they want to do is debate. They could care less about an answer. They just want to debate. They just want to argue all the time. Most of us can’t be philosophers because we don’t have that kind of background or that kind of mindset. Most of us can’t be theologians as Paul was talking about here. All of us fit into this.

What he basically does is he encompasses all the realms of human wisdom and says, “On the basis of this, I want you to know you never put a man up here on a pedestal because all of his wisdom compiled apart from the message God gives to a man is absolutely absurd in itself and you don’t want to put that man up there. He can’t lead you anywhere. The only one you want to put up there is Christ and then if you appreciate a man let him lead you to Christ. Let him lead you to the message but don’t ever put the message of the man up there. Put Christ, who is the Author of the message, up there and learn to live attached unto Him.”

I’ll tell you what, folks, men attaching themselves to men has been the downfall of the church in the twentieth century as far as division as schisms within the body, because of this preacher, because of this doctrine, because of this, because of that, because of whatever. Now listen, doctrine will separate you but you don’t have the right to make the separation yourself, an exclusive attitude. That’s what he’s saying.

There are times you have to walk away from false doctrine, but you still love the people. You still pray for the people. Your heart still includes them in your prayers, but that doesn’t mean you line up right beside them. That’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying this exclusive, holier than thou, I’ve got a corner on God attitude is what was dividing the whole church of Corinth. That’s exactly what’s dividing us in this day.

You start following men and you’re going to end up so confused you don’t know which way is up and which way is down. Follow Christ and His message. Listen to the message but don’t follow the man. Follow the message. When Paul says, “Imitate me,” he is really saying, “Imitate my faith. Do as I do.” He’s not saying, “Put me on a pedestal.” No, he’s just simply saying, “I’ve got a walk and I’ll follow Him. I think you can trust following the One I’m following.”

I wonder how much division is in the body because of people who have attached themselves to a doctrine, to a conviction, or to a person instead of attaching themselves to Christ. Perhaps you have drawn a little circle around yourself that says, “Nobody’s touching me and when these people get right with God, I might have fellowship with them.” Well, friend, you need to come to the cross that Paul preached and die to that self, that ugly old discriminating and excluding self, and experience the message that Paul’s talking about, the power that comes from the preaching of the cross and dying to self.

1 Corinthians 1:21-25 The Wonderful Message of the Cross

We want to begin looking now at the wonderful message of the cross. This message is seen by men as being utter foolishness which shows how foolish man is in his own wisdom. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, “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.”

You know the world is filled with those of us who have an opinion and consider ourselves wise because of it. Don’t we love to brag on what we know? Whether it be in the area of philosophy or theology or the general run of the mill folks who in the barber shop like to express our opinion, we like to be seen as being wise. Of course, that goes right back to Adam.

Look in Jeremiah 9:23. Jeremiah talks about what man loves to boast in the most. There are three things, but I want you to see the first thing he mentions. I think that’s the bottom line of it all. Jeremiah 9:23 is a very wonderful passage which will open our eyes as to what we really enjoy boasting about. It says, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the Lord.” Oh, how we love our wisdom.

When you take all the wisdom of man, whether it be the most academic or whatever, and you put it up next to God’s wisdom, it will absolutely pale to nonexistence. However, on this earth we tend to follow people we think know a lot. People who have a lot of wisdom tend to have a following. You say, “What does this have to do with 1 Corinthians 1?” It has everything to do with it. There was a division in the church at Corinth which had ripped it asunder, had torn it, in other words. Division means to rip, to tear, to rend. It’s a terrible word.

It says in 1Cor 1:11, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." These contentious quarrels were surfacing. 1Cor 1:12 goes on, "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.'" Now the ones who says, "I am of Christ", they're the ones who had the right person, but the wrong motive. They're the toughest ones to deal with. They excluded everybody. It was this attitude of exclusion that came with this division that has gotten into the church.

The Corinthians had made the same mistake we make in our time. We tend to listen to somebody preach or to teach and we tend, instead of hearing the message and letting the message draw us to God, we tend to attach ourselves to the person. That's what Paul is saying. Don't you attach yourself to a person. You attach yourself to Christ.

Paul is horrified that they even have put him in the mix. In 1Cor 1:13-17 he takes them back to their baptism and says to them, "I wasn't crucified for you. You weren't baptized in my name." Why would he say that? The little phrase "in the name of" or "in my name" has the idea of being attached to someone. What he's saying to them is, "Listen, Jesus Christ saved you. He was crucified for you. And not only that, when you put your faith into Him, He attached you to Himself. When you were baptized, which has nothing to do with your salvation, you made a public statement that you were consciously attaching yourself to Him. Now, since He was crucified for you, He is your life. He didn't just give you life. He is your life. Now you're attached to that life. What are you doing attaching yourself to me?"

Don't go around attaching yourselves to the people who have the message. Attach yourself to the Christ who gives the message. That's the main thing. But we as human beings would rather follow a person we can see, touch, and feel. This was causing great division in the church of Corinth and it's doing the same thing in the day that we live in.

As a matter of fact, Paul was saying, "Listen, this message that you heard from me in no way came from me. So why would you want to follow me? Follow the One who gave me the message." That's what we're going to get into in a moment. Paul says, "The message is the message of Christ and Him crucified. I didn't come up with that. I was a wise man for years, but religiously wise, and my wisdom was foolishness compared to this message. Don't attach yourself to me."

Then he begins to compare the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God. In doing this, he shows them why they should never attach themselves to any man. Man's wisdom is foolishness in light of God's wisdom. The proof that man's wisdom is foolishness in light of God's wisdom is that man looks at God's wisdom and calls it foolishness. That's the very proof of the fact that man's wisdom is foolishness. Whenever he hears what God has to say, hears the message of the gospel, and sees it as foolishness, it shows you how foolish his own wisdom really is.

So Paul basically is saying, "Listen, we are messengers. I'm a messenger, Peter was a messenger, Apollos was a messenger. But don't attach yourself to the messenger. The message didn't come from us. The wisdom of man will never save you. The message came from God. Attach yourself to Him and His message and let the message transform your life."

Look at 1Cor 1:17. We've looked at these verses, but we're continuing to review. 1Cor 1:17 says, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech [because if it was in cleverness of speech and human wisdom, it couldn't save anybody] that the cross of Christ should not be made void." Then he says, "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"

That brings us up to 1Cor 1:21. We want to begin looking now at the wonderful message of the cross. This message is seen by men as being utter foolishness which shows how foolish man is in his own wisdom. Look at 1Cor 1:21. "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."

Here's the whole point Paul's making. He's saying, "Listen, it's not as if the world has never seen the wisdom of God, but being right in the midst of it, they never recognized it to be the wisdom of God." Creation is a looking glass through which man can see the wisdom of God, but man in his own mind, in his own thinking, cannot see it as God's wisdom. The Puritan Thomas Watson wrote this about the wisdom of God. I think it's just excellent to show you how we live in the midst of it every day. I wonder, by the way, when you drive to work or come to church, are you looking around you? If you'll just start observing the wisdom of God, it's all around you. Thomas Watson says this.

None but a wise God could so curiously contrive the world. Behold the earth decked with a variety of flowers which are both for beauty and fragrance. Behold the heavens bespangled with lights. We may see the glorious wisdom of God blazing in the sun, twinkling in the stars. His wisdom is seen in the marshaling and ordering everything in its proper place and sphere. If the sun had been set lower, it would have burned us. If it had been set higher, it would not have warmed us with its rays. God's wisdom is seen in appointing the seasons of the year. The Psalmist said in Psalm 74:14, "Thou hast established all the boundaries of the earth. Thou

hast made summer and winter.” If it had been all summer, the heat would have scorched us. If it had been winter, the cold would have killed us. The wisdom of God can be seen in the checkering of the dark and the light. If it had been all dark, there would have been no labor. If it had been all light, there would have been no rest. God’s wisdom is seen in mixing the elements, the earth and the sea. If it had been all sea, we would have wanted bread. If it had been all earth, we would have wanted water. The wisdom of God is seen in preparing and ripening the fruits of the earth. In the wind and the frost that prepare the fruit and in the sun and the rain that ripen the fruits. God’s wisdom is seen in setting bounds to the sea and so wisely contriving it that though the sea be higher than many parts of the earth, yet it should not overflow the earth so that we may cry out with the Psalmist in Psalm 104:24, “O Lord, how many are thy works. In wisdom thou has made them all. The earth is full of all thy possessions.”

You see, man has witnessed the wisdom of God in the created order that is around him. Look again at 1:21. “For since in the wisdom of God [in the sphere of it, being right in the middle of it] the world through its wisdom did not come to know God.” Encased in the wisdom of God, man in his foolishness did not come to understand it to be God’s wisdom. When it talks about the world and its wisdom, there’s a definite article there. It directly separates two kinds of wisdom. There’s the wisdom of the world or the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God.

The author of the book of James says, “Listen, is your wisdom divine and from God or is it earthly and demon?” He is showing that there are two kinds of wisdom. So man left alone without God’s intervention does not discover the wisdom of God. We chose the foolishness of man’s wisdom which shows you the foolishness of ever following after man. The only men you ever want to listen to are the men who have the message that came from God.

Man is discovering laws constantly. We’ve got the law of gravity. We’ve got the law of aerodynamics. We’ve got the law of...., you just go right on down the list. But man will not attribute them to be of God. They will not do that. In fact, we have substituted the word “nature” for God. The most intelligent individual who knows that these laws are beyond anything that man could comprehend will not attribute them to God. Unregenerate man does not have the intelligence, nor does he have the courtesy to attribute what he has found and seen and discovered to be the wisdom of God. Man’s wisdom, that might even recognize that there is a God, would never bring that man to know God, experientially. It’s God’s wisdom in the message of the cross that leads man to understand how he can know God. It didn’t come from us. It came from God.

Paul says again in 1Cor 1:21, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God.” The word “know” means to know Him by experience. There are religions all over this world but they cannot get to know God by experiencing Him personally because He has a wisdom in His message of the cross that man could never equate.

Paul refers to lost humanity in 1Cor 1:21 as the world. That’s a very precious thought here. He uses the term “the world.” You ask, “Why is that important?” Because that’s the same term he used in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world.” The world of people who are foolish in their own selves who would never give credit to God for anything. “God so loved that same world that He sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believed in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” God still loved this foolish world and sent His Son and His wisdom into the world. That’s why Jesus is called the Word, the divine intelligence. If you want to know anything about God, you’ve got to come to Jesus and to His Word. He brought that message into this world to us that we might understand now how we can know Him and know Him personally.

