

CB - 7/28/68 am.

FIRST CORINTHIANS - ITS DESTINATION AND DESIGN

Scripture: Acts 18:1-11

Intro: Why do we study the Bible by books? Why do we give such prominence to the study of the Bible at CB?

We study it by books because it was written by books. There are some like PSALMS and PROVERBS which we compiled, but for the most part a writer began at the beginning, followed a plan, treated a subject, reached a conclusion, and quit!

So to understand these writings, it is best to consider them as they were written. Nothing can be as misleading as to jump around and to take verses at random!

Secondly, we study the Bible by books because we believe every book has a special place in the Word of God. The Bible is made up of 66 books, and yet it is really one book. And since it is one book, IT WOULD BE INCOMPLETE IF ANY BOOK WERE OMITTED. Each book has a special purpose, and so part of understanding the whole Bible is understanding the separate books which make it up!

These are part of the reason why we place such emphasis on the

study of the Word by books.

But in addition let me say this -

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God - from cover to cover.

We believe that it is through this book that we come to know God in salvation.

~~Therefore~~, we believe that a knowledge of the Word of God is basic to the spiritual growth of every Christian. THE ONLY WAY TO HAVE STRONG, GROWING CHRISTIANS IS TO HAVE CHRISTIANS WHO ARE WELL-TAUGHT. THIS IS THE MAIN MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH. When a church ceases to teach its people, it ceases to function as a Church.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE REASONS I WANT TO BEGIN THE EXPOSITION OF 1 CORINTHIANS THIS MORNING.

How do you find out why a particular book was written?

Basically, there are two ways.

First, by reading the book - not just once, but over and over. Remember it is the Word of God and so you can never exhaust it. But every time you read it you will get a little more.

Secondly, try to find out something about the background of the book. Sometimes this will be found in the book itself. Sometimes

it will be found in other books of the Bible. Sometimes history and historical research will help us.

I want to give you some background this morning, but you will have to do the reading for yourself.

I. THE DESTINATION.

This from 1 Cor. 1:2 is Corinth in Greece, the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia.

The writer is the Apostle Paul. ^{This has never been seriously} question - too many personal references.

He visited Corinth on his second missionary journey according to Acts 18. He spent more than a year and a half there (Acts 18:11, 18) - possibly as much as two years.

Historians estimate that the Apostle went there in 52 A.D., and that he was about 45 years old at the time.

Corinth was a city of about 600,000 - some were Roman freed men, some were Greeks and some were Jews.

About 400,000 people in the city were slaves; 200,000 free men.

although the Jews as a whole rejected him, there were some remarkable instances of salvation among the Jews. Cf Acts 18:8.

It was a strategic center commercially and politically, and Paul must have taken this into consideration when he went there.

As Paul writes, there is a church in Corinth, but there were three characteristics of Corinth which opposed the preaching of the Word of God from the first. We see traces of these in the epistle. NOTE THE PARALLELS IN AMERICAN LIFE TODAY.

A. Even though there was much poverty in Corinth, THERE WAS ALSO MUCH LUXURY.

Luxury keeps men spiritually anesthetized!

It had done so in Corinth. Of what Paul says in 1 Cor. 1: 26-28. The slaves, the common people responded, but not many of the wealthy, the nobility.

This, generally, has been the case always. When a man has money, he will often be next to impossible to reach with the Gospel.

B. THERE WAS MUCH LICENTIOUSNESS - MUCH SIN!

Godet ~~notes~~ that there was even a word for this: ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΑΪΣΜΟΣ. It meant to live

as a Corinthian, meaning a dissolute life, a life of sin.

Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11. Also ch. 5.

where people are given to pleasure, they have little time for the Gospel.

C. Corinth Was A PLACE OF GREAT LEARNING.

One historian says you could not walk the streets of Corinth without meeting one of their wise men.

They had their "halls of rhetoric and schools of philosophy" (Bodet, I, 6).

Philosophy is usually opposed to the Gospel.

This even presented Paul with a problem. SHOULD HE TRY TO REACH THE CORINTHIANS THROUGH ORATORY AND PHILOSOPHY?

His decision should attract the attention of every Christian college student - and every other person who tries to reach the intellectuals of our day.

Cf. 1 Cor. 2:1, 2.

Ill. College student who said, "That's too simple."

This does not mean a superficial handling of the Gospel, but it does mean the simple presentation of the truth of the Word of God. Cf. Acts 18:4.

But in spite of these problems people were saved and a church was established.

In 54 A.D. Paul went from Corinth and later that same year seems to have arrived in Ephesus where he spent 3 years.

From Ephesus in 57 A.D. he wrote this Corinthian epistle. Why?

This brings us to

II. THE DESIGN of the book.

You will find by reading 1 Cor. that from start to finish Paul is concerned about one thing: PROBLEMS.

It clearly teaches two things:

- (1) That it does not take problems a long time to develop.
- (2) Our problems may develop from the very areas of life where we had difficulties before we were saved.

In Romans you see Paul as the master teacher.

In Galatians we see him as a debater, the great defender of the faith.

In Corinthians he writes as a missionary pastor, establishing for all time the great moral and ethical principle of Christian living.

There were all kinds of problems in the Corinthian Church - so many that you wonder what kind of an influence they could have had in Corinth.

How did Paul solve these problems? BY GOING BACK TO THE BASIC TRUTHS OF THE WORD OF GOD AND SHOWING HOW TO APPLY THE WORD TO PARTICULAR PROBLEMS.

Concl: If we can get only this from our study together, this will be sufficient because 1 COR. WILL TEACH US THAT IF YOU AND I EXPECT TO GLORIFY GOD IN OUR DAY WE MUST BE PREPARED TO STAND AGAINST THE MORAL DEGENERATION, AND TO LET OUR LIVES BE GUIDED BY GOD THROUGH HIS WORD!

THE CHURCH AT CORINTH -

CALLED AND CONFIRMED

THE INTRODUCTION - 1 COR. 1:1-9

Intro: Paul visited Corinth and was used by God to establish a Church there on his second missionary journey. This was between 52 + 54 A.D.

About 3 years later Paul wrote 1 Cor. while he was in Ephesus. This would have been about 57 A.D.

The epistle deals with nothing but PROBLEMS. It is a very solemn warning to every Church since that time that so many problems could develop in such a short time.

Before we come to Problem #1 in ch. 1, v. 10, we have a greeting and a word of thanksgiving. As is the case in most of Paul's epistles, this introductory word not only sounds the keynote, but expresses the hope that was in Paul's heart as he wrote.

One might almost feel that the Church was beyond helping. Paul did not feel hopeless, and the reasons he did not could be ~~put~~ summed up in these two words: "called" and "confirmed."

GOD had "called" and GOD had "confirmed" what He starts, He always finishes. So Paul wanted the Corinthians to look first at GOD and His work in ~~the~~ before they looked at their own needs. Let us look at them this morning.

I. CALLED.

A. The times the word is used of the Corinthians.

1. "The church of God" - called out ones ^(v. 2). This shows the distinctive character of the Church.

2. "Called saints" (v. 2).

3. "Called into the fellowship of

this Son, Jesus Christ" (v. 9) (v. 1).
note: "Paul" called an apostle.

B. The significance of the word.

It really is almost the equivalent of commended. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:1, "an apostle... by the commandment of God our Saviour."

This is what past theologians termed an effectual call. It is more than an invitation; it is God calling so that man must respond.

Cf. Gal. 1:15 ff.

C. The importance of the word.

Together these words describe the present reasons for the calling of God. They are three:

1. God has called us as a church, one body, out from the world, united with every other believer in Christ.

THEREFORE, THERE CAN BE NO DIVISIONS. THERE MUST BE UNITY.

2. God has called us to painfulness.

This means (1) we are forgiven our sins, (2) we are cleansed from our sin, and (3) we are thus prepared for service.

3. God has called us to participate in, to share the life of His Son.
What a privilege!

Cf. 1 Jn. 5:12;
Gal. 2:20;
Col. 1:27.

We are not simply told how to live, but we have Christ living in us. He is our life. His life is ours. THEREFORE THERE IS A SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER TO A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE!

What persons ought we to be!
THIS IS OUR CALLING.

Now let us recognize a certain fact before we go on.

When people who claim to be Christians have problems like those in Corinth, we must entertain the possibility that some are not really saved. They are Christians in name only.

But this is where our second word is of supreme importance. THE REALITY OF THEIR CALL HAD BEEN

II. CONFIRMED

This falls into Paul's Thanksgiving Cf. vv. 4-6.

The truth of the Gospel, i. e., "the testimony of Christ" had been "confirmed," established, proven by what had happened to them.

IT WAS NOT JUST THEIR CLAIM TO BE SAVED, BUT IT WAS EVIDENT IN THEIR EXPERIENCE.

How?

In four ways.

(These four points are given on 8/4/65)

- A. They were a well-taught Church, well-taught in the Word of God. This is the meaning of "attitude" which is λόγος.

And it is here that Paul says, "enriched." Not just rich in the truth which had been given them, but abundantly rich.

FROM THIS IT WOULD SEEM THAT NO CHURCH SURPASSED CORINTH IN BEING WELL-TAUGHT!

- B. She had understood the truth. This is the "knowledge" which Paul refers to.

Spiritual truth is spiritually discerned. "The natural man..." (1 Cor. 2:14).

The people had loved the teaching they had received, and they knew the Word of God well!

But this is not all!

- C. This was a gifted Church (v. 7a).

Paul will speak of gifts later. This was one of their areas of trouble.

and surely we can say that there was no more gifted Church than the Corinthian Church. ALL OF THE GIFTS WERE REPRESENTED.

Ministry should have been no problem.

- D. They were interested in prophetic truth. They were "waiting for the coming (revelation) of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 7b).

There were all proofs of their salvation — AND NOTE V. 8 IN THIS CONNECTION. Paul was not afraid that they would lose their salvation.

God would confirm them "unto the end."

God was faithful!

And this was Paul's hope which led him to write! HOW HOPELESS THE MINISTRY WOULD BE WITHOUT GOD — IF WE COULD NOT TRUST HIM.

Concl: Do you see what Paul is trying to say?

He is saying that he has no doubt about their salvation.

But he is also saying that these four things in a Church do not guarantee that that will make it a Church pleasing to God.

And yet these are the things we point to when we want to show how faithful we are in days of apostasy.

Do not misunderstand

It is important to teach the Word

" " " " ~~identify~~ the Word.

" " " " have gifted people.

" " " " be looking for the

return of Christ.

BUT YOU AND I CAN HAVE ALL OF THESE AND NOT BE PLEASING TO THE LORD

What does He want?

HE WANTS THAT ^{DEPENDENCE UPON THE LORD} OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD WHICH PRODUCES HOLY LIVES AND GENERATES UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST.

May God speak to our hearts in 1 Cor.!

CORINTH'S SIN OF OMISSION

1 Cor. 1:1-9

Intro: In Paul's introduction to his first Corinthian epistle we are instructed how to approach individuals or a church when you are dealing with problems.

In First Corinthians Paul deals exclusively with the problems that were to be found in the church at Corinth. Before doing do, he asks the Corinthian believers to look with him intently at the divine side of salvation.

He thanks God for their salvation. He thanks God for confirming His own work in their lives. He thanks God that He will continue to confirm His work in them until "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." He thanks God that He is faithful--that He never begins a work without pursuing it right through to the end.

Therefore, Paul calls the believers in Corinth a church when they were not acting like a church. He called them saints when they were not living like saints. He called them enriched when they appeared to be impoverished. He called them confirmed, when they should have been condemned.

Why did he do this? Was he closing his eyes to reality, hoping against hope that they were really children of God after all?

No! Paul was never one to sidestep the truth. He thanks God that, as he writes, "the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you" because it had been confirmed.

There were:

I. FOUR SPECIFIC EVIDENCES THAT THESE CORINTHIANS HAD ACTUALLY COME TO KNOW THE LORD.

What were they?

- A. First, Paul had seen that they had been "enriched by Him, in all utterance" (1 Cor. 1:5).

What does this mean?

The Greek word translated "utterance" is . This would mean that they had been "enriched" by the teaching of the Word of God. "Enriched" carries with it the idea of abundance. There had been an abundance of teaching in Corinth. IT WOULD SEEM THAT IT WOULD BE SAFE TO SAY THAT NO CHURCH EXCEEDED CORINTH WITH RESPECT TO THE TEACHING THEY HAD RECEIVED. And it would seem that the church in Corinth had revelled in

the teaching which she had received.

Not all churches want the Word of God, but Corinth did!

This was certainly a confirmation of their faith in Christ. Corinth provided an illustration of Peter's admonition, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

But there were other evidences.

- B. They had been "enriched by Him . . . in all knowledge" (1 Cor. 1:5).

Anyone who has taught the Word of God knows that it is possible for people to sit year after year under the teaching of the Word of God, and yet not learn very much. This may be the teacher's fault (or the preacher's), or it may be the people's, but nevertheless it happens.

You can go into practically every church where the Bible is taught faithfully and find people who are there week after week, and yet they are woefully ignorant of the Scriptures.

This was down to a minimum at Corinth.

These people had tremendous insight into the Scriptures. They knew what they had been taught. Although Paul had been with them only about two years and even though the Church had only been in existence for three years, YOU WOULD HAVE HAD A VERY DIFFICULT TIME CORRUPTING THE MAJOR DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE IN THIS CHURCH. THEY WOULD HAVE CAUGHT YOU IN IT, AND CALLED YOUR HAND.

Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14, 15.

If Paul could have said no more than this, he would have been saying far more about Corinth than you can say about the average church today!

But he does say more!

- C. THE CHURCH AT CORINTH WAS A GIFTED CHURCH (1 Cor. 1:7).

In chapter 12 Paul is going to discuss the problems in this connection. We will come to these in our consideration of this epistle. But let us simply note for the present that there was no church that was more blessed with spiritually gifted people than was Corinth.

And, as Godet says, these gifts were the result of the supernatural life of the Lord Jesus Christ in the believers in the church at Corinth.

This is always the result of the first two things that Paul has mentioned: (1) the teaching of the Word of God, and (2) believers entering into an understanding of the truth.

Cf. Eph. 4:11-16. (Note that all of the commas are removed from v. 12 in the NSRB.)

The potential for ministry in Corinth was unlimited because of the capabilities of the people! The true, consistent ministry of the Word of God prepares the people of God to serve the Lord.

Here again Corinth was exceptional. IT ALWAYS FOLLOWS THAT WHEN A PASTOR DOES NOT FEED HIS PEOPLE ON THE WORD OF GOD HE IS GOING TO FIND IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO GET ANYONE TO JOIN WITH HIM IN SERVING THE LORD.

