

AN APOSTLE'S REBUKE OF A DISGRACED CHURCH

1 Cor. 5:1-5

NOT A CHURCH OF A WHOLLY DISGRACED CHURCH

Intro: This morning we begin the second main division of the epistle. In this chapter we really have two problems in one. As you read it over the first time you are first impressed with the fact that there is a fornicator in the Church of Corinth. But, as you reread it, you begin to see that the main issue in the chapter is the fact that the Church has done nothing about the other problem.

So, we actually have in chapter 5 problem #2 and problem #3.

I. THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION (v. 1).

The evidence was undeniable. There was a member of the Corinthian Church who was living in sin with a woman who is identified simply as "his father's wife."

The way this is stated has led many to the conclusion that this was not his mother, but his step-mother. Paul could have used the word mother, but there is also the possibility that he speaks of the situation in this way to show how deplorable the situation was.

The man that Paul is talking about is certainly a member of the Corinthian Church. Since Paul gives no word of rebuke for the woman, we can assume from some of the things which he says in the latter part of the chapter that the woman was not a Christian, not a believer, and that probably the man's father was not a Christian either.

Furthermore, I see no reason for saying that the father was not still living.

A look into Hebrew and Roman backgrounds would lead us to believe also that they were not legally married. Lev. 18 tells us what God had to say about such things, and Roman law also prohibited such a marriage.

Taking all of these facts and going back to v. 1 we notice the two things which Paul has to say about this:

- (1) "It is reported commonly," that is, there is no doubt but that this situation exists in the life of one of the members of the Church.
- (2) Paul wants them to know that this is such a degraded relationship that it is actually looked down on by unregenerate Gentiles, Gentiles who make no profession of being Christian.

It would be one thing to make a statement like this today, and yet quite another to have made it in the first century.

The moral background of so many of the people Paul reached with the Gospel was depraved beyond description. Note, for example, what he writes in 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

It would take a lot to shock them. In terms of our standards today, they had practically none. AND YET PAUL WRITES TO TELL THEM THAT THE SIN THAT WAS IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH HAD SHOCKED THE HEATHEN WORLD!

The Lord had established a church in Corinth that, through the lives of the saints there, the rest of the people in Corinth might be able to see the transforming power of the Gospel. It is to the Corinthians that Paul writes, "Therefore if any man be in Christ . . ." (2 Cor. 5:17).

Could anything possibly emphasize to a greater degree the seriousness of the conditions which Paul has been describing in chs. 1-4? We are so inclined to catalog sins. No one ever seems to be too exercised about divisions in the church. And yet out of this came the grossest kind of sin. When the church began to glory in men, to live like men (3:3)--carnal, to be lifted up with pride against each other, this opened the door for problems they never thought that they would have!

The Lord Jesus said in His sermon on the mount, "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23).

In his Ephesian epistle Paul wrote, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3).

What a lesson for us! As Paul said to the Galatians, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption . . ." (Gal. 6:7, 8a)--and that is just exactly what the Corinthians had been doing: sowing to the flesh!

Oh, how we need to be walking with the Lord because it is not beyond the realm of possibility today that the world can be SHOCKED by what it sees in the Church. It has happened many times before.

But let us go on to v. 2 and see

II. THE TRAGIC STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE CHURCH (v. 2).

By the use of the words, "puffed up," ch. 5 is linked without any question to ch. 4 and that which Paul had been saying about divisions.

"Puffed up."

Listen to some of the proverbs of the OT. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame" (Prov. 11:2a). "Only by pride cometh contention" (Prov. 13:10a). "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

We cannot say that God has not warned us in His Word. It is more difficult for me to detect pride in my own heart than it is to see it any place else, but the Word of God makes it very clear that pride can ruin me.

Either their pride had so blinded them to the sin that was in their midst, or it had rendered them spiritually incapable of dealing with the sin--whatever it was, nothing had been done. THIS IS THE MAIN POINT OF THE WHOLE CHAPTER. Paul is not so much rebuking the fornicator as he is rebuking the church for not dealing with the fornicator!

To be specific Paul says, "Ye . . . have not rather mourned."

What does he mean?

A Greek scholar has said that the tense of the verb here "cannot merely designate a feeling of inward grief. It shows that Paul is thinking of a positive, solemn deed, of something like a day of repentance and fasting, on which the whole Church before the Lord deplored the scandal committed, and cried to Him to bring it to an end" (Godet, I, 242).

What would be the object?

"That he might be taken away."

This is not excommunication. So far as we know this expression was never used to describe excommunication. That comes in vv. 7, 12b.

What Paul has reference to here is an act of God! That becomes clear in vv. 3-5. As usual, Paul places the work of God before the work of the church.

What does he have in mind. Notice in vv. 3-5 how he points out

III. THE ACTION WHICH THE CHURCH SHOULD TAKE (vv. 3-5).

Here we need the back ground of our Lord's words in Matt. 18:15-20. IT SEEMS THAT IT WOULD BE SAFE TO ASSUME THAT

AT LEAST THE FIRST STEPS OF MATT. 18:15-20 HAD BEEN TAKEN, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS. HOWEVER, THE CHURCH HAD FAILED TO DO THE BINDING WHICH THE LORD HAD SPOKEN OF.