1Cor 1:21 goes on to say, “God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” Now, not only did man not recognize the wisdom of God that was around him, but when the message came through His Son of how man could personally know God, man considered it to be foolishness. But even at that God was well-pleased to save those who believed. Now, you just kind of keep this in mind. The emphasis is not on man. The emphasis is on God, His message and His love, His care, His grace, and what He has done for us. Paul is saying, basically, “Why in the world would you attach yourself to man who has the message? That man could never come up with the message. God must have given that man the message. So let the message lead you to the God of the man and attach yourself unto Him.”

The Problem of the Message of The Cross

Well, we’re going to look at that saving message of the cross. There are two things I want you to see. First of all, I want you to see the problem of the message and secondly, I want you to see the power of the message of the cross, remembering that man in his wisdom is foolish when he does not receive the wisdom that God gives to him. And man, by calling God’s foolishness, shows himself to be a fool. Remembering that all along, because the message of the cross is not something your flesh wants to hear.

What’s the problem with the message of the cross? Well it was in 1Cor 1:21. “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased [now watch] through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” Now, we can put computers together. We can come up with all kinds of the fine laws of nuclear physics. We can do all these things. Mankind can come up with all of these things, but mankind cannot come up with this message. And to him, intelligent man, as we call intelligence, it’s really foolishness in God’s eyes because he rejects what God has come up.

How did God choose to get this message into this world? This message that was going to confound the wise, this message that was going to put down the wisdom of men, what was the method that God chose to get this message? Notice, it says, "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached." Now, folks, I want to tell you something. That word for "preached" means preached, exactly what it says. It means the method of delivering, that the person preaches it. It also has to do with the content of it. Just to make sure you know I know where I am, in 1Cor 1:23 Paul says, "but we preach Christ crucified." So it's the message of the cross. It has to do with the delivery. It has to do with the content of the message but, particularly, the content. Preaching is what God anointed to get this message into a world of men who considered themselves wise but in light of God's wisdom actually are fools.

What is it that brings this message in? It's the method of preaching. Romans 10:14 says, "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" God said, "That's the way I want this message to get into the world, through preaching."

Here's a side thought. Isn't it interesting we're living in a day when preaching no longer is what man says they want to hear? As a matter of fact, forty-five minute messages, hour messages, man, people think, "Man, oh man, will he ever hurry up? I don't want to hear this. I don't want to be here. It's the most boring stuff I've ever heard in my life. Let me get out of here. My stomach's growling." People will sit for four hours in a concert, but they don't want to hear preaching any more. "I'm tired of preaching." So an hour message or a forty-five minute message is down in some places to a fourteen minute message. People are doing what makes them feel better about the service rather than coming back to the way that God said, "This is the way the message is going to get into this world. It's going to be by preaching. And this message will be the message of the cross of Christ." It's not just the preaching, remember, but the content which is the cross of Christ.

What did Paul mean by the foolishness of the message? Let me tell you something. The message of the cross, us being crucified with Christ, us understanding that Christ had to be crucified for us, that message automatically makes man admit that he's a sinner. We don't like that. We like to boast in what we know. We like to boast in what we can do. We like to boast in what we have. We want the attention to come to us. But the message of the cross takes all the attention off us, puts us in our place and shows us what we're not. It shows us that we were such sinners that no man's wisdom could come up with a method of getting us to God. God had to come to us and build a bridge. God had to send His Son to die on the cross. Our flesh does not want to hear the message of the cross. It wants to hear all the other stuff but not the message of the cross.

Romans just fills in the blanks. Whenever you're kind of worried about anything, go back to Romans. Romans somehow will cover it. That's the constitution of our faith. Romans 1:21 says, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile [this is the picture of all the Gentile nations of the world from which we have come] in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became [what?] 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." Here we are today, living in a state where we'll spend millions to save a snail-darter but we'll let an unborn child be aborted. That's what's happened to man. We're upside down. And the wisdom of man, what he calls intelligence, God says is foolishness because man will not recognize his need of a savior. Man will not recognize the fact that he's in the state of being a sinner because of Adam.

We saw in 1 Corinthians 1:20 that the world at that time was composed of the Jews and the Gentiles. Look over in 1Cor 1:22 and you'll see this was all Paul knew. Who's he talking about when he says, "the foolishness and the wisdom of the world"? He's just talking about people groups, folks. It's the same way today. One's the Jews and one's the Gentiles. You've got two people groups during this period. There is another group but it's something different. I'll show you in a moment. Why do they think the preaching of the cross is such foolishness? Why would the Jews think it's foolish? Why would the Gentiles think it's foolishness? Because that's all he had to deal with. It's very simply seen.

It says in 1Cor 1:22, "For indeed Jews ask for signs." Now the word for "ask" is much stronger than ask. It means demand. In other words, the Jew, upon hearing the message of the cross, would say, "Hold it, hold it. Show me some miracles. Show me some signs. Show me something that tells me that Jesus truly is Yeshua, the true Messiah. I want to see a sign. I want to see a miracle." You can understand why they feel that way. God used signs. The word is semeion. It refers to miracles.

As a matter of fact, you often see it combined with "wonders," which has the idea that this miracle was of such degree that it was a wonder to the point I'll keep it in my mind. The two kind of go together that way. But the signs are the key. Miracles, that which is extraordinary, those things that only God can do that's beyond human thinking. God used those signs. These were fingerprints of God and the Jew wanted those fingerprints on everything that they heard. If those fingerprints were not there, they looked at whatever message that was preached as foolishness. The Jews wanted God's fingerprint.

We know from the book of Deuteronomy God had used miracles all along their way. Every time He dealt with them there was a miracle. You can understand why they developed this mentality. In Deuteronomy 4:34 it says, "Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched

arm and by great terrors, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" It says in Deuteronomy 5:15, "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the sabbath day." Over and over and over again you see the miraculous signs and wonders that God would use in the nation of Israel.

Now what did this do for Israel? I'll tell you what it did for them. It made them grow complacent and they lost all their spiritual discernment. If it wasn't a miracle, if it wasn't something that was earth-shaking, if it wasn't something that was extraordinary, they rejected the message. So the message of Christ crucified, to them, it's total foolishness, you see. Therefore, they only picked certain prophets to listen to. That's kind of like a cafeteria line. The Scribes and the Pharisees and the elders would go by and say, "Oh, I like this story. I like this one. I like this one, but I don't like that one. Don't like that one. Don't like that one, but I like this one." They got so confused looking for the miraculous power of God rather than Jesus coming and dying on a cross that.

When He resurrected, two of the disciples were walking down the road to Emmaus and Jesus had to come alongside them. He said, "Hey, guys, what are you talking about?" And they said, "Don't you know what's been going on this weekend?" I guess He did. He was kind of the center of attention. But He kind of acted like He didn't. He said, "No, tell me about it." And they told Him about how Jesus was crucified and they said, "Oh, we're so discouraged. We thought He was going to set up His kingdom." You see, Israel always looked for that kind of thing, power, big, exciting, awesome. So as a result of that, in Luke 24:25 we read, "And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken?'" You grabbed this piece and you grabbed that piece but you missed Isaiah 53. It says, "He'll be wounded for our transgressions." And all the passages that talk about the sacrificial death of Jesus upon the cross, you picked this one and that one. You're looking for signs. You're looking for wonders. You're not looking for the true wisdom of God which is in the message of Christ and Him crucified. So to the Jews, it was foolishness to them.

As a matter of fact, it was a stumbling block. That word "stumbling block" there in 1 Corinthians 1:23 is not stumbling block really, it's skandalon, which is a trap. But it's more than that. It's the trigger that sets that trap off. Those traps, by the way, were a death trap. If you have mice in your house, you put a little cheese or a little peanut butter on a trap and put the top over it. It's kind of like a little trigger. If the mouse touches that, it sets the trap off, but they don't know what's coming. Smack!! It's a death trap.

They considered the preaching of the cross a death trap to them. Why would they consider it to be a death trap? Because for a Jew to accept the message of the crucified Lord Jesus on the cross, was for them to have fallen into a death trap. They'd have to cut themselves off from family and friends and deny everything their religion taught them from that point on because they became new creatures in Christ. No more need to go to the temple. No more need for this and this and this. It just cut it off. So it was a death trap to the Jews. This was their wisdom, you see. Their wisdom was a system, a form, and that which looked for signs and wonders. It didn't look for the message of the cross. It was a stumbling block to the Jews.

But the Greeks were a little bit different. The Greeks, you see, didn't have a Bible. They didn't have all the prophecies. They didn't have the prophets. They didn't have all these things behind them. They were searching for wisdom it says. The Jews demand a sign; the Greeks search for wisdom. By the way, we all mostly came out of the Gentile world. You may be a converted Jewish person but most of us came from the Gentile world. And the Gentile world, since they didn't have the Scriptures, debated and discussed and searched out wisdom for themselves. The word for search is zeteo. It means to zealously look for something.

There are a lot of people who search for wisdom. They'll spend hours and hours and hours. That's the Greek mindset. They want to come up with the conclusion themselves. Why? So they can point back to themselves as being wise enough for having discovered it. That's the intellect. Do you know anybody like that, trying to figure out everything the Word of God has to say, trying to always wrestle with something, always learning but failing to come to an understanding of the truth? That's the intellect.

So the Greek world, the Gentile world, represented the intellectual pursuit. The Jewish world looked for signs and wonders. So the gospel, that message of the cross, was foolishness to both groups. It was a deathtrap to the Jews, it was foolishness to the Greek. The Greek couldn't stand to think of his sins, first of all even being there, but secondly being expiated by the shed blood of a person on a horrible cross. Crucifixion was the worst kind of death. They couldn't handle this. You would never walk into the academia of that time and preach Jesus crucified because they'd throw it right back in your face. They'd laugh you out of the room. "What do you mean? We're not even sinners, much less have to have our sins cleansed by the shedding of a man's blood." So they saw it as foolishness.

By the way, folks, while we're in this, the world hasn't changed much, has it? There are still two groups of people. It's not any different. You've got that group who will only believe something if they have the signs and the wonders. They don't like the message of the cross. You see, the message of the cross is not just what saves you. The message of the cross continues through your sanctification and we must remember that. You don't take the cross out of your vocabulary. Just because you're a believer does not mean that you don't have to daily reckon yourself to be dead. That's why we hate the message of the cross.

Paul said in Philippians, "I say this with weeping. There are people among us that are enemies of the cross and I'll tell you where they are. They're over here looking for signs and wonders or they're over here trying to figure it out. They don't want to die to themselves. They don't want to reckon themselves to be dead. They don't want to see themselves for how the cross makes them see one another."