But I must point out one other thing about the Corinthian Church which was wonderful.

D. This was a church where they were "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7).

Of all of the truths of the Bible evidently one truth which they loved supremely was the truth of the Lord's return.

If you preached on prophecy in Corinth, you would pack the place out where the meetings were held.

And it certainly is commendable to find a church that believes in the coming of the Lord. So many churches have turned their backs on this truth. The church at Corinth was expecting Jesus Christ to come back.

Well, you say, there certainly couldn't be much wrong with a church like this. The Bible was being taught. The people knew the Word of God. There was an abundance of gifted people to share in the work. And they were looking for the return of Jesus Christ.

What more could you ask?

Let me ask you a question. When you read a passage like this and compare it with the sad state of affairs that existed in the Corinthian church, do you ever ask yourself,

"Is anything missing? Is there something which should be here, and it is not here?" Do you know the Word well enough to determine if the Corinthians were guilty of any

II. SIN OF OMISSION?

I would like to dismiss the service right now after telling all of you to go home and read 1 Corinthians until you find out what is missing--BECAUSE SURELY SOMETHING IS!

Let me tell you what should be here by reading a few scattered passages in the book.

Look first at 1 Cor. 3:1-3. Note especially, "and walk as men?" This meant that with all of their teaching, with all of their knowledge, with all of their gifts, with all of their prophetic truth--they were living like people who did not even know the Lord!

Now turn to 1 Cor. 4:14-16, esp. v. 16. The same emphasis goes on to the end of the chapter.

Look at 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. Then 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1.

And finally, look at 1 Cor. 13:1-3.

WHAT WAS THE DISASTROUS LACK IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH?
Just one thing: They were failing in their personal obedience to the Word of God.

Do you remember what the aged Apostle John said to and concerning his "wellbeloved Gaius"? He said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4).

It is important to teach the Word.
It is important that people understand what we teach.
It is necessary to have gifted people help in the work of the church.
It is important to expect the coming of the Lord.
BUT--none of these will make a church strong and spiritually pure unless the people of the church are living obediently according to the truth of the Word of God.

This was Corinth's sin of omission. This is where they failed.

Concl: The application is obvious, is it not? Is it possible that Central Bible Church is failing right at this point? Are you reading the Word every day so that you will know and do what God wants you to do? Are you living up to the light that you have?

Would we dare to take this letter to the Corinthians and ask as we read every chapter, "Lord, is there something here for me to see-- some place where I have gone wrong?"

Are we really living by the Word of God?

Can you and I who are so concerned about our children say to them, "Be ye followers of me, as I am of the Lord"?

Do we love each other as the people of God should, or are we glad that CBC is such a big place so we won't have to see certain people?

Young people, in these days when it is so smart to despise authorities of all kinds--parents, police officers, the laws of our land, does it make a difference to you that the Word of God says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6:1) and "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).

Are we being careful about our relationship with the opposite sex in these days when anything seems to be permissible? There was a young man in the Corinthian church who had undoubtedly been there for the teaching and who knew a lot about the Word, but who was living in the grossest sin with his father's wife.

Do we believe that there is still a difference between the world and the church? Do you care how others might interpret your actions?

What about pride?

These are days when we need 1 Corinthians. Let us face ourselves honestly as we consider what we find here. And let us remember that all of the commendatory things which Paul could say about the church could not take the place of a lack of obedience to the Word of God.

May God open our eyes to see our own need, and then give us the wisdom to trust Him to set our feet squarely in the pathway of His perfect will!

A CITY LEAVES ITS MARK
1 Cor. 1:10-17

Intro: Anyone who knows the Lord Jesus Christ knows that the problems he has had before he became a Christian often continue to be problems afterwards. This applies to traits of character. It applies to moral weaknesses. It applies to the abilities which we possess.

And--the older we are when we come to the Lord, the more difficult it is to throw these problems off.

Oftentimes our environment is a problem, or possibly the culture we have been raised under, or the type of government under which we have lived. There are many today who identify our American way of life with the Church. There are those who feel that government in the Church has to be like our American form of government or it cannot be Christian.

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE WE NEED TO REMIND OURSELVES THAT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ARE ABSOLUTELY DISTINCT. THERE IS NOTHING EXISTING WHICH IS QUITE LIKE THEM. THEREFORE, WE NEED TO BEWARE LEST WE CARRY SOME OF THE CORRUPTING INFLUENCES OF OUR WAY OF LIFE INTO THE CHURCH.

THIS HAD HAPPENED IN CORINTH!

Practically every problem in the book has something to do with the background of the Corinthians--and we are introduced to one of the most basic of these in our text this morning.

The Corinthians flourished on division. It was a part of their way of life--especially among the intellectuals. They had their many schools of philosophy. You could always find an argument, or start one without much trouble in Corinth. Some men were admired for their great wisdom. Others were admired for their oratory. Some became known for their leadership ability, and were looked to as authorities. And so you could go on and on! G. G. Findlay says in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, divisions, factions were "the inveterate curse of Greece" (EGT, II, 731).

Here a Church had been planted to leave its mark on the city, and instead we realize right from the first that the city had left its mark on the church--and it threatened its very existence!

This is the reason for

I. THE FIRST EXHORTATION OF THE EPISTLE (v. 10).

This was a completely new idea to the Greek mind!

Note the graciousness of the Apostle as he heads right into the basic problem of the Corinthian Church.

Here is a call for unity--in three respects.

A. Outwardly: "That ye all speak the same thing."

This must be a reference to v. 12. Not only did these divisions exist, but they were all talking about the divisions, making them worse day by day.

How many differences would be healed if we knew how to control our tongues!

They needed to stop the way they were talking and let their speech be expressive of their oneness in Christ. It is often when someone does some talking that slight differences become major divisions.

B. Negatively: "That there be no divisions among you."

This might be acceptable in Corinthian culture, but in the church it was "practical heresy" (Trench, quoting Nevin, p. 391).

Cf. what Paul says later about the Church in 1 Cor. 12:13. Here we are dealing with "alienation of feeling, inward separation" (Hodge, p. 12). Some of these may not be talked about, but they are just as much a grief to the Holy Spirit and carry just as much potential for trouble.

C. Practically: "That ye be perfectly joined together."

Here Paul is talking about the harmonious working of the body. Sometimes the word is used of mending a net; other times of putting a dislocated bone back into its socket. And yet it can mean the proper functioning of a machine--without any thought of trouble.

How does a Church accomplish this?

By being "in the same mind and in the same judgment."
What does this mean?

"The same mind" is a word which refers to doctrinal agreement. It has to do with the way you think about the truth, "full harmony of view in regard to Christian truth" (Godet, I, 63).

There is no lack of unity in the Bible, but this harmony must also be in the doctrinal agreement of believers.

Young people, listen to me very carefully for a moment. Do you know one of the things I am most concerned about among Christian young people today? It is the kind of thing which is often prevalent in your so-called discussion groups. This often deteriorates into nothing more than a conglomeration of opinions about certain truths in the Word of God, and often the one is accepted which seems to have the most support in the discussion group.

WHAT I THINK THE WORD SAYS, OR WHAT THE WORD SAYS TO ME, IS OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE. WHAT I NEED TO BE PRIMARILY CONCERNED ABOUT IT WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD SAY--PERIOD! WHAT DOES IT SAY REGARDLESS OF WHO IS READING IT.

I am not called to preach my opinions about the Word of God; I AM CALLED TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD.

This ran just as much against the way Corinthians considered the truth as it runs against Americans today. In politics we can have our opinions, but when we come to the Word, we come to the eternal, authoritative, verbally inspired Word of God--and the main thing we need to be concerned with is this: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Here is one area where I am afraid that America has left its mark on the Church just as Greece had left its mark on the Church in Paul's day.

But this is not all. There must also be agreement

"In the same judgment." This means the way we use the word of God to arrive at our decisions. We will not find an specific answer to every question we have, but in the Bible we are given the great principles which we can use in forming our judgments as to what we should do in particular instances.

Let me cite an illustration from this letter to the Corinthians. Please turn to chapter 6, verses 19 and 20.

V. 19 gives us a truth concerning which we must all "be perfectly joined together in the same mind." Every child of God must understand that his "body is the temple of the Holy Spirit," and that the Holy Spirit therefore is living in him--and he is not his own!

Why do I believe this? Do I believe it because I can see Him, or because I had some kind of feeling, some

kind of experience when the Holy Spirit came to indwell me?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! I believe this for one reason. This is the clear teaching of the Word of God. To doubt it is to question the divine authority of the Bible.

But now look at v. 10. Such truth calls for a certain judgment, a decision regarding my daily life. It is this: "Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

The applications of this truth are legion.

Do you see why it is so important for us to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind," in our understanding of the truth? Because without this we will never have unity "in the same judgment," that is, in applying the Word of God to our daily lives.

II. THE REASON FOR THE EXHORTATION.

Because there were divisions.

Paul had heard about this from members of the household of Chloe. Whether children, or slaves, we do not know. Whether Chloe was a Christian woman from Corinth, or from Ephesus, we do not know. But the Corinthians obviously knew what Paul was talking about. She was one whom both Paul and the Corinthians trusted.

There seem to have been four major divisions based upon preferences which various Corinthian believers had for Paul, Apollos, Peter, and even Christ!

What a tragedy? Let us note

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SAD CONDITIONS IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.

Two things seem to be apparent.

A. Men became more important than the message which they preached. **A MINIMIZING OF THE WORD.**

Cf. v. 12. This reached a point where Paul and Apollos and Peter became competitors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Baptism became more important than salvation.

Paul is not minimizing the importance of baptism. He certainly is showing that it is not a part of salvation.

But he does not want anything to overshadow the Gospel. He would not baptize to gain a following, nor would he resort to "the wisdom of words."

His whole life was devoted to the person of Christ and to His work for all men on the Cross.

Concl: We must close. We are just getting started, getting our first look at the problems. But let us not think that this problem died in Corinth. It has been with the Church down to the present time. We must beware of it. Our minds and lives need to be so filled with the Word, so in love with the Lord Jesus Christ, so concerned about the salvation of men, that nothing will deter us from the message and the mission which God has given us in this world.

We must be united here, or nothing else can possibly make us effective in the work of God.

Corinth with her divisions made the church feel comfortable. She had left her mark on the Church.

The world today says dialogue is good. Let's discuss the truth and not be concerned about our disagreements.

Paul said to Timothy--2 Tim. 2:15 and 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

CE - 8/25/68

a.m.

THE PREACHER'S CALL--WHAT IS IT?

1 Cor. 1:17-25

Intro: It is no secret that churches today are getting more and more removed from the teaching and preaching of the Bible. Comments come continually about how difficult it is to find churches throughout our country where the Bible is accepted as the Word of God, and where the work is built around the ministry of the Word. We can thank God that there are still many churches that stand for the truth, but it seems that the number is decreasing steadily.

These are facts we all know to be true.

What we do not recognize, however, is that when men get away from the Word of God, their whole conception of the work of the Church gets distorted. This can be seen in what many preachers are doing. It is to be seen in the activities of certain churches. It is evident in their definition of certain terms, such as salvation, which they have lifted out of the Bible to fit into their own purposes. Many people who do not know anything about the Bible are beginning to feel that of all people who have lost their way the preachers of the day seem to be the most confused of all!

For the most part these are preachers who are liberal in their theology, and who do not share our conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that men are lost in sin and in need of salvation, eternal life, which can only be found in Christ.

For the moment we can forget about liberals and their confusion over the ministry and the place the Church is to have in the world.

But let me ask a question. It is this: From your understanding of the Word of God, WHAT IS THE WORK OF A MAN WHO HAS BEEN CALLED BY GOD INTO THE MINISTRY? Or, to state it another way, WHAT IS THE WORK OF THE CHURCH?

These are broad questions which need to be subdivided into two related questions because obviously the Church would have a ministry to perform to its own members, and it would also have a ministry to perform to the world outside of its own fellowship.

Let us take this latter point. WHAT IS THE WORK FACING THE CHURCH WITH RESPECT TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE? WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD FOR THE PREACHER AND FOR THE CHURCH IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORLD?

Paul states it unequivocally in v. 17 of our text. (Read.)

I. THE PREACHERS CALL EXPLAINED (v. 17).

The preacher (and the Church along with him) have one pre-eminent mission in the world. It is the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the Gospel? Paul defines it in 1 Cor. 15:1-8. It is the message of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, why He died, and what His death and His resurrection means to every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth.

What does it mean to preach? The word Paul uses is the Greek word which gives us our English word, evangelize. It means "to bring good news, to announce glad tidings" (Thayer, p. 256).

You do not have to be an ordained man to preach. YOU ARE PREACHING WHENEVER YOU TELL ANYBODY ELSE ABOUT THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, AND HELP THEM TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO THEM.

I believe it was Spurgeon who used to say that the greatest preaching is done when one man is the preacher and one man is the congregation. In other words, the greatest preaching is personal evangelism.

And, it needs to be said, that our preaching, or witnessing, is not to be an end in itself. OUR OBJECT IS TO SEE PEOPLE RECEIVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOUR.

This is where we often run into trouble, and this is the very point Paul touches on in the passage before us this morning.

One of the first things a Christian runs into when he seeks to witness is resistance. Therefore, we start thinking along this line: WHAT CAN I PRESENT THE GOSPEL SO AS TO DO AWAY WITH THIS UNWILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE CHRIST?

And so in many instances we find

II. THE PREACHER'S CALL EXPLOITED.

We suddenly find ourselves in a position where methods become more important than the message, and we will even alter the message to obtain the results that we are after.

What approach do you think Paul could have followed for the greatest acceptance in Corinth? This question is easily answered. It is seen in these words, "with wisdom of words." IF PAUL WERE GOING TO GEAR HIS APPROACH TO THE

DESIRES OF THE CORINTHIANS THEN HIS APPROACH SHOULD BE GREATLY PHILOSOPHIC AND PRESENTED WITH THE GREATEST POSSIBLE ORATORY.

Probably a combination of Paul and Apollos would have been the ideal evangelist for the Corinthians.

The Corinthians liked to identify their philosophies with the originators, AND THIS IS ONE REASON WHY SOME WERE BOASTING THAT THEY HAD BEEN BAPTIZED BY PAUL BECAUSE THIS MADE THEM DISCIPLES OF PAUL JUST AS OTHER CORINTHIANS WOULD FOLLOW OTHER PHILOSOPHERS.