This may have been authority designated especially to the Apostles. In any event Paul makes it very clear that he knew the action which need to be taken (v. 3). What was it?

"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (v. 5a).

What does this mean?

It cannot mean:

- (1) The eradication of his old sinful, fleshly nature, because there is no such teach in the Word of God. Besides Satan would have no part in such a thing even if he could.
- (2) Nor does it mean the annihilation of this man's body so that only his spirit will survive. Paul in 1 Cor. 15 makes it very clear that the resurrection includes the body.

No, what Paul is talking about here is physical death.

Let me cite two illustrations:

- (1) 1 Cor. 11:29, 30.
- (2) The story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. Peter ECUND them to their sin, and physical death was the judgment.

Why physical death? "That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Paul does not mean that unless this man is stopped by death that he will lose his salvation, but he does mean that the way he is using his body is having a ruinous effect upon his spirit, and that that ruin would become obvious by the kind of salvation Paul is talking about in 1 Cor. 3:15. Evidently the man involved in this sin had been prominent in the leadership of the Corinthian Church, and everyday he lived he was doing more and more damage to his spirit.

Therefore, Paul, speaking as an apostle says that it is better for him to go on to heaven, and you had better ask the Lord to take him home.

What right did they have to do such a thing? (I am not saying that this is our right today.) It was "in the name

of our Lord Jesus" (Christ is omitted in the best MS), that is by His authority, by the authority of the Word (Matt. 18:15-20), and "with the power of the Lord Jesus" (Christ is omitted again in the best MS). Satan can do nothing without the authority of the Son of God, but with that authority he, Satan the adversary, is often responsible for physical illness and physical death.

Cf. the story of Job, or the woman whom Satan had bound with disease for eighteen years in Luke 13:16, and even Paul's thorn in the flesh, "the messenger of Satan to buffet" him (2 Cor. 12:7).

Concl: What a solemn passage of Scripture this is! May it come to us this morning as a warning that we cannot play with sin. The world may defy the Word of God, but God will not let His children do it.

Let me close with an illustration.

Earlier in my ministry I knew a young man who came to Christ through great suffering. He did not attend my church, but I had the opportunity to get acquainted with him. There was much evidence in his life that he loved the Lord. He would read the Word every spare minute he had, and he enjoyed the fellowship of the people in his church.

Then something happened.

He became infatuated with another man's wife, and she with him. His attitude toward the Lord, toward the Word, and toward his Christian friends underwent almost a complete reversal. He was not married, but the woman's home went on the rocks because of him--and a divorce was in the making.

Before the divorce was granted, this man and the other man's wife started to live together. He would not listen to his friends who pleaded with him to change.

One day when the two of them were in the house together, he was in one room; she in another. She went into the room where he was and to her utter amazement she found him dead. He had not taken his life; he had just died.

Later on, his pastor commenting on this said (and I will not use his right name; let me call him, Bob), "It was just as though the Lord had said, Bob, I am just not going to let you do this. You are coming to heaven with Me."

Oh, dear Christian, if you happen to be playing with any sin, will you heed the warning of the Word of God this morning? Turn to Him without delay. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

THE CHURCH'S NEED FOR CLEANSING

1 Cor. 5:6-13

Intro: We have been learning for several weeks that the Corinthian Church was a divided church. Paul treats this subject in chapters 1-4.

Last Sunday I am sure that many of us responded in the same way that others have responded in reading this epistle--with something like startled unbelief! It was almost like Paul is saying, "If you do not believe that divisions can be dangerous, look at what is going on right in your own fellowship!" There was a man in the Corinthian Church who was guilty of a kind of fornication that had shocked even non-Christian Corinthians. It was "not so much as named among the Gentiles."

He makes it very clear that the man who is guilty is in very great danger of suffering physical death as a judgment from God. This is the emphasis in vv. 1-5.

In vv. 6-13 he proceeds to tell the Church what she must do about this. It is finally stated at the end of the chapter: "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13b).

That is the very obvious thing which must be done.

However, before he gets to that he speaks directly to the Church. And he thinking goes along this line: "You need to get rid of 'that wicked person,' to be sure, but I want you to know that there are some other things that you need to do or you will continue to have the same kind of problems, or worse!"

The heart-searching question he asks is in v. 6b, "Know ye not" (i.e., do you need someone to tell you) "that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" It should not take a letter from him to teach them that!

Leaven in the Bible is always a type of sin. The influence of sin is likened to the effect that leaven, or yeast, has on dough which is to be put in the oven and baked. It takes very little leaven in comparison with the dough for all of it to be affected by it. The women would know that from their baking. All people should know this from experience. And, of course, anyone who reads the Bible will find abundant evidence of it there.

You put sin and righteousness together in this world for prolonged periods and inevitably the sinful person will pull down the righteous one. And "a little leaven," just one person living in sin, has the potential to affect the testimony of a

whole church!