I'll tell you, it's scary, folks. People don't want to hear the message of the cross any more. But that's the day we're living in, folks. The message of the cross is not wanting to be heard by anybody. It never has been popular because it makes a man realize that he has to recognize what he's not. It makes a man come to grips with the facts. He's got to understand to say "Yes" to Jesus and saying "Yes" to Jesus is saying "No" to his flesh. We don't want to do that. That's why marriages and everybody else is upside down sometimes because people don't want to hear that message, to go home and die to self. It's not them. It's me. I've got to die to me, reckon myself to be dead as He put me to death on the cross and rise to walk in newness of His life. We don't want to hear that anymore.

The problem with the preaching of the cross is it's just not popular, never has been. Do you know why? Because it takes all of our wisdom and all that which we would take credit for and puts it to death and stomps it in the floor and puts it on the cross with Jesus and says, "Now, whatever you are is because of Him and His wisdom and what He has done for you." But to the world it's foolishness, those looking for a sign and those wanting to try to figure it out for themselves.

The Power of the Message of The Cross

The second thing, however, is the power of the preaching of the cross. You've got two sides to this thing. You've got a problem, but look what he says here in 1Cor 1:24: "but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks [that same message we're talking about], Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." You see, there really are three groups, aren't they? Let's make sure we understand that.

Look over in 1 Corinthians 10:32. I'll show you there are three groups. There is the Jewish wisdom; there is the Greek wisdom and they see the message of the cross as foolishness; but look here, there's another group. "Give no offense either to Jews [that's one group] or to Greeks [that's the other group] or to the church of God." Whoa! Whoa! Do you mean there's a third group? That's right. The third group is those who are the called ones.

We've seen the word "called" already in this chapter. In 1:1 we saw that Paul said he was "called as an apostle." They didn't have punctuation marks so we don't know if he meant called as an apostle or called apostle. "I'm a believer first, the called ones, then I'm an apostle, one sent forth especially commissioned by God for the doctrine of the New Testament." It has to be in that order. Kletos is the word "called" in the plural. Every times it's used in Scripture it means the called ones. Now, what I want you to see is the emphasis is not on them calling themselves out. It's on Him calling them. You see, they're in the wisdom of the world. The cross is foolishness, but one day the cross gets hold of them and God takes that message and calls them to Himself. That's the whole idea.

1Cor 1:9 shows it very clearly: "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." I want to time-out here just a second because I've been wrestling with this. Have you wrestled with this? Can a man resist the grace of God, the calling of God? I've really struggled with it. The older I'm getting the more I'm coming to the fact that I don't believe he can.

But you see, the whole emphasis here is on the fact that salvation came from God. It did not come from man at all. We tend to sometimes say that we're on one side but drift over here and make the responsibility man's when it's really God. God even gives us the faith to believe. But there's a verse that hit me this time. Listen to the statement that Jesus makes over in Matthew 22:14. He seems to imply two callings here: "For many are called, but few are chosen." I'm thinking, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute." The many are called. There's a general calling to everyone. We're encased with the wisdom of God and God beckons each one of us constantly. But there seems to be a specific call.

Spurgeon made a statement that really makes a lot of sense to me. He said, "There are two different kinds of callings." He likens it to the bell that sounds over the workshop to call men to work. This is a general call. Every man is called. Kind of like a dinner bell: "Okay, we're eating. If you don't come, it's your fault." The call is there. But then there's a father who goes to the door and opens the door and says, "Johnny, it's time for supper." There's a big difference in that specific call than that general call which is issued there.

I've been thinking about that. You pray for me. I may change my mind. The more I thought about that, the more I realized that you may resist it for a while but ultimately you will submit to it. The apostle Paul, I think, resisted it for years in his life. He was around it all the time. God was on his case. He wouldn't turn to him. Finally one day on the Damascus Road he responded.

Salvation is of God. It's His message. It's His doing. It's His Son who came and died on the cross for you and me. And when a person is saved, they better wake up and begin to understand this is not because you're so smart you found Jesus. I hate those little bumper stickers that say, "I Found Jesus." You did not! He found you and you finally woke up to the fact. He knew you before you

ever knew Him. We need to realize this.

In Romans he doesn't even bring it up until the 8th chapter. Do you know why I think he doesn't? It's because it's a family word. It's special to the family, to understand, I'm in this not because of my doing or because of my wisdom but because of the power and the wisdom of God that brought me to this place. I'll tell you. You just think about it. He knew our warts before the world was ever created. He knew all of our sin. He knew the garbage of our flesh. What did you say this past week that you're ashamed of? Just think back. "Oh, I lived so good last week. I just can't wait to have another week." Climb down off that pedestal. Oh, you sinner! Good grief! All of us struggle with flesh, don't we? But God knew that and at the same time God loved us in spite of it and called us. I'll tell you, it will make your salvation a little bit different, put it in a brand new dimension, when you realize God's the one who came after you and called you.

Well, Paul goes on: "but to those who are the called." The called ones came out of the Jews and the Greeks. That's what God promised Abraham: through Israel would all nations be blessed. He said, "but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." It's all wrapped up in one person. Christ is the power of God and Christ is the wisdom of God. He's the treasurer of all knowledge and wisdom. So, therefore, if you want wisdom, you turn to what God has to say and what God has done for you. Not only the wisdom to come up with the plan of salvation, but the power to carry it out, you see. It's all wrapped up in God, and God, with that one message of the Gospel and how He came and Christ was crucified, put to shame the wisdom of this world. Just literally brought an end to the wise and put a lid over the people who call themselves clever. Because this is wisdom that man could have never thought of. And if we're saved today, it's because of Him and His message.

Now listen, go back to the context. Paul is saying, "Don't ever attach yourself to a man who's got the message right because the only reason he has it right is by the grace, the power and the wisdom of God who brought him to that message." Listen to the message and let the message bring you back to your attachment to Christ and you'll not divide and conquer. There will not be exclusiveness in the body of Christ. There will not be divisions and schisms and rendering and ripping and tearing because when we're following after Him, His Spirit living in us will unite us together. That's how the church walks united, keeping their focus and their attachment on the One who is their origin and the empowerment of the very message of the cross in our life.

This week, when you're going about your daily tasks, remember something. Your identity now is in Christ. Any demand that God puts on you this next week is not a demand on you. It's a demand on His life that He has placed within you. So don't come up with the old excuse "I can't." It's really, "I won't." God has given us His life to live within us. We're dead in Him and raised to walk in the newness of life. Whose life? His life. Paul says in Colossians, "Christ is our life." And the message of the cross continues on every day. When I have to make a decision, I choose either between His wisdom, His word, His will, or I choose between my own will. You see, if I make the choice here, then I have put my identity back on the cross where I belong. The flesh is dead and I have said "Yes" to what God wants in my life. That's not a message people want to hear. But it's a message you better hear. I had better hear it because the cross is where Jesus saved us by dying for us. But the cross also is where we find our identity and that's where sanctification takes place, from that place as we reckon ourselves dead and alive to His Word and His wisdom and His will in our life. But the message of the cross is not what our flesh likes to hear. When your flesh is pampered, you haven't heard from God. But when your flesh is offended, you have just heard from God and it's the message of Christ and Him crucified and your identity with His crucifixion.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 That No Man Should Boast

Oh, how God knows the heart and the mind of man. He knows what man thinks he can do. He knows what man thinks he knows. He knows what man thinks he is by what he has. And God has so come up with wisdom, the preaching of the cross that just puts all of this to shame.

We are going to focus on 1Cor 1:26 through 1Cor 1:31. We are going to talk about "That No Man Should Boast." These are some of the most exciting verses in the New Testament. Oh, how God knows the heart and the mind of man. He knows what man thinks he can do. He knows what man thinks he knows. He knows what man thinks he is by what he has. And God has so come up with wisdom, the preaching of the cross that just puts all of this to shame.

The Observation

Now there are three things here that we need to see. When you first read these scriptures you might get the wrong idea of them, so the first thing I want you to see is the observation Paul wants the people to make. In the context of comparing the foolishness of man to the wisdom of God, there is an observation they need to make. First Corinthians 1:26 says, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble."

We must understand that God is not a respecter of persons. You could read this wrong. You could think that God is against the rich, the strong and the intelligent. That is not at all what the Scripture is saying. And when you learn to make the same observation Paul wanted them to make, you can understand where he is coming from with what he is saying.

Look in John 6:37. I want to show you that God is no respecter of persons. He doesn't look down on this earth and say, "You are rich; I won't choose you. You are strong; I won't choose you. You are wise; I won't choose you." That is not what God does. That is not even what Paul is saying. Whether you are rich or poor, it doesn't matter; you will come to Him on the basis of faith. John 6:37 says, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." So it doesn't matter. He didn't say the one who is poor, He said, "the one who comes." It doesn't matter whether you are rich, intelligent, poor or whatever. As long as you come on the basis of faith receiving Christ Jesus, He will not cast you out.

You could get from the verse that God is a respecter of persons and doesn't like the people who are rich; He doesn't like the people who are strong; and He doesn't like the people who are intelligent. If that were true, then Paul wouldn't even have been saved. Apart from Jesus Himself, Paul was the most intelligent man in all the New Testament. I love what the apostle Peter said about him. He said, "You know, our brother Paul says some things that are hard for us to understand." I mean, Paul was an intelligent man, and God used that ability, but He filled it with His wisdom and His Word and His ways. So it is not a respecter of persons he is talking about.

The fact is those who were the wise and the noble and the strong in the world were not in the context of the believers there in Corinth. It is not because God is a respecter of persons. It is because of their wisdom, their strength and their nobility that they saw the preaching of the cross as foolishness. So Paul is saying to look around them. Look at the church at Corinth. Look at the people who are in it. And I promise you, there are not many wise, there are not many noble, there are not many strong, you see not many mighty.

Look in 1Cor 1:22 again. I want to make sure now that you are catching this, because there were only two groups of people at that time, Jews and Gentiles. And these were the ones who proclaimed themselves to be all of these things above. He says in 1Cor 1:22, "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness." Then Paul wants them to observe this. He says, "Just look around you."

Look at the first phrase of 1Cor 1:26. "For consider your calling, brethren." The word "consider" is the word *blepo*. Normally it is translated "to see," "to look at something." But here it has more of the idea, yes, observe, but consider, do some reasoning here. He is telling them to look at the congregation that they are in Corinth. How many wise people do you find in it? How many mighty people do you find in it? How many noble people do you find in it? You don't find many who are in the calling with which you have been called.

He says, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." The word "wise" means wise according to this world. The word for "mighty" is *dunatos*. It means those who are strong within themselves: they can do it, they can do it, they can.