This had happened in spite of all that Paul had done, but, so the Corinthians would hear it again, he states in v. 17 the divine orders he had been under in going to Corinth. (Read.) HE DELIBERATELY AVOIDED PRESENTING THE GOSPEL TO THE CORINTHIANS ON THEIR TERMS.

What do you suppose would correspond to this in America today? How can we as Christians be deceived as to the approach we make to our fellow Americans so that "the cross of Christ" is "made of none effect"--lit., rendered useless.

To be sure we have our intellectuals, and they may you feel that you can only reach them on an intellectual basis. So, we are inclined to leave them alone.

BUT, BY FAR, MOST OF US FEEL THAT WE CAN WIN AMERICA TO CHRIST IF WE TOUCH THEM ON THE ONE POINT THAT IS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO EVERY AMERICAN. PLEASURE!

Every time you hear a person who is a Christian say to another person who is not a Christian, "You may be having a great time, but you will have the greatest time of your life if you will accept Christ," you have a Christian who is doing in America what Paul would have done in Corinth if had preached the Gospel "with wisdom of words."

OR, we see great crowds going to hear some entertainer, and so we say to ourselves, if we put on an entertainment, we will get the crowds and we will be able to win a lot of people to the Lord. So we put on our entertainment, and we get large crowds, and we again try to convince those who are there that the way to have fun, to have someone who will meet your needs, who will take care of all of your troubles, then receive Christ.

THIS IS NOT THE GOSPEL.

But, someone says, there are people saved. Yes, there may

be some saved, but this does not prove that the method is right. It only proves that God is able to use even wrong methods by His own grace, BUT WHAT WOULD BE THE RESULT IF WE WERE TO GET BACK TO NEW TESTAMENT EVANGELISM.

Paul wants to tell the Corinthians (and us) why it is wrong to adapt the Gospel to the interests of the people, and so we have

III. THE PREACHER'S CALL EXAMINED.

Why can we not change the simple order "to preach the Gospel?"

Paul gives three reasons in addition to the fact that we are simply told to "preach the Gospel." They are:

- A. Because a change in the basic character of the Gospel robs the message of its power (v. 17b).

We are living in a day when it seems that we have forgotten the mighty power which God has placed in His Word. Cf. Heb. 4:12.

It is through the Word that men come to realize their need of Christ, and it is through the Word that men are born again.

In power-mad Rome Paul declared what he writes in Rom. 1:16.

If we would only "preach the Word," preach it simply, preach it lovingly, preach it repeatedly, depending upon the Lord to use it, how our eyes would be opened to see how foolish we have been.

We often ask people to believe when we have given them nothing to believe. We talk to them about what the Gospel will mean to them, and we avoid talking about what it means to God. We no longer reason with men about sin, righteousness, and judgment, and so we make the cross of Christ of none effect.

- B. We can never make the Gospel really acceptable to the world (v. 18a).

To the world of unsaved men, the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, it always has been, and it always will be!

Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14. NOWHERE IN THE GOSPEL ARE WE URGED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL BECAUSE MEN WANT TO HEAR IT; WE ARE

COMMANDED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL BECAUSE THEY NEED TO HEAR IT--and there is all of the difference in the world in those two ideas!

If we will take God at His Word, and tell men what we know about the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be amazed to see how God will work. He is not asking for our advice on how to reach men; He has commanded us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!

If you are trying to make the Gospel acceptable to the world, you are working at something which can never be done. And if you think that you have done it, you had better look very closely to be sure you are really presenting the Gospel of the grace of God!

But there is one other reason.

- C. We should not follow the interests of the world because we can see the results which those interests have produced. Cf. vv. 20, 21.

"Where is the wise?" Where has his wisdom led him? Has it led him to God? Has it satisfied his needs? "Where is the scribe?"--the Jewish religious leader who claims to be the interpreter of Scripture and yet has not hesitated to add to the Old Testament scriptures. Where is he? Has all of his knowledge led him to God? "Where is the disputer of this world?"--the one who hopes by reason and argument and debate to arrive at an understanding of the truth. Where is he? Would you like to be in his shoes?

The answer to these rhetorical questions is self-evident. WHY THEN WAS THERE ONE SINGLE REASON FOR THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH TO FOLLOW THE BLIND PATH OF HUMAN WISDOM AND PHILOSOPHY IN SEEKING TO PRESENT THE ETERNAL TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD?

Concl: But let us bring it down to America today. With all of our emphasis on pleasure and having a good time, has this been so successful that we as Christians should adapt the Gospel to this kind of an approach. Where is America going today with its emphasis on having a good time? What about our divorce rate? What about the terrible rise in crime? What about suicides, teen-age suicides? ARE WE GOING TO DEGRADE THE GOSPEL BY TRYING TO TELL THE WORLD THAT THEY ARE GOING AFTER THE RIGHT THING, BUT GOING AFTER IT IN THE WRONG WAY.

THERE ARE A LOT OF TRAGIC THINGS IN AMERICA, BUT NONE MORE TRAGIC THAN THE WAY THE CHURCH HAS PERVERTED THE GOSPEL OF

CHRIST IN ORDER TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF THE WORLD.

Let us forget about entertaining, and concentrate on ministry.

Let us forget about what men want, and concentrate on what God wants and what man needs.

Let us not try to lull the world into thinking that they can have a better time if they will only have Christ, when what they need to know is that they are under the judgment of Almighty God and that their condition is so desperate that God had to send His only Son to redeem them from the penalty of their sins.

Let us quit taking our methods from the world, and get them from the Word of God--methods which the Spirit of God can use to bring men to know their need of Christ.

We will never win the whole world, but we will see many more transformed if we leave the Gospel as God gave it and dare to preach it for His glory!

THE CALLING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
1 Cor. 1:26-31

Intro: Last week in 1 Cor. 1:17-25 we considered the Apostle Paul's call to service for our Lord Jesus Christ, and its bearing upon our service for our Lord. This morning I want us to consider the call of God's people to salvation and its place in this very powerful letter from Paul to the Church of Corinth.

All of chapter one is very instructive in connection with the nature of the Gospel as well as the ministry of the Gospel. We do not even have to read between the lines to see the divine principles which Paul employed in his work as an evangelist!

We must keep in mind that Paul is concerned first of all with the divisions which were threatening the very existence of the Corinthian Church. These divisions arose over confusion as to the nature of salvation itself. The human side had become dominant in their minds and so it becomes necessary to remind them

I. OF THE ONE WHO HAD CALLED THEM, or THE SOURCE OF THEIR CALLING.

Note how Paul emphasizes this again and again.

"For ye see your calling" (v. 26) . . . God hath chosen" (2x in v. 27 and 1x in v. 28).

Cf. v. 9, then "called to be an apostle" in 1:1, "called to be saints" in 1:2. This emphasis is found also in the Gk word for "church."

They were saying, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1:12). But note v. 30: "But of Him," that is, God, "are ye." You are not of Paul or of Apollos or of Cephas; YOU ARE OF GOD!

Let us get this straight in our thinking once and for all. It will save us from a lot of confusion. Regardless of the method of evangelism that may be used, NO ONE IS EVER SAVED UNLESS HE IS SOVEREIGNLY CALLED INTO SALVATION BY GOD HIMSELF!

And this is just as true of every other child of God as it is of you, or of me! Cf. John 15:16.

I must never forget this. It will keep me from thinking too much of the human instrument God may have used to bring me to Himself, and it will keep me worshipping God!

II. Secondly, I must see THE SURPRISES CONNECTED WITH HIS CALL.

Seven hundred years before Christ came to the earth God expressed a truth through the prophet Isaiah which we are reminded of here. It is this: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For . . ." (Isa. 55:8, 9).

What is the surprise?

It is this: God has deliberately avoided the way men would undertake the salvation of men--the way which men will often employ in spite of what the Word of God teaches us.

Salvation is for all men, but if you will look at the people of God you will note that there is a definite absence of certain classes of people.

Certain inscriptions in the Catacombs indicate that in the church at Rome most of the members were from the lower or middle classes (Godet, I, 111). It is true that Paul wrote to the Philippians and said, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22). But even taking the Word of God as a whole, we see abundant illustrations that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called."

THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED BY ACCIDENT; GOD HAS DELIBERATELY ORDAINED THAT IT SHOULD BE THIS WAY!

What are meant by these terms?

The "wise men" are the philosophers of Corinth, the intelligentsia, the educated class, the Ph. D.s, the "brains." He is saying that you will NEVER find the Gospel of Jesus Christ popular on the university campus, nor will it have wide acceptance with men who have come to worship at the shrine of human wisdom. There are some, but "not many."

The "mighty" are people in places of power and authority, governmental leaders, religious leaders. There are some, like Nicodemus, or the Ethiopian eunuch, or Naaman the Syrian, but again--"not many."

The "noble" are the well-born. These are the people whose very names carry a certain prestige, an influence which seems to overpower people--which was illustrated this last week by the men and women who were seeking frantically to get Senator Ted Kennedy to run for the Presidency. They know the power of that name. There are some well-born

people who have been "called" into salvation, but again--
"not many."

Is this not surprising?

How many times we say, What if so-and-so were a Christian,
what a mighty influence he would have for Christ?

Do you suppose these people are beyond the reach of the
grace of God, that the Holy Spirit cannot bring His power
of conviction to bear upon them?

Some of them are saved, which proves the Lord can reach
them. But have you ever noticed how a Christian in
politics, or a Christian with a lot of money, or a
Christian who is high in educational circles often proves
to be a disappointment.

Think of how we try to reach the football captain, or the
homecoming queen, thinking that we will then be able to
reach the whole campus for Christ! Cannot God reach them
if He wanted to? If we had been talking to Nicodemus we
would have promised to make him a disciple if he would
only accept Christ. We could visualize all Judaism turning
to Christ. BUT THE LORD LET HIM GO WITHOUT BRINGING HIM
TO THE POINT OF A DECISION.

No--God has deliberately chosen NOT to work among the
high-ups of this earth. WHY?

There are two good reasons given here.

First, because God has chosen to display the power of the
Gospel by showing the effect that it has in the weakest,
most worthless vessels He could find.

Note v. 27 ff. Paul does not simply say, "But God has
chosen the foolish things of the world," but he says that
"God has chosen the foolish things of the world to con-
found the wise."

How beautifully this is illustrated in the story of Elisha
and Naaman! Elisha could not have been a greater fool in
the eyes of the world in doing what he did. BUT HE WAS A
MAN WHO WAS WISE IN THE WAYS OF GOD. He "confounded"
Naaman. He put him to shame. He made him see how foolish
he was. And then Elisha's servant almost ruined the whole
thing.

The same is true of the "weak" and the "base . . . despised
. . . and the things which are not." He is speaking of

those who are unlettered, uneducated; those who have not achieved great power among men; those who do not have outstanding families; those who are even disdained by the world; those who "are not" because as far as the world is concerned they do not even exist--THESE ARE THE VESSELS GOD MOST OFTEN USES TO ILLUSTRATE FOR ALL THE MIGHTY POWER OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IN TRANSFORMING THE MOST INSIGNIFICANT OF MEN INTO MIGHTY WITNESSES FOR CHRIST.

That is the first reason.

The second is this: God will have no flesh, however great it might be, to glory in His presence.

The greatness of a man has nothing to do with his right to be saved. The Gospel is for those who realize that all that they have does not move them one step closer to God. And therefore you will find God uses people who are the best illustration of what He desires to do in the lives of men.

Do you feel that you are too bad to be saved? You are just the kind of a person the Lord can save. If you feel that you are so good you do not need salvation, this is the most serious mistake you will ever make.

One other point. It has to do with

III. THE SUMMARIZATION OF THE CALL, or Paul's explanation as to why human merit is of no significance.

It is found in v. 30.

It is apparent in the English and certainly in the Greek that the word "wisdom" does not go with the three great words of the Gospel which follow it: righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

God has called me into a position of being "in Christ Jesus." And it is the Lord Jesus Christ who has become my "wisdom" so that I am able to understand God's way of salvation which consists in righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

What does this include?

It is as though the Apostle in three words is summarizing the first 8 chapters of Romans:

- (1) "Righteousness" - Romans 1-5, my deliverance from the penalty of sin, declared acceptable to God because I am "in Christ Jesus."

- (2) Sanctification" - Rom. 6:1-8:17, deliverance from the defilement of sin, cleansed because I am in Christ.
- (3) Redemption" from - Rom. 8:18-30, deliverance from the earth, from the very presence of sin itself when the Lord comes and I am transformed into His very likeness.

Concl: What could you add to that? Absolutely nothing.

And it is all mine because I have been called by God and placed in Christ Jesus. Salvation is complete, and there is nothing for me to glory in.

When you get through with 1 Cor. 1 we cannot talk about Paul, or about Apollos, or about Peter--ONLY ABOUT CHRIST. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND THE WORD OF GOD
1 Cor. 2:1-10

Intro: I want to link three statements in ch. 1 this morning with the first verse of chapter 2. Note the statements very carefully:

- (1) Ch. 1, v. 9, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Salvation is a divine calling, and it is GOD who does the calling--not you and I.
- (2) Consequently, in ch. 1, v. 17 we read, "For Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel." Paul could not choose his own message; he had to fit into the divine plan of God.
- (3) Then in ch. 1, v. 26 we read, "For ye see your calling." No one who has come to Christ has any right to boast in his salvation. God has not called us because of what we are; He has called us in spite of what we are "that no flesh should glory in his presence" and that "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Ch. 2, v. 1 goes back to explain more about ch. 1, v. 17. God has called. Paul has been sent. EVERYTHING DEPENDS UPON HOW PAUL PREACHES, AND WHAT PAUL PREACHES. And let us see this morning that this is simply a lesson in evangelism for every child of God.

Do you want to know how to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ? No better instructions were ever written than those given here in ch. 2, vv. 1-5.

Please notice that as Paul talks about how these Corinthians were saved, and how other Corinthians might be saved, that there are three factors which enter into the salvation of those who need Christ. They are all in these verses.

- (1) First of all, there is the one who is doing the witnessing, the man of God, or let us simply call him, the child of God. In these verses it is Paul.
- (2) Secondly, there is the word of God. Paul speaks of it in v. 1 as "the testimony of God." We might talk about Paul giving a testimony, but it is actually God who is speaking. He is simply using us as bearers of the message.
- (3) Thirdly, and for the first time in this epistle, Paul refers to the Spirit of God in v. 4.

So we have . . . the man of God . . . the word of God . . . the Spirit of God. Remember that when we speak of "the man of God" we are not talking about a preacher in the formal sense, but we are talking about any and every person who knows Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Every Christian is in this sense a man of God!

Since we are just now being introduced in this epistle to the Holy Spirit, let me point out a couple of dangers.

There is nothing more essential to the Christian life and to Christian witnessing than is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. BUT HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT THIS IS WHERE SO MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE GONE WRONG? SOME OF THE CORINTHIANS WERE IN TROUBLE OVER A FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND PROPERLY THE TRUTHS OF THE WORD OF GOD CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT. AND THERE ARE HUNDREDS UPON HUNDREDS OF CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA TODAY WHO ARE OFF ON THE WRONG TRACK CONCERNING THIS VITALLY IMPORTANT DOCTRINE.

What are the pitfalls? There are two: emotionalism and fanaticism. The moment you begin to talk to some Christians about the Holy Spirit they begin to talk about some great feeling they have had, or some great experience they have had. It might have been a dream, or a vision, or they will tell you that they have seen God, or they have spoken in tongues, or they have performed miracles--and the longer you listen to them the more you begin to realize that something very essential is missing. THEIR EMOTIONALISM HAS GOTTEN THEM AWAY FROM THE WORD OF GOD.

Ill. A pastor was speaking with a young lady who claimed to be able to speak in tongues. He was trying to show her from the Word of God that her experience was not consistent with the Word. Finally, she responded in this way. She said, "Before I had the experience, you might have convinced me that I was wrong, but now you could not prove it even though you showed it to me in the Bible.

How can I keep from the extremes that some people have gone to and yet not avoid the teaching of Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit?

Notice what Paul says--not, I tried to witness in the power of the Spirit, nor, I hope I witnessed in the power of the Spirit, but "my speech and my preaching" were (lit.) in the powerful demonstration of the Spirit.

How could he say this? Because some five years after he had first gone to Corinth with the Gospel, there was a Church there made up of people whose profession of faith had stood the test of time. The test of any effort to win people to Christ is not that they have made a decision; it is that six months, or a year, or five years later they are still going on with God. Paul had seen God, the Holy Spirit, do a work, a mighty work in Corinth, and the church itself was proof of that statement. Now the point I am after is this: ON WHAT BASIS DID PAUL GO TO CORINTH SO THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT COULD USE HIM THE WAY HE DID? The answer is right here!

First of all,

I. THERE WERE THREE SPECIFIC THINGS WHICH PAUL DELIBERATELY AVOIDED IN HIS MINISTRY (vv. 1, 4).

- A. Paul did not go to them as an orator. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech" (v. 1).

An orator is inclined to depend upon how he speaks as the way he expects to convince his hearers. He is more concerned about method, about effect, than he is about content.

Moses was bothered with this. Cf. Ex. 4:10, "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

You see Moses was doing what most of us do; he was looking at his ability to persuade, and he knew he did not have it.

It is true that some people are swayed by this. A man can preach error with such powers of oratory that people will believe him, or a man can preach the Gospel with great eloquence and people will be swayed--but this does not mean it is the power of God!

- B. Paul did not go to them as a philosopher. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came now with excellency of . . . wisdom" (v. 1).

Paul did not try to meet the intellectual on his own ground, nor did he try to impress the Corinthians that he was capable of holding his own with their greatest scholars. He did not go to Corinth to be recognized as another wise man.

I believe there is a segment of evangelical Christians today who are on shaky ground because they are trying to match the world in its wisdom, and I believe that history will teach us that when men have tried for some time to do this that gradually they get away from the Gospel altogether.

The Corinthians would have loved either of these two approaches, but Paul was very careful to avoid both of them.

But there is one more.

- C. Paul did not go to them as a debater. "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom." Cf. v. 4.

Listen to these words from Charles Hodge who for 56 years lectured on the Pauline Epistles at Princeton Seminary. He says:

"It might have been easy for him to argue the Corinthians into a conviction of the truth of the Gospel, by appealing to its superiority to heathenism and to the evidence of its divine origin afforded by prophecy and miracles. He might have exhibited the folly of idolatry, and the absurdity of pagan rites and ceremonies, and convinced them of the historical truth of Christianity. The conviction thus produced would be rational and important; but it would not be saving faith. Faith founded on such evidence is merely speculative. The true foundation of faith, or rather, the foundation of true faith, is the power of God" (1 Cor., p. 32).

We can be so intent on proving the other person wrong, or winning an argument, that we lose sight of the real issues in salvation. Cf. John 16:7-11.

Many do not witness because they feel that they do not have the answers. Of course we need to be able to answer honest questions, but you can prove another person to be absolutely wrong, but not lead him to Christ. You can even make him agree that you are right, but this does not mean that he is a Christian.

Paul was not a debater; he was a witness.

Now we have spoken of that which Paul avoided. It is time for us to ask, WHAT DID HE DO?

II. IF HE WAS TO SEE THE POWERFUL DEMONSTRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THERE WERE TWO THINGS WHICH WERE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.

- A. An attitude of complete dependence. "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (v. 3).

Does this not describe your feelings as you think of approaching others with the message of salvation? Who of us has not been overwhelmed with the awesome task of reaching another person for Christ? PAUL NEVER GOT OVER THIS FEELING.

Have you ever seen these advertisements in our Christian magazines, "Soul Winning Made Easy"? There is no such thing. It is never easy to win men to Christ. It is impossible if it is up to you and to me. Only the Holy Spirit can bring men to Christ, and it is fatal to evangelism when I come to the place where I feel that I have a method that is the answer. Paul with all of his experience and with all of his knowledge of the truth apparently never approached another individual or a crowd except with a feeling of personal inadequacy concerning the job to be done!

This is crucial. But there is another point.

- B. An attitude of great determination, of great purpose." "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (v. 2).

He said that he came "declaring unto you the testimony of God."

Paul is not saying that he was not interested in gaining knowledge. He IS saying that he did not come to impress them with his wisdom, or his speaking ability, or his debating skill; HE SIMPLY HAD COME TO TELL THEM ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, AND WHAT JESUS CHRIST HAD DONE FOR THEM.

Paul was not a witness for a religion; he was a witness of a Person--one who was living and loving and ready to take away the sins of men who would accept Him as their Saviour.

Cf. Phil. 3:10.

"Jesus Christ"--the Person; "him crucified"--His work! How simple, and yet how inexhaustible!

Concl: This is all it takes: a child of God who will be simple enough to depend upon the Spirit of God and just tell people what he knows about Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross.

Dear people of God, have we gotten to the place where we are just trying to get people to believe like we do, or are we so devoted to our blessed Lord that we just have to talk to others about Him?

This is what the Holy Spirit will bless. This is why the Apostle Paul saw such a tremendous work done in Corinth. He wanted to reach the Corinthians, but he took his orders from God. May we have the wisdom to do the same!

THE WISDOM WHICH PAUL PREACHED
1 Cor. 2:6-10

Intro: From v. 17 of chapter 1 to our text this morning wisdom has taken a beating at the hand of the Apostle Paul. It would be easy to misunderstand him.

In 1:17 he declares that he was sent to "preach the gospel" but "not with the wisdom of words." In 1:19 he quotes from Isa. 29:14 to the effect that God had said, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." In 1:20 after throwing out some challenges he says, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" In 1:21 he continues his tirade by saying that "the world by wisdom knew not God." It seems that insult is added to injury in 1:27 when he says that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."

In 2:1 he seems to begin again when he states that he "came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom," and then adds in v. 4 that his "speech and (his) preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom."

But what is worst of all is 2:2, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

And remember--ALL OF THIS WAS WRITTEN TO A CHURCH IN A CITY WHERE WISDOM WAS THE MAIN THING THEY WERE INTERESTED IN.

Reading all of this there are several things we might say. (1) We might immediately feel that Paul is singing the praises of stupidity, that the less you know, the better Christian you could be. Or, (2) we might feel that Paul had not respect for the feelings of others, and that he deliberately tried to offend people feeling that there was some special virtue in this. Reading Paul's epistles we must disregard both of these impressions.

What then was he trying to prove? What was he trying to get across to the Corinthian church?

We come to the answer in 2:6 when suddenly we read, "Howbeit (the Gk., but) we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." If anyone happened to be reading this epistle for the first time, surely his eyes would become riveted to the page when he came across these words. He DOES speak wisdom! But in the following verse he calls it, "the wisdom of God." What is he trying to tell us? Let us see.

I. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF WISDOM.

There is "the wisdom of God" and "the wisdom of this world,"

or, to be more accurate, the wisdom of this age.

The wisdom of this age is an expression which sums up "all that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral, atmosphere which at every moment of our life we inhale, and again inevitably to exhale . . . the subtle informing spirit of the . . . world of men who are living alienated and apart from God" (Trench, pp, 217, 218).

So it actually points to the ideas, the standards, the philosophies of men which makes them what they are and causes them to seek the things which they are after.

And note: It "comes to nought," i.e., it finally spends itself and proves that there is nothing to it. All the hopes which it inspired are empty hopes which will lead men only to despair.

What a picture of life in this world! IF ALL WE HAVE IS THE PHILOSOPHIES, THE DREAMS, THE ASPIRATIONS OF MEN-- THEN WE HAVE NOTHING.

Paul is not despising the attainment of human wisdom, but he is saying that all of the wisdom of man cannot find God, cannot solve the real problems concerning evil, and death, and life after death, and God!

Remember 1:21--"the world by wisdom knew not God." We can only find God through

II. THE WISDOM OF GOD. Let us examine carefully what Paul has to say about it.

A. What it is.

It is a wisdom which comes from God. It is called in 2:1, "the testimony of God." In 1:17 Paul calls it "the gospel" which had to do with "the cross of Christ." In 1:23 he writes, "But we preach Christ crucified."

Paul is trying to tell us that Jesus Christ, His coming into the earth, and His death on the cross have the answer that men are seeking so frantically by all of their philosophic speculations. Christ is the answer for the evil in the world. Christ is the answer to death. Christ is the answer to life after death. Christ is the way to God.

The world listens and says, Nonsense! Why is this so? This leads to my next point.

- B. Men are absolutely incapable of understanding "the wisdom of God."

Read 2:6, 8.

Who are "the princes of this age"? They are "those who in the present age . . . by nobility of birth, learning and wisdom, power and authority, wield the greatest influence, whether among Jews or Gentiles" (Thayer, p. 79).

They are the men described by Paul in 1:27, 28, "the wise . . . the . . . mighty . . . things that are."

If the Jews and the Romans had understood Jesus Christ, they would have had nothing to do with His death on the Cross. This is why Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Now read also 2:9. This is not a verse which has to do with a Christian's understanding of heaven; this has to do with anybody's understanding of salvation. You may take all of the avenues of human knowledge and through these a man will never come to understand God and the purposes of God. A Ph. D. from any great university is just as helpless as the most primitive native that you can find any place in the world.

Cf. 2:14. Man in his own wisdom is incapable of knowing the things of God, and does not want to know them!

Therefore, young people, when you go into the classroom and your professor starts to belittle the Bible and to humanize Jesus Christ, remember that he is only displaying his ignorance of "the wisdom of God."

But, you say, if you have been following me, If men cannot understand the wisdom of God, how will they ever come to know it? How did we ever come to understand the Gospel? Note:

- C. We come to understand "the wisdom of God" by revelation.

Never read 2:9 without also reading 2:10! What God revealed to the men who wrote the Scriptures must also be revealed to the men who read the Scriptures!

Who does the revealing? The Holy Spirit does! What an

amazing thing this is, when for the first time we begin to understand who Jesus Christ is, why He came, and why we need Him as our Saviour.

Our Lord Jesus told His disciples just before he went out to be taken by the Roman soldiers, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . ." (John 16:13).

But let me add one other word.

D. "The wisdom of God" will let me in on the purposes of God in salvation.

Did you notice what the Lord is called in 2:8--"the Lord of glory"?

Read also 2:7--"which God ordained before the world unto our glory."

Rom. 3:23 says that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

What is the purpose of God in salvation? As Dr. L. S. Chafer used to say, "God is so delighted with His Son that He is going to fill heaven with people who are just like His Son is!" "Beloved, now are we . . . (1 Jn. 3:2).

Concl: Now do you see why Paul did not philosophize? Do you see why he did not preach the wisdom of this age, the wisdom of men? Because as far as the things of God are concerned, men in their highest flights of wisdom are like blind men groping in the dark. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of men as the Gospel is being preached. And it is only through faith in Christ who died for our sins that He will ever be made to us all that we need--RIGHTNESS, SANCTIFICATION, REDEMPTION.

UNDERSTANDING THE THINGS OF GOD

1 Cor. 2:11-16

Intro: Chapter 2 is very clearly a chapter which deals with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians there are three such chapters: 2, 12, and 14. There are several scattered references to the Holy Spirit in different sections of this epistle, but the emphasis is in these three chapters. The emphasis begins in ch. 2 because the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in chapter 1, whereas all of chapter 2 is devoted to this one subject.

The problem which Paul is concerned with at this point in the epistle is the "divisions" mentioned in 1:10. He mentions them again in 3:3. Evidently the major issue in those divisions had to do with the ministry of the Holy Spirit--which incidently is one of the major causes for division in the Church today!

The particular point of difficulty over the ministry of the Holy Spirit had to do with how it is possible for men to understand the things of God.

The Corinthians who were not Christians declared that it was through human wisdom, through philosophy, through what Paul calls "the wisdom of this world" (1:20; 2:6). To them, human reason was capable of attaining any kind of knowledge, but this is where they were wrong.

But the Corinthians were Christians were equally wrong. They said, "If you want to know the things of God, then you had better listen to Paul." Others said, "No, you need Apollos." Still others said, "No, Cephas (Peter) is the one who can lead you into an understanding of the things of God." And then there were others who apparently were concerned only with the words of Christ. Cf. 1:12; 3:4.

This is why they were divided. What is the real answer? Paul is seeking to tell us.

~~First of all, let us eliminate one whole segment of the human family by looking at 2:14.~~

~~What does Paul mean by "the natural man"?~~

We must keep in mind the fact that Paul is talking about a message which he describes as "the gospel" in 1:17 which had to do with "the cross of Christ," "the testimony of God" in 2:1, and "the wisdom of God" in 2:7. These "things" Paul refers to in 2:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. And in v. 10 Paul says that they are "revealed . . . unto us by his Spirit."

He is speaking of those things which he is writing about. Paul is claiming divine inspiration for his writing. The great majority of Corinthians (those who were not Christians) rejected Paul's message as "foolishness." Those who were Christians were divided over the "things of God."

If Paul were ever in a position to exalt himself, he has that opportunity here. He claims that his message has been revealed God. Is he not then in the best position to explain what the Holy Spirit meant by the truth that was given to him?