And the word for "noble" is the word *eugenes*. You could translate it "good genes." They came from the good genes. They have good families, money and a pedigree. Paul says, "Look around you. You don't find many of these in the kingdom of God. You don't find many of these in the church." And it is not because God is a respecter of persons. It is because these are the people who consider the gospel to be foolishness. They consider the word of the cross to be foolishness. Now if they are in the kingdom it is not because of their wisdom. It is certainly not because of their strength. It is not because of their nobility. It is because of the grace of God. But there are not many who are a part of the chosen ones, a part of the called ones.

I love the Word of God and when you start looking at this, it just follows a pattern all the way through. As a matter of fact, later on Paul is going to quote Jeremiah 9:24. But if you will look back at Jeremiah 9:23, it will show you that he mentions all three of these things. And the implication is that man is so proud of his wisdom, man is so proud of his ability, man is so proud of his nobility and his riches and what he has, he doesn't think he needs God. And he boasts and he brags about these things. Look at Jeremiah 9:23. It is incredible how Paul is just reaching back into the Old Testament and bringing these truths right in light of the Corinthian church. I guarantee you, you look at the church of Jesus Christ today and there are not many wise and not many noble and not many mighty in our church either; because you see, these people think they don't need the gospel. They are not lost. Their money will get them to heaven. Their ability will get them to heaven. Or their wisdom will help them to figure it out. They don't need Christ. In Jeremiah 9:23 it says, "Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches.'" Boom, boom, boom. That is exactly what Paul is talking about. Evidently they had the same problem in Israel that the church was having in Corinth. People are proud within themselves.

Don't we like to boast of these things? Have you ever tried to talk to somebody who was a real thinker and he looked at the gospel and saw it as simplistic and foolishness? Or have you ever tried to talk to somebody who is a self-made man in his business? I

mean, he has brought himself up from his boot straps and you try to share the gospel with him. And he says, "What in the world do I need that for? I have built a business. I can do whatever I need to do." These people don't have any reason for the gospel, you see. That is why there are not many of them among the called ones.

We love to boast but that boasting usually costs us, doesn't it? We love to tell people about what we have, what we know, what we can do. But those are the very things that make us think that the gospel is foolishness because we can save ourselves. We can do it ourselves. We can come up with a better plan. We have riches. Who needs God? And that is the reason there are not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble in the body of Christ.

He says very clearly there, "For consider your calling [he talks about their [[salvation]]], brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." That is the observation Paul wants them to make. If you will look around you today, it is the same thing. The people out there that you want to know the gospel are too proud. They show their foolishness by thinking that the message of the cross is foolishness. That shows you how foolish they really are. So Paul says, "Observe the believers around you."

The Truth

Now, the second thing he wants them to do is so critical to this text. There is a truth that Paul wants them to understand. It is found in 1Cor 1:27 and 1Cor 1:28. He says, "But God 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." Now the word "chosen" is the key word. It comes from two Greek words, the word *ek*, which means out of, and the word *lego*, which means to say something with full expression and intelligence in the thought. The idea came to mean to select someone, to make a choice of someone in a lineup of others. Random choosing does not fit this, so if you think that God just randomly chooses, no, sir; it is a special selection – yes... that one right there. And amongst many, He chooses certain ones.

It is so important to realize what this word means. It is kind of like when you think of man choosing somebody to work for him and so he has a group of applicants who come. They give him the application. He looks through them and finds two or three who look pretty good. He calls a special conference and gets all the information he possibly can before he makes his choice. Then finally, he makes his choice. That is the way man does it. Man is limited. Man doesn't know everything, so he does the best he possibly can. He gets as much information as he possibly can. You see in the business world how this works.

That is the way it is in our choices. You can see it in marriages. How many times have you seen a couple come for pre-marital counseling and you say, "Listen, you are going to have to go through counseling." They say, "No, no, no. We don't need it. This is the right one. We know it is the right one. We have chosen." Yeah, right! And six months to a year later on they are coming back and saying, "Oh, we made a bad choice, you see. We didn't have all the information."

I am saying that for a reason. When man makes a choice, and it is always limited because man does not have enough information to know that he is making the right choice. But, this is not talking about man's choosing. This is talking about God choosing. Now you have got to understand this. What the world thinks is foolish and weak God chooses. He makes perfect choices and His perfect choices are based upon His omniscience. What is that? That means God knows everything. He is in full control. He knows exactly what He is doing. And when He makes a choice, He never misses anything. It is exactly the right choice. Whatever He does, whatever He selects, whatever circumstances there are that the world looks at as foolish, as the world looks at as weak, etc., God sees it as wise because it is a perfect choice.

The word "chosen" is used three times in 1Cor 1:27-28 in bringing out the point that we are looking at. God chooses perfect things. Look at 1Cor 1:27 again: "but God has chosen the foolish things of the world." Are they foolish to God? No, they are not foolish to God. He is perfect in His choices. But they are foolish to the world, understand that. When it says foolish things, it means foolish as the way we would see them: "to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong." Look in 1Cor 1:28: "and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are."

Now, with that in mind you have to realize that He makes perfect choices, but His choices are also very purposeful. Why would He choose what in man's mind was foolishness? The verse explains beautifully what He is doing. The word *hina* isn't in your scripture. It says He chooses the foolish to shame the wise. The word "to," *hina*, means in order that. It helps you understand there is a purpose. It is a purpose clause. God chooses what is foolish to the world's eyes in order that He has a purpose behind it. It is a perfect choice that has a perfect purpose in what He is doing.

Now, let's look at that. What are some of the things he mentions here? God chooses that which is foolish. Why? He says, "To shame the wise." When Paul uses the word "foolish" there with a definite article, it could be the foolish people He uses. In context that is probably where he is going. However, with a definite article behind it, it categorizes whatever choices He makes. It can be foolish things. It can be foolish circumstances in your life. The world looks at it and says, "That is foolish." The world looks at it and says,

"That is weak. That is not anything." And God says, "That is a perfect choice and it has a purpose in it."

God does that in order to what? To shame the wise. Now Paul is jumping in. Now he has been telling them about the foolishness of man and the wisdom of God. Man keeps rejecting God's message. The word "to shame" is kataischuno. There are several words for shame. This particular word means to be humiliated or to be embarrassed. Now what is God's plan? God sees man in his arrogance walking around boasting in what he knows. And God says, "I will show man. I will embarrass him. I will humiliate his wisdom by choosing what he thinks is foolish to accomplish My perfect goal of salvation in people's lives." The word has the idea to leave them dumbfounded. They won't have an idea of what is going on. Their wisdom can't come up with it. They can't come to any conclusion based upon their wisdom that would even fit in the category of what God does.

Let's illustrate that for a second. When God wanted to heal a man's eyes, did He always do it the same way? One time He took mud and put it in a man's eyes. Now why did He do that? That was kind of foolish to the people of that day. One time He spit and took the spittle and the mud and put it in the man's eyes. Another time He spoke and a man was healed. Now why didn't He do it the same way? You see, this is God. God, making perfect choices, has a purpose in making those perfect choices, and that is always to confuse and dumbfound men who think they are wise within themselves.

Vance Havner used to say, "One got his eyes healed when they put the mud in them. And then there was another little boy who got his eyes healed when they put the spittle on his eyes. And the other fellow, he got his healed when Jesus spoke." He said, "If that had been in the 20th century, there would be three denominations come out of that: the mudites, the spitites and the speakites." Everybody would have attached themselves to a man who had a message. But the messenger which is God Himself says, "Hey, I won't always do it the same way. And what I do is never to bring glory to man. It is to bring shame to the wisdom of man. It is to bring glory to Myself." He uses the things that are foolish to shame the things that are wise.

When God wanted Joseph to be exalted, what plan did He take? Man would have said, "Oh, I have got a great plan. Let's let him go to school, get a Ph.D. and we will put him right at the top." No, God had his brothers sell him into slavery. He was thrown into a pit, taken over into Egypt, then was falsely accused, spent years of his life in prison on a false charge and finally was exalted as the second man in Egypt. And when his brothers came to him, he said, "You meant it for my harm, but God meant it for good." Now, you tell that to an ordinary man who is trying to figure all these things out, he would say that is foolishness. And that is the very purpose for which God does it the way He does it, to confound man, to dumbfound man, to help man understand that he needs a wisdom beyond himself if he is ever going to get in touch with a holy God.

In Judges we see this over and over again. Ehud was the left-handed judge God used in a very special way. Gideon was there in the wine press. The Midianites had come in the eighth year, and he was out there trying to get a little wheat. God said, "Hey, thou mighty man of valor." An intelligent person looking at this would say, "This is just dumb. Why didn't He pick somebody strong, truly a man of valor?" Because God was going to make him that because God was coming to do in him what he couldn't do himself. He even narrowed his men down to 300 men. I mean, that was Gideon.

Deborah went up against 900 iron chariots. What is God doing, picking a woman to be the judge of Israel when Caisa has 900 iron chariots? Because God makes choices that man thinks are foolish. But they are perfect choices. And they are very purposeful. They are to shame the wisdom of the wise. So there is a purpose in this. You have got to embrace that. And the fact that God chooses things that men see as foolishness is many times the detriment to the wise, to the strong and to the noble. They look at that and say, "Ah, I can't buy into that. It doesn't make any sense to me."

Wasn't it Kareem Abdul Jabbar who said the reason he couldn't embrace Christianity is he couldn't accept the three headed God? Well, bless your heart, Kareem. You mean you can't understand a three headed God? Neither can we. If you could, He wouldn't be any bigger than your brain. You bow before Him and you trust Him and you confess Jesus to be your Lord and your Savior. You see, those who are strong and mighty and rich see the foolish things that God does as foolishness. But God sees it as a perfect and purposeful choice that He has made.

Well, God chooses the weak things. God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. That is a precious thought. The word "weak" is the word asthenes. It is the same word used in James 5 which everybody translates as "sick." Not necessarily. It can be somebody who is weak and powerless. It means they are totally unable to help themselves. The idea here is that God chooses that which the world looks at as weak, but it is a perfect choice and it is a purposeful choice. God has a purpose in it, to shame the strength of this world. You know, when He looked at Simon Peter, instead of taking the things that the world sees as strong, God chose tenderness and love and forgiveness and pity and mercy and meekness. The world sees that all as weak.