Paul's answer is very clear.

I. NO MAN KNOWS "THE THINGS OF GOD"; IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO KNOWS THEM (1 Cor. 2:11).

He draws an analogy from human life. A person may say something, and then we say to him, "What do you mean by that?" Or, we are with someone who baffles us, and we say, "You know--I just don't know what is going on inside of him."

You and I never know the things that are going on inside of another person. No one knows that is going on inside of us. We may have fears or ambitions or problems of one kind or another which we have never told to anyone.

We may behave in very strange ways--that is, strange to other people--because they do not know what is going on in us.

I am not saying that this is all wrong, but I am saying what Paul says--if you take any man, no man knows the things of that man except that man himself. He may not understand all he knows, but he knows more about himself than anyone else does.

Now for the analogy . . .

Cf. v. 16a Who thinks that he is capable of knowing the mind of God, or to explain God's thoughts if he could know them?

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:10, 11 that not even the Old Testament prophets who wrote the books of the Old Testament were able to understand all that they wrote, nor could the angels understand it! Instead, he explains in 2 Pet. 1:21 that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

So, just as man's spirit is that only source of information concerning the things of man, "the Spirit of God" is the only One who knows the things of God!

Read 1 Cor. 2:9, 10 again.

Now we are ready for the second point. It is this:

- II. "WE HAVE RECEIVED . . . THE SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD" (1 Cor. 2:12).

Did you get that? (Read it again.)

Let me say something which I believe very strong about the Corinthian Church. I BELIEVE THAT THEY WERE TERRIBLY CONFUSED OF THIS VERY VITAL POINT OF BIBLICAL TEACHING. Notice what Paul says in 3:16, and again in 6:19.

Cf. Rom. 8:9. It is impossible for any person to be a child of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not have the Holy Spirit indwelling him permanently. Cf. John 14:16.

IF ANY GROUP OF CHRISTIANS COULD POSSIBLY HAVE LOST THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH BECAUSE OF ALL OF THE SINS THEY WERE GUILTY OF. But Paul does not tell them to seek the return of the Spirit, or to pray for Him to come into them for the first time. HE TELLS THEM THEY HAVE, with all of their problems, THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLING IN THEM.

- III. Teasing my youngest brother when we were children-- calling him when he was already there--like believers who pray for the Holy Spirit.

Do not let anyone ever get you into a prayer meeting where they are praying for you (quote) "to get the Holy Spirit." You have Him in you if you are Christ's!

What does this have to do with understanding the things of God? Note the reason stated here for His presence in you and in me.

- III. THE HOLY SPIRIT INDWELLS EVERY BELIEVER "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (2:12) --"the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (2:9), i. e., that which is revealed in the Word.

Cf. John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

Here is our answer.

If men are to understand "the things of God" then it will have to be through the Spirit of God. This is why a person who receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour will

not only have an overwhelming desire to read the Word of God, but will also show amazing growth in understanding the Word of God.

And this is just the reason that unsaved people do not enjoy the Bible, nor read it, nor understand it. Look at 2:14.

Who is "the natural man"? Jude tells us in Jude 19, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual (natural), having not the Spirit."

The natural man is not a Christian and so he does not have the Holy Spirit in him. Therefore, he rejects the Word of God ("receiveth not"), "neither can he know" it, because this is impossible without the Holy Spirit.

Concl: There is much more that could be said about this wonderful passage, but let me conclude with this question:

Does this leave any room for the teacher of the Word to be a Paul, or an Apollos, or a Cephas? Certainly. See 2:13. But just as long as the teacher confines his teaching to what the Holy Spirit has said, i.e., to the Word of God, realizing that his teaching will only be understood as the Holy Spirit uses him to impart the truth.

How wonderful to know this truth, and how wonderful also to experience the Spirit's teaching whether through our own reading and study, or through some one else that the Spirit of God may use. When we give the Holy Spirit His place, then we will not be inclined to exalt men like they were exalted in Corinth, and then the possibility of division is greatly decreased!

EVIDENCES OF CARNALITY

1 Cor. 3:1-7

Intro: In this section of ¹Corinthians it is very important that we understand the terms which the Apostle Paul is using.

In 2:6 he spoke of those who are "perfect."

In 2:14 he mentioned "the natural man."

In 2:15 we have another term, "he that is spiritual."

Then in 3:1 he contrasts the "spiritual" person with one he calls "carnal."

And finally, in 3:1, we have another expression, "babes in Christ."

What does he mean by these?

Let us take "the natural man" first. Those of you who were here last Sunday may remember that I mentioned that Jude uses this same word in Jude 19, the same word in the original Greek ($\psiυχικὸς$), but our translators have rendered it, sensual. However, after the word "sensual" Jude has explained what he means by sensual, or natural. The natural man is one who has "not the Spirit." This can mean only one thing. It means that he is not a child of God because the NT makes it very clear that every true Christian has the Holy Spirit living in him, and that nothing can cause the Holy Spirit to leave.

So, if a man does not have the Spirit, he has never had the Spirit. He is not a child of God. Read 1 Cor. 2:14 with that in mind.

Now let us look at the other side for a moment.

What happens to a person when by faith he receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour?

- (1) He is "born of God," that is, he receives eternal life and he comes into the family of God as a babe.
- (2) He becomes "spiritual." Paul seems to be contrasting "the natural man" of 2:14 with all who are no longer in that category because they are now saved. As Paul uses the word here he means that a Christian is spiritual because he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Before you object to what I am saying, hear me through to the end.

- (3) When a person receives Christ, he also becomes "perfect." I did not say he becomes sinlessly perfect, I said that he becomes "perfect." Our problem here is that we do not

know what these Biblical terms mean.

How can I say that all Christians are now "perfect"? Read 1 Cor. 2:6-12 and you will see that Paul uses this of all believers.

But here is the answer: The word "perfect" speaks of the attainment of a goal, the fulfillment of a purpose, of arriving at a destination.

Paul says in Phil. 3:15, Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." He had made it clear in the preceding verse that he was pressing on toward a goal, and he could claim perfection already because there was no uncertainty about his reaching the goal. In fact, in God's sight, he was already there.

Listen to 10:14. "For by one offering he (Christ) hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

This is a term in which I must distinguish between my standing before God (perfect) as compared with my present condition in my daily life.

But I must also say this:

- (4) When a person becomes a Christian, he does not become "carnal," but he remains carnal! Why? Because he still possesses that old carnal, fleshly nature which is never saved and always opposes God and the things of God.

Note what Paul says in Rom. 7:14. "Now we know that . . . I am carnal, sold under sin."

Paul is not describing his experience, or his spiritual condition at the time. He is simply saying that you can be spiritual and carnal at the same time: spiritual, because you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit; carnal, because you still have a sin nature in you.

Now having said all of that which applies to every believer, I must recognize that these terms are also used to speak of practical experience.

Please turn to Phil. 3 where Paul speaks about being perfect. A moment ago I told you that Paul claimed to be perfect. That is in v. 15. NOW LOOK AT V. 12! "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect"!

He was perfect, and yet he was not perfect! What kind of talk is this? This is what he means. His ultimate perfection was so guaranteed by God that he could claim it now, but in experience he could not!

Now look at our text for the morning, and notice Paul's words carefully.

Paul could not speak to them as practically spiritual, that is, as believers who were exercising real dependence upon the Holy Spirit, who were being taught by the Spirit, but he must write to them as believers who were living under the dominion of the flesh--just like they were when they first came to Christ. THEY HAD NOT GROWN AT ALL!

What a tragedy, and yet this is the chief problem with the people of God in every age!

Instead of having been taught by the Spirit and instead of living in dependence upon the Spirit, they were "carnal," living like people who did not know the Lord. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:3b.

We all are spiritual because we have the Spirit indwelling us, that is, those of us who know the Lord, but we need to be spiritual in our daily lives. The only other alternative is carnality!

What are the signs, the evidences of a carnal Christian?

- I. IT IS TO BE SEEN, FIRST OF ALL, IN A CHRISTIAN'S ^{LACK OF} UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORD OF GOD. Cf. 1 Cor. 3:1, 2.

There is nothing wrong with being a babe in Christ, that is, one who has just come to Christ. But it is tragic when one remains a baby. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:2, 3; Eph. 4:14; Heb. 5:12, 13.

A carnal Christian can only feed on "the sincere milk of the Word," and he may not even want that.

What is the difference between "the meat" and "milk"? Is it salvation as compared with prophecy? Is it 1 Thessalonians as compared with Romans? Do we have one set of truths for one group of Christians, and another set of truths for another group? THERE IS CERTAINLY NOTHING OF THIS EVIDENT IN THE SCRIPTURES! A babe in Christ needs to know all about the truth that he can. "Every thing which God has revealed is to be taught to every one just so fast and so far as he has the capacity to receive it" (Hodge, p. 49). The difference is in the understanding. A babe can be taught the truths of salvation, or of the incarnation, or about the Holy Spirit, but as he grows his understanding of them deepens, and his delight in them will increase. Paul said, "Brethren, be not children in understanding . . . but in understanding be men" (1 Cor. 14:20).

Paul felt very definite limitations in his own ministry to the Corinthians, and this was due to their carnality.

II. IT IS TO BE SEEN IN THE WAY A CHRISTIAN LIVES. Cf. 1 Cor. 3:3.

Let us consider the words which Paul uses to describe the character of their lives. *If people are not learning the Word, it is not surprising that their lives are mixed up.*

This may
be all
under-
cover.

- A. "Envy" - ζήλος. We get our English word zeal from this Greek word. It starts out with ambition in a good sense, then it turns to competition, and then it seeks to belittle or to destroy any good that it might see in the lives or actions of others, jealousy.

And all of this can be employed while one is actually trying to serve the Lord. It leaves no room for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Everything depends on action. The goal is the main thing; how you get to the goal is of little consequence.

This is
openly
manifest.

- B. "Strife" - ἔρις. Paul uses this word in 1 Cor. 1:11 where it is translated, "contentions." It speaks of believers being enemies of each other.

In 1 Tim. 6:4 Paul uses it as arising out of doctrinal disputes. How often among carnal Christians the Word of God becomes the basis of bitter hatred.

Such actions completely ignores one of the last words of our Lord to His disciples: John 13:34, 35; also the Lord's prayer, John 17:23. "The fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22a).

- C. "Divisions" - διχοστασίαι. While this word is not in the best MSS, the idea certainly is contained in the other words. It means to stand apart. Factions develop in the church. Some leave. A new church may be formed.

How different the attitude of Abraham in Gen. 13:8, 9.

- D. "Walk as men," that is, as men walk who do not know the Lord.

How many ideas do you see in the church today and in various Christian organizations which had their origin in the world, not in the Word of God? I speak of ways of promoting a work, ways of training, ways of raising money, ways of winning converts. A carnal Christian will not care where the methods come from; he is primarily interested in "results."

III. IT IS SEEN IN THE WAY MAN IS EXALTED (1 Cor. 3:4-7).

Ignorance of the Word plus the employment of the ways of man leads to the exaltation of men.

Every preacher, every Christian leader, every Sunday School teacher, every missionary, every one who serves the Lord in any way should have these words of vv. 4-7 so written on his heart that he might never forget them. Paul had anticipated this in 1:29, 31.

You can tell where a man stands with the Lord by his attitude toward the praises which may come his way. Paul wanted nothing to do with it. He was nothing! God was the One who was using him, and God gave the increase. Therefore, God deserved all of the glory!

Concl: So much could be said on this subject. More of our troubles in the church are traced to such situations as these--carnality, ignorance of the Word, exalting man.

What is the remedy? It is to let the Holy Spirit teach us the Word of God so that we will know how the Lord wants us to live, how we are to serve Him, and what our goals should be.

CB - 10/6/68 am.

WHAT IT MEANS TO SERVE GOD

1 COR. 3: 6-15

Intro: We are still in that section where Paul is dealing with divisions in the Corinthian Church. Their divisions were partially the result of spiritual immaturity. The spiritual immaturity was manifested in several ways. ONE OF THE CHIEF WAYS BEING CONFUSION OVER WHAT THE WORK OF GOD REALLY IS!

How would you define it? If we are confused at this point, then we will be confused over WHAT IT MEANS TO SERVE GOD.

Ill. Recently I was in a church where I saw ~~an~~ pamphlet entitled something like this, Should The Church Be Involved in Social Action?

The minute you mention Church to some people they immediately think that identification will mean giving up a lot of things that they would like to do.

To people in the Church it often means meetings, committees, work projects, etc.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS CHRISTIANS NEED TO ASK IS,

I. WHAT IS THE WORK OF GOD?

I am aware that for John 6 the multitudes asked our Lord, "What shall we do that we might work the

works of God?" To which he replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Cf. vv. 28, 29 in John 6.

However, this is for those who do not know the Lord. AND IT MIGHT BE WELL TO EMPHASIZE THIS. NO PERSON CAN SERVE THE LORD RIGHTLY UNTIL HE HAS FIRST OF ALL RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS HIS SAVIOUR!

In talking to a fellow-Pastor recently he said the question came up as to whether or not a man had a right to be a minister in their denomination if he did not believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ — and the Committee deciding this unanimously voted that it was NOT NECESSARY FOR A MINISTER TO BELIEVE IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH!

Let me say this morning that a man might be a minister, a pastor, but if he denies the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, how can he even be a Christian?

Until a person receives the Virgin born, crucified, resurrected and ascended Son of God as his Saviour, it is meaningless to talk about serving the Lord.

WE ARE CONCERNED THIS MORNING, HOWEVER, WITH THOSE OF US WHO HAVE RECEIVED CHRIST.

WHAT IS THE WORK OF GOD?

LET ME READ CAREFULLY 1 COR 3:9, 10.

THE WORK OF GOD IS PEOPLE. Cf Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13.

We may need to build buildings, and we may have to have committees and meetings and classes and camps etc., but if you want to see what GOD is doing, look into the lives of His people.

Often when we are asked how the work at Central Bible is going we respond by saying that we had so many in S.F., or so many in church, or so much given to missions, but does this really tell us how things are going?

Numbers can be very deceptive.

On one occasion our Lord fed a crowd of over 5,000 men + women and children (John 6).

They wanted to make him king.

He got in a ship + crossed the sea to Capernaum.

The next day the crowd followed him.

When they came to him, He actually rebuked them, saying, "Verily, verily, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled" (John 6:26).

Paul tells us that GOD is cultivating the lives of men as a farmer would plow + plant a field. Also - GOD is building His people as a carpenter would build a building - AND HERE WE HAVE A PICTURE OF HIS WORK!