After Simon promised Him, "I will go with you, Lord," He said, "You will deny me three times." He didn't ask him, "Simon, are you strong enough to go into battle and fight for Me?" That would have really spoken to his flesh. That would have made sense to Simon Peter. He would have said, "Absolutely, I will go in there for You." But see, Jesus didn't do that. He chose the things that are weak. He says, "Simon, do you love Me?" And the world says, "What are you talking about? Love? Man, we are talking about a kingdom

here.” See, God chooses what the world thinks is weak to do one basic thing, to prove out how weak the world’s strength really is. He is shaming the strength of the world. If God could save the world through strength, why not try it?

You know, strength and force have done a lot of things. Have you ever studied the crusades and the holy wars? They tried to make everybody Christians by force. That has never worked, and it never will work. God wants them to see that. You don’t go the way of force. What I choose, perfect choice, is that which is weak to bring shame to those things you call strong.

Galileo made the statement that the earth revolves around the sun while the typical person of that day said, “No, the sun revolves around the earth.” They put him in jail. They treated him terribly. They tried to force him to admit that he was wrong. But he didn’t until the day he died. He said, “I am telling you, you are wrong.” You see, you can’t do it by force. God knows that. So God chooses the things that the world sees as weak, things such as tenderness, as I said a moment ago and love, and forgiveness and those kinds of things. And the world says, “Ah, that is never going to work.” And God says, “Yes, it will.”

By the way, husband, if you have a wife and there is a problem between the two of you and you want her to submit to you, you don’t walk in your house and use force to get her to do that. You have to go the way of the cross and the wisdom of God. You come in, submit to Him, bow down before Him and let Him produce love and tenderness and forgiveness in your life. And as a result of that, she will submit to your leadership because she can trust the One who lives in you. That is the way God is, folks. He never does it man’s way. He won’t do it man’s way. Because what He does is perfect and purposeful. He is putting to shame the wisdom and strength of man.

1Cor 1:28 says, “the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are.” Let’s look at them one at a time. He says first of all “the base things of the world.” That is the word *agenes*. Do you remember the word *eugenes* that we saw a while ago? This is the exact opposite. A while ago they had good genes, and here they have no genes. These are the ones who have no nobility at all. They have no pedigree at all. They have no riches. They are the poor of the earth. That is the base things of the world. That is what the world sees them as, too. If you are not successful, if you don’t have your name in Fortune Magazine, then you are nothing. And God chooses the people who aren’t anybody for a purpose, you see.

He also chooses the despised. The word “despised” is the word that means scorned, contemptible of man. God has chosen the things that are not. This was the highest insult to a Gentile or especially a Greek because to the Greek, the whole thing was in being, in existing, in all their writings. This expression meant that you think you are something but you are nothing. God chooses the nothings of this world. I mean, the world would laugh and spit on them. They are nothing. That is exactly the perfect, purposeful choice that God makes, to put the world in their wisdom and shut them up and cover up the cleverness of the prudent, as He says over in the Old Testament. He put an end to their wisdom to show them that they are not as smart as they think they are. The message of the cross defies human logic and human wisdom.

Look at the people God used who were nothing. Just think about it for a second. One of them I like is John the Baptist. He came out of the wilderness with skins on him eating bugs. John the Baptist had no formal education, no training in a trade or profession, no money, no military rank, no political position, no social pedigree, no prestige, no impressive appearance or oratory. And yet Jesus said in Matthew 11:11, “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist.”

The greatest example is Jesus Himself: born of a virgin, born in humble circumstances, no room for Him in the inn. And the very fact that He grew up poor and the fact that when He came on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He didn’t come with an army behind Him. He came riding a donkey and He went to die. And the Jewish mind says, “That is foolish.” And the Greek says, “That is foolish.” And God says, “It is perfect. It is perfect. And it accomplishes My purpose and puts an end to the wisdom of the vain people on this earth who think they are wise in themselves.”

So the message of the cross, folks, is so important here. There are not many mighty and not many wise and not many noble in the body of Christ. It is not because God doesn’t love them and didn’t die for them. It is because they see in themselves what they need. They don’t see a need outside of themselves. God saves the intelligent. Thank God He does. He saves the strong. He saves the noble. But not many, because they just won’t give Him time of day. They don’t need Him. They have got everything they need.

It is not that God shuns these people, but God has actually made a choice to choose what they think is foolish and what they think is weak and what they think is base and despised and the things that aren’t for one reason. His purpose is to shame their own wisdom and to show them that He alone is the wise one who can save each of us.

The Reasoning

Thirdly, there is God’s reasoning that Paul wanted them to embrace. That is so critical, I think, here. He is bringing them to a point here. By telling them all this, he is telling them, “Don’t embrace man. Embrace the message of the cross. Embrace Christ, but don’t embrace man. Don’t attach yourself to man.” The reasoning in this is, to me, so beautiful how he brings it out. Why does God use

the foolish in all these things? 1Cor 1:29 nails it. It says, "that no man should boast before God." That is it, bottom line. No man can stand up and say, "Aha, I'm saved, but it is because of my intelligence," as the Gnostics did of that day. And no man could stand up and say, "I am saved based on my strength. I can do it myself," as the Pharisee would say of that day. And no man can stand up and say, "I am the noble one and because of my family line, God must accept me." You see, no man can do that. It has nothing to do with any of that. That is foolishness to God. He has chosen another way. And when a man comes to the cross and admits what he is not and admits that he is in need and that he is a sinner and that he is desperate for God's grace, then the man becomes wise with the wisdom of God and salvation is the result of it.

The word "boast" there is *kauchaomai*. It is the word that comes from the root word *aucheo*. It is the same word Paul uses in Romans 15. I want you to see this. Look at Ro 15:17, 18 of Romans 15. Here is a man who knew something about boasting in his wisdom, his own strength and his own nobility. It was the apostle Paul. Anybody who would write this had to be a changed man because he is the epitome of everything he says that God says is foolish. There was a time when all he did was boast in what he could do and what he knew and what he had. Romans 15:17-18 says, "Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God." Boy, what a powerful verse there. *Kauchaomai* is the word "boast" there. I found a reason to stand up and shout out of things pertaining to God.

Then verse 18 continues, "For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles." I want to tell you something. If you will look at Paul's life, God had him do some foolish things in the world's eyes to accomplish the goals that God had. By the way, let me just subtly bring this in. This is mainly to the lost who think God's message of the cross is foolish. I want to tell you something. As soon as you become saved, you have the same battle. Are you going to come to the Word or are you going to come to the reasoning of man? And folks, the moment you depart from God's wisdom and His Word and the message of the cross, you have just proclaimed to the world how stupid you have really chosen to be. Because anything outside the wisdom of God and the message of His cross is foolishness as far as God is concerned and all eternity is concerned and will not bring about the spiritual end you desire in your life. Only what God says, only dying to self, the message of the cross, continues on after we are saved. It continues on. We die daily so that we continue to live in the wisdom that God has for us. God tolerates no man's boasting in himself. Salvation is something that man's mind could never come up with or figure out.

The message of the cross is something money can't buy. It is something intelligence cannot figure out. It is something that nobility cannot deserve. It is a gift by the grace of God.

Look at 1Cor 1:30. He says, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus [you used to be in Adam but now you are in Christ Jesus, and by His doing, not yours], who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and [[sanctification]], and redemption." Somebody says, "Oh, I want that wisdom. If my wisdom is foolish, I want the wisdom of God." Then you come to Christ at the cross and Christ will give you wisdom. And Christ will give you righteousness. And Christ will give you [[sanctification]]. It all is in Him, you see. He is the only one who can supply it. A believer is given redemption in Christ, not only from the penalty of his sin, the power of his sin, but the promise that one day, even from the presence of sin.

Then the apostle Paul turns and looks back to the Old Testament and takes Jeremiah 9:24. I read Jer 9:23 a moment ago. He says in 1 Corinthians 1:31, "that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" Jer 9:24 says, "But let him who boasts, boast of this, that he understands and knows Me that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth. For I delight in these things, declares the Lord."

You see, man in no way ever deserved or earned God's wisdom, God's righteousness, God's sanctification and His redemption. No way in the world. We are not smart enough to figure it out. We are not noble enough to deserve it. And we are not strong enough to achieve it. It has to be given to us as we receive the message of the cross. It is at the cross where we die and are buried and are raised to walk in newness of His life. In Him we have wisdom. And in Him we have our righteousness. And in Him we have our sanctification. And in Him we have our redemption. That is the message. And no man can stand and boast before God. It is for this reason that we can never boast of any of these things.

I want to make sure you remember that this truth does not change once you get saved. God will do some things in your life and allow some things in your life you would look at and say, "That is utter foolishness." But be careful. When you come back to Christ you may see the divine wisdom in it, for His choices are perfect and His choices are purposeful in your life. Living under the Word, living at the cross, reckoning yourself to be dead makes you wise and will effect righteousness in your life, will set you apart unto Him and will give you the benefits of all that redemption from the power of sin as you live day by day.

I was preaching at a church recently and I said, "I am not much of a counselor." You all have heard me say that. I said, "People come to me, and I look at it simply. My whole mind set is, 'Read it. Do you believe it?'" And if they do, I say, "Go live it. I am going fishing." That is the way I look at it. I have said that and it is as honest as I know how to say it. I get tired of people who don't want help. Ninety percent of people don't want help, they just want relief.

After the service was over a lady came to me. She was from California and she was visiting. She walked up to me and said, "Did I hear you say something?" I am thinking, "Oh, dear God." I said, "I don't know. What did you hear?" "Did you say that you don't like to counsel people?" I said, "Absolutely, I did say that." She said, "Do you tell me that you just tell people if they believe it to go on and live it and go on." I said, "Yes, ma'am, I said that." "Oh, I would never want to be a member of this church." I said, "Well, I am not the pastor of this church. I am a pastor of another church someplace else." She didn't know that, and she said, "Well, I tell you what, we just suffered the loss of a loved one and that is the most calloused, uncaring thing I have ever heard in my life."

She didn't hear the context or anything else that I had said it in. Inside of me, my wisdom was, "God, this lady acts like she loves You. I am going to send her home! Bam! Here she comes, Lord!" That is my wisdom. Or, I could have easily in five minutes made her look like she was the biggest fool who ever walked the face of this earth. But somehow that wisdom didn't quite measure up to the Word that I have studied. There was a voice inside of me saying, "If you are going to be wise, you had better not do what your flesh is telling you to do. That will prove that you are stupid and you are not willing to live in the wisdom of God. You had better die to self, take your identity at the cross and let Jesus be Jesus in you."