The test of God's work in Corinth was to be seen in the lives of

the Corinthians!

Whenever the organization becomes more important than the people, then we have departed from what the NT teaches concerning the work of God.

I have no right to ^{try to} make God fit into my plans. "We are labourers together with God";* It is God's husbandry, God's building!
How we try to reverse it!

now having established this, I want to take these two illustrations this morning, and draw one lesson from each one. What are we to learn about serving God from these two illustrations: God's husbandry and God's building?

II. WHAT ARE WE TO LEARN ABOUT SERVING GOD FROM

A. GOD'S CULTIVATED FIELD?

There are several lessons here. I want to take just one.

This is it: "We are labourers together with God."

The Corinthians had completely misinterpreted the work of God. They had made Paul + Apollos opponents; actually they were ON THE SAME TEAM.

Paul had planted; Apollos had watered. Both were indispensable parts of the harvest.

This is one of the hardest lessons for us as Christians to learn.

We are not the only ones God is going to use. It may take 5, or 10, or 100 persons to bring someone to Christ. There is no such thing as competition in the work of God if both Paul and Apollos are concerned about God's work in the lives of people!

Whoever does the work, God gives the increase, and so He gets the glory for whatever is done! It is thrilling to hear how many different people God uses in the life of one person - for salvation, then for growth.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT SERVING GOD FROM

B. GOD'S BUILDING?

Read v. 10.

Paul, "the wise masterbuilder," or ARCHITECT, a translation of the GK word. Hodge says, "So him (Paul) was revealed the whole plan of the building, and he was inspired to develop that plan, and to prescribe the way in which it should be carried out."

Paul's architectural drawing is in the WORD.

What is the first thing of importance in building a house? The foundation.

"I have laid the foundation" (v. 10) - then read v. 11.

Possibly Paul was thinking of what our Lord said in Matt 7: 24-27.

Paul had not gone to Corinth to establish disciples of Paul! Cf. 2: 2. See also the preeminence of Christ in 1: 1-9!

If the building is to stand, there can be only one foundation: JESUS CHRIST - WHO HE IS, AND WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US!

Concl: This is the only way to have strong, growing Christ - TEACH AND PREACH CHRIST!

Let that be the heart of our message here at Central Bible. Let people who come hear learn of Him, and then learn to love Him and to live for Him.

This is my prayer for my own ministry - that the Lord would just use me to exalt His Son.

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS?

1 Cor. 3:9-15

Intro: Whenever the subject of rewards comes up among Christians, someone usually says, "I'm not interested in rewards for the things that I do. If I get any, I am going to cast them at the Lord's feet."

They are usually thinking about the four and twenty elders in Rev. 4 who "had on their heads crowns of gold" (v. 4), and they "fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (vv. 10, 11).

Such an attitude toward rewards is very pious-sounding, but it is clearly out of harmony with the Word of God. BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT REWARDS.

We would all agree that the person who serves just for what he gets out of it does not really have the work at heart. This is what is wrong with so much that is being done in the secular world today.

If you have read this passage carefully, you will notice that Paul does not tell us what the rewards are; HE IS TELLING US WHAT WE MUST DO IF WE ARE TO RECEIVE A REWARD FOR THE WORK THAT WE DO, SERVING THE LORD! This is a most important point.

IF I SAY THAT I AM NOT INTERESTED IN REWARDS, WHAT I MAY BE SAYING IS THAT IT DOES NOT MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE HOW I SERVE THE LORD; THE MAIN THING IS THAT I AM DOING SOMETHING!

If this is my feeling, I could hardly be farther from the truth! Cf. 1 Cor. 3:10, ". . . but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

You and I who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour should be interested in rewards if for no other than just this one reason: IT WILL MAKE US CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT WE MUST DO TO SERVE THE LORD THE WAY HE WANTS US TO SERVE HIM!

What does Paul tell us here about rewards?

We have at least five principles which every child of God should be vitally concerned about. If we do not understand these principles, we cannot help but be confused about what it means to serve the Lord--and you only have to look at the Church, at preachers, at missionaries to know that confusion is everywhere these days because we have not gone to the Word of God to find out how we are supposed to serve the Lord.

The first principle is this:

- I. It is in v. 8. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."

This was where the Corinthians had gotten off on the wrong track. They were comparing the work of Paul with the work of Apollos and then dividing up after they had decided who was doing the best work.

You find this in the Lord's work today. We are making comparisons all of the time.

One of the parables which our Lord gave causes us a great deal of difficulty because we do not understand the work of God. It is found in the first 16 verses of Matt. 20. A householder went out to hire labourers to work in his vinyard. He hired some the first thing in the morning. Others were hired at 9 o'clock. He hired more at noon and at 3 p.m. Then at 5 o'clock he hired some more.

When the day's work was done he amazed everyone by giving every person who had worked for him that day the same amount: one penny!

The cries of outrage began to pour in from those who had worked most of the day, but then he reminded them that he had contracted to pay them one penny, and this is what he had done. IF HE WANTED TO PAY THOSE WHO STARTED AT 5 O'CLOCK THE SAME AMOUNT, THAT WAS HIS BUSINESS!

They were making the mistake of comparing their time, and their work with the time and work of others--but the householder does not reward in terms of time spent in the vineyard.

Listen to 2 Cor. 10:12. "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

Paul in Gal. 6:4 says practically the same thing. "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have re-joicing in himself alone, and not in another."

God is going to deal with each one of us individually, and what others have done will not even enter into the decision of what our reward shall be.

The second principle is:

- II. No reward will be given for work that is not built on the foundation. Cf. v. 11.

What does Paul mean by this?

He means that nothing can be considered the work of God which is not built upon Jesus Christ--His Deity, and His work at the cross!

Paul was not the foundation. Apollos was not the foundation. Peter was not the foundation. Paul had laid the foundation in Corinth by preaching Jesus Christ, "and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

There are many today who are trying to build on the foundation of Christ's teachings while at the same time they will deny that He was the eternal Son of God, and they will deny that His death on the cross was as a sacrificial substitute for the sins of the whole world--that He must be accepted by every person who desires a right relationship with God.

Corinthian philosophy could never do what Jesus Christ could do!

Sometimes people call the Church to get us involved in various social works. Now I am not against doing anything that we can do to help people. I do not believe we should make people think that the government will support them for ever. But we do need to help people. But how do you help them? Where do you start? If we ask many of these social agencies, "What place to the preaching of the Gospel?", they will usually say, "Oh, we leave that up to the churches."

If we approach human problems on any other foundation but Christ, we are dealing with symptoms--not the real issue!

Don't forget this principle in serving the Lord. Always remember Jesus Christ!

The third principle is:

III. I must build on the foundation those things which will stand the test of divine judgment. This is the meaning of the fire in v. 13.

"Gold, silver, precious stones" will stand the test of fire; "wood, hay, stubble" will be destroyed by fire.

What is Paul talking about in using these figures of speech?

Our strongest clue is to be found in the problem that he is dealing with here. What is it? It is the conflict be-

tween human wisdom and the Word of God!

Paul wants to establish in the minds of the Corinthians once and for all that God works through His Word. They had been born again by the Word. They could only grow in grace through the Word. The Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths. The Word is living and powerful and sharper than any twoedged sword.

Gold, silver, and precious stones suggest riches, and this is the way they are used in the Scriptures.

Cf. Psalms 19:10, 11, speaking of the Word, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: . . . Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Cf. Psalms 12:6, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

Cf. Matt. 13:⁵¹52, "Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his things new and old"---precious stones!

This is why the Word of God must always be at the heart of our ministry here, and must be the guiding light in each of our lives, day by day.

The fourth principle is:

- IV. Rewards are not determined by immediate results when serving the Lord, but "the day shall declare it" (v. 13).

What day? Cf. 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10. It is the day of Jesus Christ, the day of His return, when we will be caught up to meet Him in the air.

Here again we often have the wrong set of values, we manifest our ignorance of how God works.

Sometimes the world must feel that we are more interested in statistics than we are in people. We have contrived about every way possible to get "decisions" out of people.

Today most Christians will admit that there is a real dearth of Bible teaching. What they will not recognize is that our ignorance of the Bible has caused us to employ a lot of methods and aim at a lot of goals that will not stand the test when "the day shall declare it." It is

Not just what happens this morning that God is concerned about, but whether that result is a lasting result.

One other principle, and we are through.

- V. Salvation and rewards must not be confused with each other. I can lose all of my rewards, and still be saved. Cf. v. 15.

If you have been one who has said, "Oh, I am not interested in rewards," is this what we you want? Do you want to be "saved; yet so as by fire."

There is no need for this. This is not the way to bring glory to God. But, you see, even at the risk of some people taking advantage of this, Paul does not use works as pressure to make people certain about their salvation.

How delightful it is to see the consistency of the Apostle Paul regardless of the subject he is treating.

Concl: What is your reaction when you get through a passage of Scripture like this?

It makes me want to get into the Word of God more and more--to learn, to grow, and to know that I am serving Him in the way He wants me to, trusting Him to give the increase.

May the Lord keep us from turning away from our Lord and from the Word to any other thing as we seek to minister to men on behalf of a Saviour whose coming is very, very near.

GOD'S HAND IN ALL THINGS

1 Cor. 3:16-23

Intro: One of the difficult things about the divisions which had developed in the Corinthians church was that the spiritual growth and blessing of the people had suffered. This becomes very clear in chapter 3.

The basic principles involved in serving the Lord had also become cloudy. Even the leaders of the church had become so involved in all of the problems that they had overlooked the fact that Christ was the only foundation upon which the work of God in the lives of His people could be founded, and that nothing must take the place of the teaching and preaching of the Word of God.

It is very apparent that when human wisdom replaces the Word of God, then difficulties arise in many ways. This may be the reason that Paul deals with this problem first.

Chapter 3 closes with three warnings followed by the teaching of one of the greatest truths related to the lives of the people of God--and all of these are concerned directly with the sovereignty of God in human affairs: God's hand in all things!

The first of these three warnings we considered last Sunday morning: that it is possible to serve the Lord in such a way that all rewards are lost, even though the servant himself will be saved "so as by fire." Cf. v. 15.

This morning let us look at the other two warnings, and the conclusion which the Apostle Paul reaches.

I. God's Hand In Protecting the Church From being Defiled (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

Note the language very carefully here. He is not teaching them something new. In chapter 2 he had referred to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit--that every Christian had the Holy Spirit living in him.

That was in connection with the Word of God--that, regardless of who might be the teacher, the Holy Spirit is the only One who can give us an understanding of the Bible.

Now, however, he refers to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in another way. It is this: The fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in us individually

means that together, as well as individually, we are "the temple of God."

"Ye" (plural) "are the temple" (singular) "of God."

This means that the significance of the temple in the OT is carried over into the Church in the NT. The temple was the place God dwelt, where His presence was manifested.

There is a sense, then, in which the local church is the temple of God--not the building, but the people.

Where did God dwell in Corinth? In the church of Corinth. Where does he dwell in Portland? He dwells wherever His people are. We are in this sense "the temple of God"--as is every other local assembly of NT believers!

But what about the warning?

It is in v. 17. The words "defile" and "destroy" are the same word in the Greek. It means to mar, to bring into a worse state. The temple of God is to be "holy." Anyone who defiles the church, who divides it, who brings false doctrine into it, who seeks to exalt himself in it, is going to find that God does the same thing to him!

Nothing is so dear to God on earth as His people. We all need to think twice before we defile them. It is with God that we will have to deal.

II. God's Hand on Those who Teach the wisdom of Man rather than the Word of God (1 Cor. 3:18-20).

Here Paul goes back to some of the truth that he had stated in 1:18-25.

"Let no man deceive himself." This is stated in the Greek so as to indicate that some were deceiving themselves!

But the word "craftiness" in v. 19 indicates that they were not deceiving themselves about their teaching. They knew that it was "vain" (v. 20). Archbishop Trench defines "vain" as meaning, "aimlessness . . . resultlessness . . . the leading to no object or end." And then he quotes another who says it is "to build houses of sand on the sea-

shore, to chase the wind, to shoot at the stars, to pursue one's shadow."

Man's "thoughts," his dialogues, will often promise happiness, holiness (goodness), and even heaven, but he knows in his own heart that he does not have the answer.

But man will turn from the Word of God where the real answers are to be found, and will turn to human wisdom where there is nothing.

What is the warning?

It is in v. 19. But what is more, it is in the OT! From Isa. 29:14 (translated literally), God will grasp with His hand those who substitute human wisdom for the Word of God--and He will do it to bring them to judgment!

Cf. Heb. 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

III. GOD'S OVERRULING HAND OF BLESSING--tremendous assurance for the people of God (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

"Therefore let no man glory in men." To glory in men is to consider that men are the source of blessedness, and that, if we can be related to them, there is just that much more opportunity for blessedness.

This is just as wrong as it can be, and Paul shows us why!

As you read through the latter part of v. 22 you find the reasons why men are not holy, why they are not peaceful, but instead, why they are defeated, discouraged, hopeless, and why they have no answers.

I cannot possibly deal with all of the facets of these words, but let us get an idea.

"The world" - the people, the events (of the last week, Viet Nam, drug addiction, violence, revolutions, dictatorships, suicides, broken homes, immorality, the rising cost of living, and on and on.

What can man do about "the world"?

"Life" - What have you had to do with your life, who your parents were, where you were born, your sex, the circumstances in your home, your personality, your gifts, your education, your choice of a life partner, your children, your health, and on and on.

What control does man have over "life"?

"Death" - This is the subject we do not like to talk about. Death is our enemy, and even as far as the Bible is concerned it is the last enemy that will be destroyed.

What can man in all of his wisdom do about "death"?

"Things present" - By this expression Paul is describing the things that are going on right now that affect your life, the things at hand, the things in sight, the problems that threaten us.

While life is filled with many wonderful things, always, underneath the surface, in every human heart, there are those people we are concerned about, or those circumstances that are too great for us, or those problems for which we have not found an answer.

Besides telling me to ignore my problems, or just live with them, what can do about "things present."

"Things to come" - Why does Paul have to go this far, especially when he means things that are sure to happen, and which may be about to happen.

It is a known fact that one of the greatest source of our fears is the future.

Is there a fear in your heart this morning that you have been trying to ignore--but it is there! Fortunately, many of the things we fear never come to pass, but what help have you found in all of the learning of the day?

WHEN YOU GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT, THESE ARE ALL AREAS WHERE MAN'S NEED IS GLARING.

WHAT CAN GOD DO ABOUT THESE THINGS?