And just in a split second, I made the choice and the words came out of my mouth. I said, "I am so sorry. Never in a million years would I have said this to hurt you." And I wouldn't. I said, "My little baby is in heaven. My Mother and Father and all my grandparents, my wife's Dad. I have more on that side than I have on this side and I can fully understand what you have been through. I wish my message today had been in the context of your suffering." I put my hands on her shoulder and I said, "Listen, I am really sorry. Can I pray with you in the midst of your need?" Tears welled up in her eyes. And when she walked out of there, I honestly believe that she didn't walk out an enemy, she walked out a friend.

My wisdom said, "That is stupid." But God chooses the things that the world thinks are weak in order to put to shame the strength of the world. Forgiveness, tenderness, love. You can't produce it. You can't fake it. You have got to be at the cross. The Holy Spirit of God produces it. That is the key.

We see Princeton and Yale and other Ivy League schools now as great academic bastions of knowledge. Do you realize that back in the early days, they were Christian schools, folks, and they were there to make sure that America never drifted away from Christian principles? That is where they got their roots. One of the men who had graduated back in the early days from one of those schools was at another school speaking. He was old, up in age. The auditorium was packed because they couldn't believe they had the opportunity to hear from this great, learned, brilliant man. After he had finished speaking, he asked, "Hey, do you have any questions?" Several questions came and finally one man stood up and the whole place got still when he asked him this question. He said, "You are the most brilliant man I have ever heard in all of my life. What is the most brilliant truth, the greatest piece of wisdom that you believe God has ever given to you in your journey with Him?" The man stood there for a long time as if pondering the question and then said, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so."

All the wisdom of the world just pales to nonexistence with the message of the cross and the message of the gospel. And God has deliberately chosen perfectly, the things that the world looks at in disdain to put to shame the wisdom of this world. He loves those who are rich. He loves those who are mighty. He loves those who are wise. But they themselves rarely see any integrity in the message God sends to them. They call God's wisdom foolishness. That is why you should never attach yourself to man. Man hasn't got enough sense to get in out of the rain. You attach yourself to God. He is the One who is the origin.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 The Wisdom of Boasting in the Lord

Wisdom, to me, is the right use of truth. You see, man without God is stumbling in the truth all the time. He finds the truth of laws of gravity, etc. He stumbles into truth. But when he does stumble into it, he doesn't have the wisdom of knowing how to use it. Therefore, he never relates it back to God. Now wisdom is not just the truth, it is the right use of truth.

I want to focus on 1Cor 1:30 and 1Cor 1:31 as we talk about "The Wisdom of Boasting in the Lord." Now the word "wisdom" is found 18 times in 15 verses in 1 Corinthians. The first time it is found is in 1Cor 1:19. That is when Paul quotes from the Old Testament of what God is going to do with the wisdom of men. It says in 1Cor 1:19, "For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.'"

If you will look carefully at that verse, automatically you will understand there are two kinds of wisdom. He calls man's wisdom the wisdom of the wise. There is God's wisdom and then what he calls the wisdom of the wise. And he says, "I am going to destroy the wisdom of the wise."

Look over in 2 Corinthians 1:12. You find that word "wisdom" again and you understand that there are two kinds of wisdom, that which comes from man and that which comes from God. You have got to be able to make a distinction between the two. Second

Corinthians 1:12 says, "For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity [now watch], not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you."

Look over in James 3:15. Again we find that there are two kinds of wisdom; there is God's wisdom and then there is another kind of wisdom. James 3:15 says, "This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, and demonic." So there is another kind of wisdom.

Now you may ask, "Why in the world would Paul bring up this thing about wisdom?" Well, you may remember the people of Corinth had heard a message from several ones. They had heard it from Paul, the first pastor of the church. They had heard it from Apollos. They had heard it from Cephas, that is, Simon Peter. Some of them had even said they heard it right from Christ. That is the group that is hard to deal with. They had the right person and the right message but the wrong motive in their heart. They had attached themselves to the messenger and not the one who is the originator of that message. You see, they were attaching themselves to men.

Do you think people do that today? Are you kidding? The moment you attach yourself to man you must remember something. And this is what Paul is talking about. Paul said, "Don't ever attach yourself to men. If they have the right message, it is guaranteed that it didn't come from them. And guaranteed, they don't have it all and they don't have it all together. Don't ever put yourself in touch with man, put yourself in touch with God. Attach yourself to Him."

That was the problem in Corinth. They would exclude others who weren't like themselves. "I am of John MacArthur." "I am of Chuck Swindoll." "I am of John Calvin." And what happens is, you become exclusive and forget man is not the originator of the message. God is the originator of the message and man's wisdom compared to God's wisdom, well, there is not any comparison. Man's wisdom is foolishness when compared to God's. Paul is horrified that they put him in the lineup. He didn't even mention Apollos. He didn't mention Cephas. He just speaks of himself. He said, "Man, I wasn't crucified for you. You were baptized into my name. Don't attach yourself to me." Oh, the difference between man's wisdom and God's wisdom.

What is this word "wisdom?" The word is sophia. We really haven't spent that much time on it. To put it simply, here is my definition of it. Now you may like it or not like it, but here is my definition of it. Wisdom, to me, is the right use of truth. You see, man without God is stumbling in the truth all the time. He finds the truth of laws of gravity, etc. He stumbles into truth. But when he does stumble into it, he doesn't have the wisdom of knowing how to use it. Therefore, he never relates it back to God. Now wisdom is not just the truth, it is the right use of truth.

Wisdom Is the Ability to Perceive the Reality of Something

In my study of wisdom, there are three elements to wisdom that man does not have which completely separates him from what God's wisdom would be all about. We are talking about wisdom, not the truth but wisdom. When it comes to the ability, wisdom is the ability to perceive the reality of something, to understand what really is going on, what forces are involved, what striving them, what is happening here.

Remember Habakkuk? Habakkuk looked around and saw all the sinfulness of Israel. He was a prophet. He said, "God, why do you make me to see iniquity?" In his limited understanding he saw the truth around him but did not understand how to perceive what was really going on. Then he says, "God, will you never answer me?" God did answer him, didn't He? God said, "Hey, I am raising the Chaldeans to power." Finally Habakkuk comes to his senses and you can see the wisdom of God coming into his life. He says, "Now I see, they are being raised up to chastise and purify your people." At first he did not have that ability to perceive the reality of what was going on. But when he got in touch with God, God gave him the understanding. Then he says, "Now I see what is really going on. I see all the forces that are involved. I can see what is happening."

So to me there is an element of wisdom that gives us that ability to perceive the reality of something, what is really happening here. And only God has that. Man does not have that.

Wisdom Is the Ability to Discern Between the Trivial and the Eternal

Secondly, it is the ability to discern what is trivial and what is eternal. That is wisdom. A wise man knows how to make that kind of difference: the difference between that which is trivial and that which is eternal. To be able to evaluate what is worth something, to be able to distinguish between those things that like I said are trivial or those things that are eternal.

I think a little bit of that is seen in Romans 16:19. The ability to discern what is righteous and what is evil is something that wisdom gives you. Man does not have this, but God gives us that. This is where God's wisdom comes in. In Romans 16:19 he says, "For the report of your obedience has reached to all [as Paul wrote the church there in Rome]; therefore, I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil." The ability to make that discernment, that which is trivial, that which is evil and that which is eternally good. man does not have that on his own.

It is amazing to me. You can have good parents, I mean good in the world's eyes. They can raise their children to know the difference in right and wrong, and they think they have just done the greatest job. They send them off to the university, and as soon as they get to the university, they find out that the mores of that university, they say, "Oh no, it is not wrong here to do that." They changed the standard. And so what was right and wrong at home isn't right and wrong at the university. But wisdom teaches us the ability to know between good and evil and there is huge difference. What is good and evil at home is good and evil at the university. What is good and evil today is good and evil tomorrow. Only wisdom gives us the ability to discern between the two. Man does not have that. Obviously, he does not have that.

Wisdom Is the Ability to Harmonize Truth and Love

Thirdly, wisdom is the ability to harmonize two essentials of human life: truth and love. Make them balance out together. People can have the truth and not know how to deliver it in love. They don't know how to do that. They don't know how to be honest with somebody and yet patient with them. They don't know how to be both frank and gracious. Only God gives a man that kind of wisdom.

To me, these are three essential elements in wisdom. And you may argue that there are more, but those are three that I have come up with. One, the ability to perceive what really is going on. Think about it. You get up in the morning, have your quiet time and say, "Oh, that is going to make my day. It will just turn out beautiful." Two hours later, you are thinking you are not even saved because the world caves in on you. Do you have wisdom from God to be able to perceive in that situation what is really going on beyond what the eye can see and what the mind can comprehend? Only God can give that to you. And do you have the ability to perceive the difference in that which is trivial and evil and that which is good and righteous and eternal that God is doing? Do you see through that? Do you have that ability to balance truth and love? Those three things are at least three essential elements of wisdom that immediately show you that man does not have this.

God says, "I am going to put an end to the wisdom of the wise with the wisdom that I have that comes from above." You say, "If we don't have this wisdom and God has it, how do we get it?" We get it in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look over in 1Cor 1:30 again. Now we have come right out of where he uses the foolish things of the world, the base things, etc., to shame the wisdom of man. He talks about how when Jesus came He was the perfect example of that. He came humbly into this world. He came into poor circumstances. He rode a donkey on His triumphal entry and died on a cruel cross. Man looks at that and says, "That is foolish," without wisdom enough to perceive what was really going on, without wisdom enough to realize that this was the greatest, most righteous thing that had ever happened on this earth. No wisdom to discern that, you see.

In 1Cor 1:30 Paul says, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God." Where do we find this wisdom? We only find it in Christ Jesus. Now keep the context in your mind. If you lose the context, this whole book just becomes fragmented. What is he talking about? Don't attach yourself to man. Attach yourself to Christ. In Him is the embodiment of wisdom. You can find a man who has been made wise, but you don't want his wisdom. You want to find the source of that wisdom. You attach yourself to Christ and that is where you find wisdom for yourself, the ability to supernaturally live in this world.

He says, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God." It is only in Christ that we find the ability to perceive the reality of something, only in Christ. It is only in Christ that we find the ability to distinguish between that which is trivial and that which is eternal. It is only in Christ we find the ability to harmonize truth and love. He gives us the grace and the empowerment to say what is needed to be said, but to say it in a love that is produced by His Spirit. Only in Christ can we find that kind of wisdom.

The bottom line is it is only in Christ that we find the ability to properly and rightly appropriate truth. You can know it. You can sit in a Bible study for years and hear it and hear it and hear it and even tell other people about it. But when it comes to appropriating it and living it, that is wisdom that only comes from Christ. It does not come from mankind. If man has his wisdom with truth, he will take it and use it to abuse people, not to lead them to understand the wisdom that God has for them.