The answer is ONE OF THE MOST UNBELIEVABLE TEACHINGS TO BE FOUND ANY PLACE IN THE BIBLE.

God's answer is: "All things are yours"!

What does he mean?

He means that, instead of being the hopeless victim of all of these areas of life that he has mentioned, GOD'S HAND IS IN SUCH CONTROL OF THE WHOLE WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT THAT WHENEVER IT TOUCHES THE LIFE OF ONE OF HIS CHILDREN THE RESULT IS BLESSING AND NOT RUIN--EVERYTHING WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S REDEPTIVE PURPOSES FOR HIS OWN.

Rom. 8:28-39 is an expansion of this truth. (Read vv. 28, 29, 31, 32, 35-39.)

Concl: Finally, in conclusion, let us go back to the problem in Corinth. How were men being exalted? It was by the church saying, "I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I of Cephas."

What does Paul say?

Paul says in effect, "You do not belong to me; I belong to you!" God had given Paul and Apollos and Cephas to the Corinthian Church to be a part of those "all things" that God had given to the church for edification and blessing.

"All things are your's." This enables us to live in peace and joy, knowing that we have a heavenly Father 'who worketh all t ings after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

THE GLORY OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

1 Cor. 3:21-23

Intro: Paul's statement at the beginning of v. 18 is a stinging rebuke of the Corinthian Church. "Therefore, let no man glory in men."

The world does this all of the time, and it is extremely difficult for the people of God to get away from it.

This has led to the practice of name dropping. Our politicians will do this. Depending upon the party that they are connected with, they will use the name of some well-known figure as an endorsement.

When I was a student in college we had at our school the largest Browning collection in the world. I took the course in Browning--and enjoyed it thoroughly! But one day when I was looking through the collection of Browning's things, I was shown an image of a woman's hand, life-size, but it was terribly dirty. Before I could ask why someone did not clean it, I was told that it was never dusted because Elizabeth Barrett Browning had been the last one to dust it--and it had never been dusted since!

We like identification with famous people.

I have noticed an old Buick around town with something like this on the back of it: "President John F. Kennedy used this car."

We see this all of the time in TV commercials. Some famous baseball star endorses a certain kind of shaving cream--and this impresses people, causing them to buy, or our great business organizations would not continue to do this.

The story is told that one time Mr. Dwight L. Moody was walking down the street of a large city, and he met a man on the street who was so drunk that he had a hard time standing up. But he was not so drunk but what he could recognize the evangelist. He said, "Well, hello there, Mr. Moody." When Mr. Moody did not recognize him, he said, "Don't you know me? I'm one of your converts." And Mr. Moody had the presence of mind to say, "Well, you must be; you don't look like one of the Lord's!"

Everywhere we see the tendency among men to glory in man.

The Corinthian Church had gotten into trouble on this point. They were saying, "I am of Paul; or I, of Apollos; or I, of Cephas; or I, of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:12). And Paul said, "Every one of you saith" (Ibid.), indicating that the whole Church was taken up with this kind of an emphasis. Nothing could have

displeased the Lord any more than this.

Why? Because it kept them from seeing the most wonderful relationship they had, the most wonderful relationship it is possible for any person to have---

I. THEY BELONGED TO JESUS CHRIST. Cf. "ye are Christ's" in v. 23.

Some, according to 1:12, were saying this. Whether they understood it or not is open to question. What does Paul mean by this?

He meant that instead of glorying in the servants of the Lord they should have been glorying in the Lord!

Why did they belong to Jesus Christ? Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 7:23.

In Romans 14:8 Paul says, "We are the Lord's."

In John 17:6 our Lord prayed, "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me . . ." And then He adds in v. 10, "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine!"

This is the reason Paul can add

II. CHRIST BELONGED TO GOD (a mystery we will never be able to comprehend fully), but this means that we belong to God too. Cf. 1 Cor. 3:23b. "The head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

If we are to know what it means that we belong to Christ, then we would do well to study the Gospels to learn what it meant that Jesus Christ belonged to God.

Think of the confidence manifested in the Father when He answered Pilate as He did in John 19:11. But we cannot stop here as delightful as it would be.

These are two basic truths which depict the glory of being a Christian. But upon these two truths we have some practical results. For this we must go back to the last of v. 21 and then look at all of v. 22.

III. "ALL THINGS ARE YOURS."

What does Paul mean by this? He has compressed here into three verses the truth which he gave to the Romans in Rom. 8:28-39. It is the truth that everything in a believer's life is worked together for the eternal good of that child of God.

Do you remember some of those statements?

- (1) "If God be for us, who can be against us?"
- (2) "He that spared not His own Son, but . . ."
- (3) "What shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

And then the grand climax, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Not only are we undefeated by the trials of life, but God actually uses them to accomplish His purpose in redeeming us. What does this include? Note our text.

A. It includes EVERY SERVANT OF THE LORD."

Ill. Meeting one of our families in town the other day, and having her say to me, "Oh, I know you! You go to my Church!" She was right.

What a narrow concept of the ministry these Corinthians had! They were saying that (some of them) belonged to Paul; what they should have been saying was that Paul belongs to all of us, and so does Apollos, and so does Peter. They were God's gift to the Church of Corinth, and to the whole body of Christ!

This is why Paul could rejoice in the blessing of God upon His fellow-servants. They were not competitors. Whenever God blessed someone else through them, any of them, it was God who was doing the work, and it was God who should have the glory. AM I SO BLIND THAT I THINK I AM THE ONLY ONE THAT GOD IS GOING TO USE AT THIS CHURCH.

What dignity this gives to being a Christian when I stop to realize that God can use me to help another Christian move just a little closer to that goal in eternity--likeness to our Saviour!!!

But there is more. Now he goes into the realm of our daily lives.

B. "The world."

When Paul wanted to describe the world he was living in, he chose a quotation from an ancient Psalm of Israel, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long . . ." (Psa. 44:22 in Rom. 8:36).

Not many of us have had to suffer for our faith in Christ, but what about this world. Where is it headed? The sin, the moral looseness, the wars and rumors of wars, the Godlessness--where are we headed? Can God use this world and life today for His purposes? What

about our young men in the service of our country?
What about the election that is coming up a week from Tuesday?

Every experience in this world that touches our lives can be a part of completing that work in us which began when we first trusted the Lord Jesus as Saviour.

- B. "Life." God has had a hand in who your parents were, your sex, where you were born, the circumstances in your home, your personality, your abilities and gifts, your education, your jobs, your choice of a life partner, your children, your health--and on and on.

He may not be responsible for all that has happened in your life, but there is nothing in your life that is beyond His control, and beyond His ability to make it serve a purpose in your life.

- C. "Death." There is no more dreadful word, is there? Death is our enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). Death can separate us from our loved ones, and our loved ones from us, but it cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do you remember how Paul spoke of death? It was to be preferred to this life--"far better" (Phil. 1:23).

- D. "Things present." Paul means by this the things that are going on right now.

If the Lord would give us the privilege of changing anything that touches our lives right now, what would you change? Does it ever occur to us that God has reasons for NOT changing things? That sometimes the greatest blessing is experienced in going through something we would like to avoid?

And then consider

- E. "Things to come." What about the future? Paul is talking here about things which are about to happen, things that you can see are on the way. What does this mean to you?

Concl: Often our hymn writers are able to put wonderful truth into words. I love to read some of the good old hymns. The other day my wife reminded me of a verse of a hymn. She may have used it at the Ladies Retreat. But, if so, then ladies here it is again. It is written by F. W. Faber. Listen carefully to these words:

I worship Thee, sweet will of God,
And all Thy ways adore;
And every day I live, I seem
To love Thee more and more.

When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee.

And when it seems no chance or change
From grief can set me free.
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And gladly waits on Thee.

He always wins who sides with God;
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong.
If it be His sweet will.

- by F.W. Faber.

(Close by quoting Rom. 8:28, 29; 1 Cor. 3:21-23.)

MINISTERS AND STEWARDS

1 Cor. 4:1-5

Intro: In chapters 1 through 4 of 1 Corinthians Paul is dealing with the problem of divisions in the Corinthian Church. Much of what Paul has to say in these chapters indicates that this problem had arisen because the people did not understand the nature of the ministry! For this reason he has a great deal to say about the work of the minister, of one who is called by God to act as a pastor, or shepherd of the flock.

In dealing with this he speaks in chapter 1 of his message. In chapter 2 he speaks of the manner of his speaking. In chapter 3 there are two points of emphasis: first, his relationship to his fellow-ministers, and secondly, the fact that God is the One who is doing the work, and He is the One who will reward His servants; therefore, our work must be acceptable to Him.

He returns to this emphasis at the beginning of chapter 4.

Speaking for "us" (it is "me" in v. 3), Paul declares that he wants the people of Corinth to recognize that he and Apollos are "ministers . . . and stewards."

As I have pointed out in previous messages, there is a great deal of confusion today over just what the work of the pastor is.

You might feel that the place to talk about the work of the pastor is just before a group of seminary students, or Bible school students, who plan some day to be pastors. But, if this is the case, then why did Paul say so much about his own work in this letter to the Corinthian Church? THIS FACT PROVES CONCLUSIVELY TO MY MIND THAT IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT FOR EVERY CHILD OF GOD TO UNDERSTAND THE WORK OF THE PASTOR--THE WORK OF ANY MAN WHO IS CALLED OF GOD TO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY. Churches call their pastors, and if churches do not understand the work of the pastor they just might be looking for the wrong kind of a man!

The same thing applies if you are looking for a church. What should you expect out of a true, New Testament, local church?

Ill. In Beaumont, Texas--talking to a Seminary professor concerning the work of the ministry. They were not training expositors, but preachers who could administrate.

In answering this question as well as in answering every other question that has to do with the work of the Lord in the world, our authority is the Bible. What does it have to say?

Paul says, If you want to know how you should regard us and the work that we are doing, then we want you to know that we are "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Before we look at these terms, let it be stated that no man has the right to undertake the work of the ministry unless he is called of God. Remember how Paul started his letter in 1 Cor. 1:1--"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God."

This is a principle that follows right through the Word of God.

Concerning the Old Testament priesthood, the writer of Hebrews states, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5:4). And just a few verses later (v. 10) he even says about our Lord Jesus Christ that he was "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec."

In 1 Cor. 1:17 Paul says, "Christ sent me."

So I have no right to choose the ministry; God calls me of His own sovereign will, and it is my joy, if He calls, to respond to His call.

Having understood this, what is

I. THE MEANING of the expression, "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

A. "Ministers of Christ."

At first we might think that this means one who ministers Christ, but this is not the main idea.

Paul uses a term here which is a military term. This is the only time he uses it in any of his epistles. It is the term which was used of an under-rower on the ancient war galleys. Then gradually it was used for any soldier who served his commander-in-chief, especially for carrying solemn and important messages.

In Luke 4:20 Luke uses this word for "the minister" of the synagogue. In Acts 13:5 Luke uses it of John Mark who went along to assist Paul and Barnabas.

The term emphasizes what Paul has been saying all along --that the Lord is the One who is doing the work; Paul is working with Him, assisting Him, under orders only to Him.

However, this, without the following expression, could be rather vague.

B. "Stewards of the mysteries of God."

In 2:7 we had this expression, mystery. It is a NT word which describes the truth of the NT--truth not fully revealed in the OT, but now completely revealed in the NT. For our purposes it is a term which describes the Word of God!

What was Paul's relationship to the Word?

He was a steward of it. This meant that he had been entrusted with the Word of God. He was responsible to preach it, to teach it, and to do it in a manner ~~that~~ would be pleasing to God.

Humanly speaking, the way in which Paul discharged his stewardship would determine the salvation of those who came under his influence, and would determine the spiritual life and strength of the believers who were under his care!

To bring these two titles together, a minister, or pastor, is under orders to Jesus Christ, and is charged with the faithful ministry of the Word of God, here called, "the mysteries of God."

This being the case, then the primary responsibility of every pastor is to know that Word. He cannot preach it and teach it if he does not study it. He cannot study it unless he takes time in his study. He cannot study it if his life is filled with so many other details that he hardly ever has time in the Word.

Do you want to know the main reason why people do not go to church today?

There is one reason: BECAUSE THEY DO NOT GET ANYTHING WHEN THEY DO GO!

Paul is here telling the Corinthian Church and every other church where this epistle is read that the reason there is so much division in the church is because the work of the ministry is not understood--and sometimes the pastor is the most confused about what he is supposed to do, or so busy with everything else that he never gets to his study.

God has charged his servants with the ministry of the Word. The church will suffer, and so will the world, if pastors are failing to do what they have been called to do.

But let us look at another factor in this tremendously important subject. What is

II. THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE in fulfilling this calling.

You can tell by what Paul has already written how some of the Corinthians would answer this.

Some would say that you could only reach the Corinthians with a philosophic approach. And they would feel that the philosophy would be a little more effective IF it were mixed with a little oratory. And then, if the one doing the speaking were a person with a commanding presence, one who could sway the crowds when they looked at him, then this would guarantee his success in Corinth.

If all of these ideas are true, THEN GOD MADE A MOST UNFORTUNATE MISTAKE WHEN HE SENT PAUL TO CORINTH BECAUSE SOME OF THESE QUALIFICATIONS PAUL DID NOT HAVE, AND OTHERS HE REFUSED TO USE.

Why did he refuse?

Because Paul could not be "faithful" to his message and faithful to His Saviour if he tried to reach the Corinthians on their own terms.

God did not call Paul to Corinth to be sensational, or to be popular, or to be successful, or to be eloquent.

God called Paul to Corinth to preach a message that they had never heard before, to preach it in all of its truth, believing that, as he taught the Word, the Spirit of God would move the hearts of men toward the Lord Jesus Christ-- and this is just exactly what had happened!

This is just where we have failed today.

Our pastors have not been teaching the Word and so both the pastors and the people are not learning what they need to know to grow spiritually and then to serve God effectively.

And so what do we do?

We pitifully copy ways that the world is effective, and we expect the Spirit of God to adapt His ways to our ignorant activities. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14-16.

The world does not need what they already have with the Gospel tacked on! They need to know that the Gospel has no roots whatsoever in the world, that it is distinctive, that it is of God, that Christ is able to meet their needs in this world that is so sick with sin that that sickness is even making serious inroads into the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The more you learn of the NT, the more you will realize that in our evangelism today we are violating the most basic principles of the NT--and this is why our converts do not stick!

A person can make a decision and be gone in a few weeks, but if he really comes to the Saviour, he must be born of the Spirit of God, and he will not be born of the Spirit unless the Spirit of God has the Word of God to work with.

But what have we done?

We are doing all that we can to dress the Gospel up in wrappings that are just like what the world is doing so that we can slip up on the world and get them saved before they know what has happened. And so we have our movies, our music, our novels, our celebrities, etc.

The comment of a young Jewish girl a short time ago stopped me in my tracks. She is not a professing Christian, but she was talking to another girl who was a Christian. And they were talking about evangelistic methods, and this is what she said. She said, "When you bring all of these outstanding athletes on campus, don't you think we can see through what you are doing?"

When are we going to get back to NT principles--that God wants people who will be faithful in living for Christ, and faithful in telling others about Christ in simple, unaffected, sincere words--believing that the Holy Spirit will use His Word to bring others to Christ.

Concl: The pastor is to lead his people into an understanding of the truth of God and so of the ways of God. When we understand this, then we will understand Paul's detachment from the criticism of men which is expressed in vv. 3-5.

He refused to bow to pressure.

He refused even to trust his own judgment apart from the Word.

He knew that one day he would stand before God, and then everything would be brought to light, "and then every man shall have praise of God."

Never has there been a greater need for the Gospel, but the Gospel must be preached according to the ways of God if we want to see God working to bring about the salvation of man.

THE FOLLY OF HUMAN PRIDE

1 Cor. 4:6-13

Intro: We are approaching the end of what the Apostle Paul has to say about divisions. He has found it necessary to defend (1) his message, the Gospel, (2) his manner of ministering, and (3) even the nature of the ministry itself. While Paul is always gracious in what he says, yet he is never hesitant about coming to the point where the truth is concerned. He has been, however, on the defensive; now he takes the offensive!

From v. 6 on to the end of chapter 4 Paul is concerned with human pride, the folly of it, the ugliness of it, the damage which it can cause.

He is now ready to point out that their pride in certain men had damaged them, and this is the reason that their fellowship with each other had been affected.

He had just spoken about the nature of the ministry--that he and Apollos were "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." "And these things, brethren," he writes in v. 6, he had "in a figure transferred to" himself "and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think above that which is written." But any Corinthian Christian who read this epistle, or heard it read, was to realize what we should realize as we consider it together this morning: that what Paul has said about himself and Apollos applies to every men who claims to have been called of God into the ministry!

Every minister has to deal at times with problems. But it is important in dealing with problems not to deal with personalities, OR THIS WILL CAUSE FURTHER DIVISION.

What marvelous evidence we have here that the Apostle Paul was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit!

But we come down to this: Why is it wrong to glory in men?

Paul gives four answer which I want you to see this morning, and I trust that the Lord will never let us forget them.

I. We should not glory in men **BECAUSE IT IS A VIOLATION OF THE WORD OF GOD TO DO SO** (1 Cor. 4:6).

In reading v. 6 did you notice these words: "That which is written"? What does Paul have in mind?

Paul uses this first back in 1:19 where we read, "For it is written," and he follows it with a quotation from the OT.

No quotation follows this expression in 4:6, but the idea is exactly the same. Paul means that, when you take the teaching of the OT as a whole, there is no reason for any man to get puffed up about anything.

The Word of God settles that. Cf. e.g., Jer. 9:23, 24.

Or Isa. 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Or read Psa. 14, or any other place in the OT. NOWHERE DO WE HAVE ANY AUTHORITY TO GLORY IN MEN. When we know the facts of the Word of God, WE CAN ONLY GLORY IN GOD-- NEVER IN MEN!

May I say it again. THE WORD OF GOD GIVES US OUR ANSWER, AND SETTLES THE QUESTION ONCE AND FOR ALL.

And this applies to every problem that a Christian faces. It may be the problem of knowing the will of God, or of being assured of salvation, or of settling a marriage difficulty, or knowing how to witness, or of what the course of events will be in the future--these and many other things are settled in the Word of God.

But let us go on.

II. We should not glory in men BECAUSE NO MAN HAS ANYTHING WHICH HE HAS NOT RECEIVED (1 Cor. 4:7).

Look at everything you have this morning. Think about it carefully--the family you were born into, the abilities you have, the opportunities to develop your abilities through training, through education, the money to do what you have done and to buy what you have--everything you have you have received. From whom? James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father . . ." (Jas. 1:17).

III. I once heard of a man who refused to thank God for his food when he and his family sat down to the table on the basis that he had earned it himself and if anyone should receive the thanks, he should. A short time after he had expressed himself this way he was taken seriously ill, and his family came to a place of real need. This went on for some time, and then his health was restored. From then on he was always ready to thank the Lord for the physical strength to be able to work so that his family could have food.

We have nothing, but what we have received it. Paul says,

"If thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (v. 7).

What answer can you give to that question?

But there is a third reason in our text.

III. We should not glory in men BECAUSE IT PRODUCES IN US A FALSE SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT (1 Cor. 4:8).

To glory in men produces spiritual pride in those who are doing the glorying. Read this verse very carefully. What does it tell you about the Corinthians, i.e., those who were a part of the problem that Paul is discussing here: the divisions?

They were "full," meaning that they were satisfied. They had all that they wanted spiritually. They would come to church and listen, but you could not get them to read the Word on their own. You could talk with them, but never detect a hungering and thirsting for righteousness. They were "full."

They were "rich." Cf. 1 Cor. 1:4-8.

Do you know the difference between positional truth and practical truth? Or, to state it another way, do you know the difference between a believer's standing before God and his state before men?

The Corinthian church had been blessed as no other church with spiritual gifts, but these gifts had gone sour on them. Instead of producing blessing, it had become one of them problems, as we will learn.

You all know how strong I am on doctrinal teaching. I am, and I intend to stay this way. But let me say this: WHEN I BECOME SO SMUG BECAUSE MY DOCTRINE IS CORRECT, BUT I LOSE MY LOVE FOR THE LORD AND MY DESIRE TO WALK IN THE LIGHT OF THE TRUTH OF HIS WORD--THEN I AM IN TROUBLE.

Then, notice, the Corinthians were reigning like the millennium had already started!

Do you know when the people of God are going to have the upper hand in the affairs of this world? It will not be until the Lord Jesus Christ is reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords! Until then, if you and I act as though things are going our way in this world it is evidence that pride has blinded us to the way things really are.

Paul explains this in the remaining verses of our text, but

let me state it as my fourth point.

IV. We should not glory in men BECAUSE IT IS CONTRARY TO GOD'S PURPOSE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD (1 Cor. 4:9-13).

Let me call your attention to the word "spectacle" in v. 9. This is the Greek word, theatron. You can tell that we get our word theatre from it. Paul's use of the word here means that Christians are like "the gladiators who were presented as a spectacle in the games of the amphitheatre, and whose blood and last agonies formed the joy of the whole population of spectators" (Godet, I, 224).

This we are "unto the world," probably referring here to the whole universe, which includes "angels, and . . . men."

It is not now, nor has it ever been, God's purpose to make celebrities out of his people. WE are "appointed to death," and the passage here indicates that the death can be slow and torturous, ending finally as "the filth of the world, and . . . the offscouring of all things," the dust which is swept up and thrown out.

Thank God not every Christian is treated like this, but when it does happen, we should not be surprised. God does not lift His people out of the trials and testings of life. Instead they often endure even more. WHY? Because God wants to display His glory before men, and He wants men and angels to see the marvelous sufficiency of His grace.

Concl: Sometimes God brings His servants to a place of great prominence, as He did with Daniel. But Daniel was in the theatre too.

Would you not think that if a man continued to pray, as Daniel did, even when the king's edict had gone out, that God would keep him from being cast into the den of lions. Of course we would think this!

But God did not keep him from the den of lions; He did something far greater. He kept him from the lions!

Early in the morning King Darius came to the lion's den, and you can almost hear him as he cried out, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" (Dan. 6:20)

Do you remember Daniel's answer? "My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions' mouths." What did Darius do? Did he proclaim Daniel Day when he took Daniel out? NO! He declared a decree. Listen to it:

"I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the

(Over)

Living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that
which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be
even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he
worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who
hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions"
(Dan. 6:26, 27).

What was Darius doing--singing the praises of Daniel? NO!
He was doing just what God wanted to accomplish through
the trials of Daniel. He was bring glory to the God of
Israel.

The folly of human pride. "He that glorieth, let him glory
in the Lord." This is the only way to please God, and
this is the only way to bring the blessing of God into
the Church--either in Corinth, or in Portland.

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PAUL SPEAKS AS A FATHER
1 Cor. 4:14-21

Intro: The epistle of 1 Corinthians is an epistle dealing with problems--church problems. As we come to the end of chapter 4 this morning, we come to the end of what he has to say about the first problem: the problem of divisions. And yet it is not quite right to say only that it is just the first of the problems; it is the one problem which seems to have been responsible for producing the others. This is seen, not only by what the Apostle has said about divisions, but also from the facts that this comes first, and Paul deals with it at such length.

So the trouble which divisions can cause should never be underestimated.

The divisions seem to have started over the exaltation of certain men. Paul was one of them--although this was certainly not what he wanted. But it had led to divisions over how the city of Corinth was to be reached with the Gospel, what the message should be, and who was best qualified to be the chief evangelist.

One by one Paul has been forced to deal with the various aspects of the problem.

Here in chapter 4 we have him speaking in three different capacities:

- (1) As a minister of Christ, and a steward of the mysteries of God (vv. 1-8).
- (2) As an apostle (vv. 9-13).
- (3) As a father, i.e., as the spiritual father of most of those in Corinth. He was the one God had used to bring them the Gospel for the first time.

This morning we want to look at what he has to say as a father.

I would like for you to see that he presents himself as the spiritual father, or father in the faith, of the Corinthians in three roles:

- (1) First we see the father as a teacher (4:14, 15).
- (2) Secondly, the father as an example (4:16, 17).
- (3) Finally, the father as a disciplinarian (4:18-21).

Before we look at each of these, let us consider how Paul was their father in the faith. Notice v. 15b, "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

We all should know that there is only one way we can get into the family of God; that is by being born again. When we re-

ceive the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour we are born into the family of God. John makes this clear in the Gospel which bears his name, chapter 1, vv. 12, 13:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God (Gk., children), even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The only way you can become a child of God is by being born of God, and the only way you can be born of God is by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.

If Jesus Christ is not your Saviour, then you are not a child of God.

Now, in bringing us to Himself, God works in a very special way. You have this in 1 Cor. 4:15.

- (1) Some person, or persons, comes to you with a message.
- (2) That message is the Gospel--how Christ died for your sins, and that He was raised again from the dead--that by receiving Him you can be a child of God.
- (3) It is the Lord who does the saving. I do not understand all that is involved in the new birth, how the Lord does it--but I do not need to. I meet the conditions; He does the work.

As far as the Corinthians were concerned, Paul could say, "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." Paul was the messenger, the Gospel was the message, and "Christ Jesus" was the Saviour!

So, because of this, he was their spiritual father, the one who had led them to Christ.

You Christians have the same relationship to anyone you have led to a knowledge of the Saviour. And this was the reason for Paul's great concern. You are naturally going to be more concerned about your own children than you are about anyone else's children.

What roles does a father have? Notice:

I. THE FATHER AS A TEACHER (1 Cor. 4:14, 15).

Paul uses an illustration here that we had in Gal. 4:1-7. It concerned instructors, the pedagogues, these servants in a family who were given the task of training the children mentally and morally. Although the task was the pedagogue's, the real interest in seeing that the job was done well was the father's. Paul brings this in to illus-

stration to show why, although he is not trying to shame them (i.e., to overwhelm them with discouragement by turning them against themselves), yet he is trying to warn them (i.e., to bring the truth to their minds).

Paul had not said the things he had said because he was jealous of Apollos or of Peter, but because he was their father in the faith, reminding them of the Word of God, because he wanted them doctrinally and in practical experience to be growing in the Lord.

As their father, he felt a solemn responsibility to be their teacher.

II. THE FATHER AS AN EXAMPLE (1 Cor. 4:16, 17).

The evidence of Paul's concern is seen not just in his talk, but also in his walk—his daily living.

What a wonderful thing when a father can say to his children, Be imitators of me. Paul repeats this in 1 Cor. 11:1.

This is where so much of our teaching fails. Our children here the words, but they do not see the illustration.

Our Lord lived according to this principle. After washing the disciples feet He said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

While Paul would never claim perfection, yet doctrinally and practically he was satisfied that he was walking in accord with the Word of God. To remind the Corinthians, he was sending Timothy, another child of Paul's in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2), "who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which he in Christ, as I teach every where in every church." Paul did not teach one thing in Corinth, and something else other places. He taught the same thing everywhere.

Let me call your attention to the word, ways, before we go on to our last point.

By "ways" Paul means not only a course of conduct, but how he thought about things, how he felt about things, and how he made his decisions!

The Bible does not give the specific answer to every question we face, but it does give us the principles so that we will have a basis for our decisions. You can see this manner of thinking illustrated again and again in chs. 1-4.

As a spiritual father, Paul taught them the truth, rejoiced when others taught them the truth, but he also back up his teaching by the life he lived.

Cf. Phil. 4:9.

III. THE FATHER AS A DISCIPLINARIAN (1 Cor. 4:18-21).

No parent particularly enjoys those times when it is necessary to exercise discipline.

III. I read of a daughter, probably high school age, who went out to baby-sit a three year old child. That child was so terrible, that when the babysitter went home she went immediately to her own parents and apologized to them for ever having been three years old.

Paul did not want to exercise discipline. Cf. v. 21.

Why did they need it? V. 21 tells us. They did not understand "the kingdom of God."

Paul was speaking of them as a family, and as a church (v. 17), and now as a kingdom.

Who is in the kingdom of God?

As Paul uses the term here he is speaking of ALL the people of God. It emphasizes the authority which God has over us. This authority will one day be extended over all the earth, but right now it is a kingdom which is established in the hearts of God's people.

But how do you reveal this? Cf. Luke 17:20, 21. It is not by your "speech" (the same as "word"), i.e., not just in what they say, but "in power." Cf. 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5.

They were "puffed up" like a pair of bellows, there was a lot of talk, but little evidence of the transforming power of the Spirit of God. This leads to chapter 5. Paul is going to tell them there that there is sin the Church is guilty of, sin which "is not so much as named among the Gentiles"!

They knew the Lord, but it was hard to tell it when you looked at the church in Corinth.

Concl: Is such a indictment ours today? Is it possible that people cannot hear what we say as Christians because they are too conscious of what we are? What is needed? Spiritual fathers who will teach, live, and discipline, if necessary, and children who will follow their example.