The problem in Corinth was they were looking to everybody but Christ for this wisdom that they said they wanted. They were looking to Paul, to Apollos and to Cephas, but they weren't looking to the originator, the source, the origin of all wisdom which is Christ Himself. Paul wants them to know that our entire state of salvation is found in Christ. There is not one thing that we are looking for when it comes to eternal things that are not found in Jesus Christ.

"Don't ever attach yourself to men. Don't be divided," he says. "You come back to Christ. He is the source of your unity that can draw you back together, who can solve your disagreements, who can bring peace back into the body. But don't attach yourself to men. Men have nothing to do with our salvation. Christ is the embodiment of it all."

1Cor 1:30-31 read again, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" I want to make sure you understand that phrase, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus." You must understand this. Man's wisdom comes up with a plan called

religion. He comes up with his own furniture. You know, religious works are nothing more than furniture in a dead man's house. Man wants God to bless it but God can't because it came right out of a dead man's house. You see, religion won't get you there.

Man's wisdom has many ways of being saved. The Gnostics said that it didn't even mean Christ. All you had to have was a mystic understanding of things and a wisdom. And the religionist says, "Oh, no. It is by keeping the law." And it goes on and on and on. It is by His doing that we are in Christ, not by man's. That is why man can never take credit for anything. If he is wise at all it is because it comes from Christ. It is by His doing, not by any work that man can do.

The little word *ek* is used there. Translators picked up on it and said "by His doing." It is really "out of Him you are in Christ." It is because of Him that you are in Christ. When we look at this verse on salvation and what we have in Jesus Christ, we begin to see the wisdom of boasting only in God. We don't ever want to boast again in man because we realize now that in Him is all the aspects of our salvation found, in Christ Jesus. We are in Him, not by our own doing. It is by God's plan and by God's grace and by what God has done for us. Don't ever attach yourself to man. A cult is always centered around a man or a person.

People come to me sometimes and ask if certain denominations are cults? I say the only thing I know to say, "Who are they attached to? Are they attached to Christ or are they attached to some man?" If you center it in on a man, that is a cult. You don't ever want to do that because when you center yourself in on man and make him the embodiment of wisdom, what happens is, you have become deluded as to what you really have in Jesus Christ. You don't want to ever do that. Continually live unto Him, unto Him, unto Him, and every aspect of salvation is found in Him.

In Christ Jesus We Have Wisdom

That is what we are going to look at in 1Cor 1:30. Why it is so wise to boast only in Him, not in us, not in man but in God for what He has done for us? First of all, in Christ Jesus we have wisdom. We have talked about that; now let's look at it in 1Cor 1:30. "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God." Now I want to tell you, folks, it is one thing to know about the Christian life, it is another thing to know how to live it, to take the truth that we have learned and bring it down to where we live every day. You have got to have that. It is not there if you are not walking with Him in a surrendered relationship every day. You are not living in His wisdom. You may know His truth, but you don't know how to appropriate it and apply it in your life.

Look over in Colossians 1:9. I love the prayers of Paul. There must be a book written on them. I have often thought that would be a great book to write, just on the prayers of Paul. Because in his prayers you see such substance of what he is talking about, especially in Colossians 1:9. Wisdom. Do you need wisdom? I guarantee you, you are desperate for it like I am. It is only found one place – in Christ. Colossians 1:9 says, "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will [Isn't it good that he didn't stop right there, because you can be filled with the knowledge of His will just by coming to the Word of God and as God speaks what He wants you to do to your heart. But now look] in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." In other words, when God speaks the truth, He gives you the wisdom on rightly using the truth in your life. You have got to have the two together. Knowledge won't cut it. You can know it, but you have got to have the wisdom to know how to appropriate it.

The well of wisdom that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely unsearchable. Whatever you are facing in life, whether it be a trauma of a circumstance in your life, whether it be something physical you are dealing with, whether it be something else, God's Word has something to say to you. He will give you His wisdom accompanying His will that will help you to know how to rightly use the truth that you have already discerned.

Look in Romans 11:33. Paul has been speaking for 11 chapters on the grace and the mercy of God and what God has done for us. I love this. He speaks of the riches of this wisdom. You may not have a dime in your pocket, but if you have Jesus Christ living in you, you have tapped into the well of God's wisdom that has no bottom to it. And the more you come to it, the more is there of how to take truth and rightly use it in your life. Verse 33 of Romans 11 says, "Oh, the depth."

You know, we read that callously. It is kind of like when I was down in the Caribbean one year. I had gone down with some missionaries there. I was down in the Caribbean on the island of Bon Aire and we were swimming. The water was about 30 feet deep. You could see down to the bottom. It was wonderful. I asked the missionary, "What is that out there where it gets real dark?" He said, "Why don't you swim out there and see." I thought it was some kind of plant, some green plant that was growing out there or something. When I swam out there, it was a drop off. I guess it was the ship channel. When it dropped off, folks, I don't know how far it went down, but there was a strange feeling that went through me, because when you got out there, those sun rays went down hundreds of feet below you and it just turned dark and you didn't see a thing. It just kept right on going down, down, down, down.

I could say, "Oh, the depth of that ocean down there." And you would say, "Oh, big deal." You haven't been there! You haven't seen it! That little "Oh, the depth" is not quite enough to explain what he is saying here. I mean, it is unsearchable! You can't ever begin to see the bottom. It just continues to go on and on and on. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

Man, the wisdom of God that we have in Christ Jesus. He has become unto us wisdom. You have just tapped into it when you receive Him into your heart.

Look in Colossians 2:2-3. It talks about the wisdom that is hidden in the Lord Jesus Christ. I just want to make sure you understand who lives in you and what you have access to. It is all the wisdom of God is in Christ Jesus. Colossians 2, I’m going to pick right up at Col 2:2: “that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in which [speaking of Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

You know, every now and then I like to listen to something on an AM radio station. And you know, it is funny, I got to thinking about that the other day. Sometimes when you turn on an AM station and you are out of town, you can’t find anything. It will go forever and ever and ever. There is not much on an AM station. But when you flip it over to FM, I mean there is one every two or three digits there.

The way I look at it is, when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ who has become to us wisdom, God has taken our little feeble, human brains, devoid of all eternal wisdom and has flipped us over to FM. If we will just fine tune the station, all that is resident in Him, the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge become ours. You see, I want to tell you something, folks, counseling would flip over and become almost extinct if people would tap into the wisdom that is theirs in Jesus Christ. People get so upset when you mention counseling. Listen, the greatest counselor who ever lived is Jesus Christ. And the only counselor who is worth his salt is a person who takes your hand and puts it in the hand of God so that you can get in touch with the Mighty Counselor because He is the only resource of wisdom that man is so desperate to have. When you tap into it, folks, that is the way it is.

In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom. Not just truth. Yes, He is the embodiment of truth. For God is truth. But not only that, He is also the wisdom of how to rightly use truth.

To the degree we are willing to surrender to Christ daily and embrace the cross, which has been the message of chapter 1, we can now participate in that wisdom which He has come to us because of salvation. In other words, we must die to self daily, live dead to self and reckon self to be dead, which happened at the cross. The old man is dead. Reckon that dead and daily say yes to Him and yes to His Word. By doing that we tap into the resources of His wisdom.

Look over in 1 Corinthians 3:18. We literally have to profess ourselves foolish in order to tap into what he calls His wisdom. First Corinthians 3:18 says, “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise.” To the degree that I am willing to set aside my own wisdom and surrender to what His Word and His wisdom says to me can I tap into that which is hidden in Christ Jesus. Not only can we know truth, but we know Christ who has become to us wisdom, the ability to rightly use truth in our life.

You know, one of the most prevalent things to all of us is when we enter into a trial. Turn over to James 1:2 and let’s just remind ourselves of this. We talk about the wisdom that we now have in Christ Jesus. If you have any struggles in your heart and life, I promise you, you may be able to find the truth of the matter, but you will not find the way to rightly use that truth until you come to Christ. Christ then, through His Word and through His power, can give you the wisdom to do what you need to do and the grace to empower you. I love these verses. James 1:2 says, “Consider it all joy, my brethren [notice the wording here] when you encounter various trials.” That is multi-colored trials. I want you to know that your trials are multi-colored. They are color coded. Peter talks about the multi-colored grace of God, but Ephesians talks about the multi-colored wisdom of God. “Oh, you mean to tell me my trials are color coded, but God’s grace which gives me the enablement to deal with them is also color coded? And He even gives the wisdom that is color coded to go with it?” That is right.

To put it so simply that nobody can misunderstand it, if you are going through a red trial, God gives you red grace. But not only does He give you red grace, He gives you red wisdom to go through it. Exact wisdom, which you could not have come up with in a hundred phone calls to the best friends you have who have a quiet time every day. God gives you the red wisdom. He gives you the exact wisdom to walk through those trials. Your trials are multi-colored, but so is His wisdom and so is His grace.

Look at James 1:3: “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” There is a marvelous perspective now on why you go through trials.

Look at James 1:5. So often we read verses 24 and forget verse 5. They are tied together. He says, “But [that is a conjunction there] if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.” When do you feel the most devoid of wisdom? It is while going through a trial. It is when the storm moves in on you. All of a sudden you find out what you owe on income tax or you are overwhelmed by something

else and you don't know what you are going to do. And in the midst of that, you see, you cry out to God and say, "God, I lack wisdom."

You know, the first key to getting into this wisdom is to profess yourself foolish, as he says in Corinthians, so that you might become wise. We have to admit what we don't know so God can tell us what He does know. James 1:5 says, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." God is right there. Christ has become to us wisdom. But understand, once you have Him in your heart, it doesn't mean that you automatically have it. You must profess yourself foolish to tap into it and to the degree you are surrendering to Him will be to the degree you tap into the unsearchable well that has no bottom of the wisdom of God. In Christ we have wisdom.

I made some really bad mistakes in my early years as a pastor. I have made some big ones since then, but maybe not quite as frequently. One night there was a man from Holland visiting our church. Somebody walked up and said, "Hey, why don't you let this man share his testimony? Some great things are going on in his life." It was after the service and I said, "Sure." The man walked up and said, "Oh, thank you, thank you for letting me come up to the pulpit." He said, "I just recently got the baptism of the Holy Spirit."

Now, if you know where I stand, that is not where I am. I believe the baptism with or by the means of is our salvation. We are baptized into Christ by the means of the Holy Spirit of God. I do not see a secondary experience. We don't teach that. You say, "Well, Wayne, you are wrong." Well, pray for me, but we don't teach that. I don't believe that. I believe that in Him you have everything according to your salvation as Corinthians is telling us right here.

I want to tell you something, that man was my brother in Jesus Christ. We do not agree doctrinally, but I am not going to exclude him. Now that doctrine may separate. That is why you have denominations in America. But it was not me trying to exclude him.

How am I going to handle that? The truth of the matter is, I want to make sure I keep the doctrine straight that I believe that we stand for, but at the same I love the man as my brother in Christ. How am I going to handle that situation? I just quickly cried out. I said, "Oh, God, help. I don't know what to do." As I walked to the pulpit, God overwhelmed me. I never will forget it. It was one of those things that came right back to me when I was studying it. When I walked to the pulpit I said, "You know, isn't it wonderful that when you get saved you have the same Holy Spirit of God. Now we may not agree as according to how He works, but it is the same Spirit and that Spirit will unite us and our brother right here and we can just all give him a hand for the fact that he is our brother in the Lord Jesus Christ."

It was amazing. When I walked away from church I am thinking, "Where did that come from?" It was like God said, "Pssst. It didn't come from you." The wisdom to be able to do and balance truth and balance love. That is wisdom. And we can fit it in any area of those things we talked about. Only God can give it to you and only when you profess yourself to be foolish can you tap into the wisdom of God. If a man is going to make himself wise as a Christian, he will walk right away from the very things that he could have had and does have, but he is not going to experience it because of his hardheadedness and his unwillingness to surrender to Christ.

Potentially it is there. It is a well with no bottom. If you have a problem and there is a sin in your life that you won't deal with, I promise you, you are not going to tap into His wisdom until you are willing to deal with that sin and come to the cross, embrace it and understand that apart from Him you are nothing. Say, "God, whatever you want." That is when you are going to tap into His wisdom, and it will blow you away.

I love what Paul says in Romans 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him, which is [and I love how the New American Standard puts it] your reasonable service of worship." It is not reasonable until you have presented your body and then it becomes very reasonable and you have tapped into the wisdom of God.

In Christ We Have Righteousness

The second thing we want to look at is that in Christ we have righteousness. This is what Paul is saying. "Why do you want to attach yourself to a man? He can't give you these things. Attach yourself to Christ. Don't ever attach yourself to the message. Attach yourself to Christ who is the messenger."

1Cor 1:30 reads, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness." Now, man in his wisdom seeks to work up righteousness in his own power. He has a plan. It is called church or religion or whatever you want to call it. He has a plan. Do enough good things and boy, God lifts up those things. No, God doesn't accept those things. The term righteousness is dikaiosune. We saw that word in Romans when we studied Romans. Dikaosune is the actual deed itself. To have righteousness, good deeds, that God sees as righteous implies the fact that first of all you have to become righteous. You can't have righteousness if you haven't been made righteous which means in right standing with God.

The prophet Isaiah said of the righteousness of Israel in Isaiah 64:6, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our

righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.” So man in all his wisdom and plans cannot work up righteousness. He cannot come up with deeds good enough that God would accept. But in Christ, He has become our righteousness.

Man, to be capable of righteousness means that you have to understand that you were tried in God's legal court and found guilty. This is why the Greek would never accept the gospel, the cross. He didn't want to see himself as guilty. “Of what? I didn't do anything!” It is not what you do, it is what you are. You are born into Adam with the virus of sin and you are unrighteous. And in God's legal court you are declared guilty. God has separated you from Himself for all of eternity because of sin. Once you understand that, then you realize that Jesus came and this is God's grace extended to man that man does not deserve. Jesus came to do what? He came as a man. And what was required of man that man could not produce, Jesus came as the Godman and produced it. He didn't come to destroy the law. He came to fulfill the law. And when we put our faith into Him then what He did is written to our account. That statement of guilt is erased and now we have been acquitted, not because of what we did, but because of what He did. He has become our righteousness. I am not righteous in myself. I am righteous in Him and for what He has done for me.

The position of being made righteous happened when I put my faith into Christ Jesus, justified, acquitted of guilt. But now, to live righteously goes back again to embracing that cross, to the extent that I am willing to surrender to Him and to walk with Him is to the extent that I will participate in the righteous life that He wants to produce through me. Hebrews 9:22 says, “And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Jesus had to die on the cross for us. You see, the condition for a man to ever produce righteousness and to tap into His righteousness is to admit to himself that he is unrighteous and that he is desperate for Jesus and what He has done for him on the cross. When we accept Christ's payment for our sin, then we are justified and made righteous, acquitted.

Romans 3:24 tells you how it happens. It says, “Being justified as a gift by His grace.” Man's religious wisdom? No, no, no. “You have to come to church every Sunday morning and every Sunday night. You have to have your quiet time. You have to give your tithe. Until you do all these things you cannot be made righteous.” No, it says, “As a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

How many times have I mentioned this song? I love that song, “Be ye glad, oh, be ye glad. Every debt that you ever had has been paid up in full by the grace of the Lord. Be ye glad, be ye glad, be ye glad.”

Christ has become to us our righteousness. He is the very source of it. He is not only the source of our righteous position with God which is in right standing, but He is the source of our every day righteous living. It doesn't come from what I can do for Him, it comes from what He now can do through me. He is the righteous one who empowers me to live righteously. Romans 1:17, says, “For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.” Then he quotes out of Habakkuk 4 and listen to what he says, “As it is written, ‘But the righteous man [the one who has already been made righteous now] shall live by faith.”

You cannot separate faith from obedience. If you want to tap into Him, who is righteous in you, who has made you righteous with the Father because He lives in you, and if you want to live righteously, you have got to learn to surrender and bow before Him. There is no other way. There is no other way. You have to walk by faith. His Word has to be so in your life that you are surrendered to it at all times. And when you are that way, what comes out of that is righteous living, the good works that were predestined before the foundation of the world.

All the wisdom of man couldn't come up with that. They can come up with a plan to become good, but they can't become righteous, so they can never produce righteousness. And whatever they call righteousness is filthy rags in God's eyes. But Christ has become to us wisdom and righteousness. He is the source of it. Why in the world would you follow after a man, because a man can only lead you down the wrong path of unrighteousness. But Christ in you and through you is the embodiment of righteousness.

In Christ We Have Sanctification

The third thing is in Christ we have sanctification. 1Cor 1:30 continues, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification.” Now that is the same word we have seen several times in chapter 1. The word “sanctification” has that idea of being set apart. It is the word we have already understood back in 1Cor 1:2. It says, “We have been sanctified.” That means cleansed and set apart for His purpose.

That is why we are called “saints,” by the way. I hope you remember this now. It is still tied into what chapter 1 is all about. When you get up in the morning say, “Hello, Saint.” It will remind you of your purpose – to live separate unto Him who has set you apart. You set yourself apart unto Him. You positionally have been set apart unto God by His Spirit coming to live in you and now experientially daily you tap into that and you live apart unto Him as you separate yourself unto Him.

First Thessalonians 4:3 says, “For this is the will of God, your [[sanctification]] then look at what he says immediately after that], that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.” He starts talking about how you set yourself apart to Him. Positionally we have already

been set apart to God. He has His Spirit living in us which proves that, but daily we must live set apart unto Him, you see, to participate in all that it means in our life.

1Cor 1:2 says, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus." Now as we choose to embrace the cross, the message that the world thinks is foolishness, then we will participate in this holy, separate living. That is what holiness is. It is not living perfect. It is living blameless and separated unto Him. That is what it means. Not sinless, but living separated unto Him because you are going to fail. All of us are. We still have bodies of flesh, but to participate in that is when we are willing to embrace the cross and to die to self and say yes to Him and to His Word.

Second Timothy 2:21 says, "Therefore if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified." So we have the idea of cleansing yourself. Not only have you been cleansed, cleanse yourself. Make some choices in your life. Second Corinthians 6:17, "'Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you.'"

I found something in my study of that word sanctified that blessed me. Now most of us think about sanctifying ourselves and setting ourselves apart unto God. We can come up with 16 different laws and if we miss one of them, we put ourselves right back up under the law. We forget what this whole thing is all about. But listen to what Peter says. I like Peter anyway. He communicates with me. Look in 1 Peter 3:15. Look at what he says here. This blesses me. The emphasis is not so much on me but it is back on Him where it belongs. I love it when it is back on Him. I love this because to me it says something. Maybe it doesn't to you, but I hope it will. It says something very special to my heart. First Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts." He didn't say set yourself apart unto Him. He says set Him apart in your heart to where you are going to obey Him.

Listen, when you sanctify Christ as the Lord in your heart, then the rest of it will take care of itself. The whole key is making sure that you acknowledge His Lordship in your life. Only in Christ do we find sanctification. Remember, from what we studied in chapter 1, sanctification involves eternal purpose and eternal fulfillment. If you want to tap into that sanctification situation, you are already positionally sanctified. But if you want to experientially walk in light of that, then it is to the degree you are willing to set Christ apart as the Lord of your heart and choose to obey Him and surrender to Him and the rest of it will take care of itself.

In Christ We Have Redemption

The final thing he says here is "In Christ we have redemption [1Cor 1:30], but by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and [[sanctification]], and redemption."

The word "redemption" comes from two words, apo, away from, and lutrosis, which means to ransom, to ransom or to pay a price for something. To pay a price in order to release someone or something, to be set free because of the ransom of another. It is found ten times in the New Testament. Most of the time when our souls are ransomed from sin and when our body is ransomed from the grave, when we are in Christ Jesus, that means that the blood of Christ has been paid for us.

When you wake up tomorrow and say nobody ever cares about you, yes, sir, Jesus shed His precious blood for you. He redeemed you. Redemption is the means of our righteousness. If He hadn't shed His blood, we would not have our righteousness. Redemption is the means of our sanctification, and redemption is the means of our glorification. In our righteousness, we are free from the penalty of sin, acquitted. In our sanctification, we live daily free from the power of sin, and in glorification, we are free from the presence of sin one day when God glorifies us and it is all because of redemption. He purchased us by the shedding of His own blood.

The world promises a lot of freedom but it is not freedom, folks, it is bondage. But this is freedom. When you realize that in Christ, when you don't attach yourself to men but you attach yourself to Him, live under His Lordship and surrender yourself to Him, you participate in His wisdom, in His righteousness, in His sanctification and also in His redemption. This is all made possible because of what He has done for us, the wisdom of God.

Now folks, I want to tell you something. If you are not going to walk with Him, you are deluded. I promise you. You are being pulled away from the resource you have in Christ Jesus who has been made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Don't attach yourself to a man, and don't put that man on a pedestal. If that man's message is right, thank God for it. It didn't come from him, it came from God. Let that message lead you to Christ. That is the key, day by day.