Therefore, a Church and every individual in the Church must be careful about condoning, or excusing, or practicing sin in any form.

Let us notice how Paul develops this.

I call your attention to the expression in v. 6: "not good."

The Greek idea of good which is carried into the NT is described by Archbishop Trench as "the harmonious completeness, the balance, proportion, and measure of all the parts with one another" (p. 389).

Ill. This past summer we made a trip around the US for the marriage of our two sons. Before we left we had an air conditioner installed in our car because of the hot weather we expected to go through down through the South and in the Eastern States. That air conditioner worked fine until we left New York and started toward Pittsburgh. Then I noticed a strange noise in it every time I turned it on. I knew that something was wrong, but I didn't know what it was. I stopped in one town, but no one could help me. The morning we left Pittsburgh I told my wife and Gary that I was going to find out what was wrong. I looked up the name of a dealer, and went over to see him. When I explained the trouble and described the noise, he got a very knowing expression on his face, went to get a pair of pliers, and got in under my dashboard. After checking it momentarily, he reached in with those pliers, and began to pull and pull. Suddenly something came loose, and getting out of the car he held up a plastic case for a pair of glasses that had been sucked into the fan of the air conditioner--and this was causing my trouble. It was "not good" for that to be in there because it did not belong in there. Once it was out, the air conditioner worked perfectly.

Now this is the point. Sometimes things get into the lives of Christians, and they do not work right! That is what Paul is talking about in this passage. Let us notice the things which he says are "not good," and notice also the relationship, the progression, that is apparent as he moves from one thing to another. There are three of them.

I. "YOUR GLORYING IS NOT GOOD" (1 Cor. 5:6a).

To glory is to boast, to be proud of something. It is possible to glory in the right way, but it is also possible to glory in the wrong way. WHAT WERE THE CORINTHIANS AS A WHOLE GLORYING IN?

Cf. 1:29; 3:21; 4:7. They were glorying in men. They had

forgotten that it was written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31, quoted from Jer. 9:24).

It is very possible that Paul is pointing to this one thing as the root of all of their trouble.

To the Galatians he wrote, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption . . ." (Gal. 6:7,8a).

The Church that exalts men, that glories in her leaders instead of glorying in the Lord, is a Church that is headed for trouble, and it can be DEEP trouble!

We can thank God for those who are a blessing to us, but always remember that whenever there is blessing, it always comes from GOD! Cf. 1 Cor. 3:7.

When a Church glories in men it has something in it which does not belong, something which is "not good."

II. "THE OLD LEAVEN" IS "NOT GOOD." Cf. 1 Cor. 5:7, 8.

The background of these two verses is Exodus 12--the Passover Lamb, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If you are familiar with that story (and notice again the importance of the OT), you will remember that for seven days after the Passover they were not to have any leaven in their homes; they were to eat only unleavened bread.

What was the meaning of this?

It meant that the redeemed people of Israel were to be a holy people. They were to be different. And now Paul tells us that that Passover Lamb was a type of Christ, and that since He has been sacrificed for us, we "are unleavened." Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.

So we are no longer to be characterized by "malice" and wickedness." The first of these words speaks having an evil attitude, while the second speaks of outward acts of sin. By the first, we become tolerant of sin; by the second, we participate in it and excuse it.

INSTEAD, we are to have in our lives "sincerity and truth." "Sincerity" is a word which ties right in with the expression, "not good." It describes what a woman will do when she puts her flour through a sieve to make sure that there are no lumps, nor any foreign substance, in the flour--anything that should not be there. "Truth" means that the

inward state of a person's life is brought into conformity with the truth, i.e., the Word of God. Cf. John 17:17.

So, if you and I are harboring sins which are contrary to the Word of God, we can only expect trouble.

Notice the advance that we have made between v. 6 and vv. 7, 8. If you displease God by respectable sins, you are opening yourself up for sins that are not so respectable.

Then, this leads to our final point.

III. CONSTANT FELLOWSHIP WITH THOSE WHO ARE LIVING IN SIN IS "NOT GOOD"—WHETHER THEY BE NON-CHRISTIANS, OR CHRISTIANS (1 Cor. 5:9-13a).

Let me be clear on one point. Paul is not saying that a Christian should have a holier-than-thou attitude. HE IS SAYING THAT WE ARE NOT TO KEEP COMPANY (vv. 9, 11) with fornicators, the covetous, extortioners, idolaters, railers, or drunkards. By this he means that, according to the Gk verb, we are not to mingle with again and again the people whose lives can be characterized by these terms. "With such an one no not to eat" (v. 11b).

He is not saying that you cannot take an unsaved person to lunch, nor is he saying that you cannot have an unsaved person, or a backslidden Christian, into your home for dinner. WHAT HE IS SAYING IS THAT PEOPLE LIKE THIS ARE NOT TO BE YOUR BEST FRIENDS! THEY ARE NOT TO BE THE PEOPLE THAT YOU RUN AROUND WITH, THE PEOPLE THAT YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR TIME WITH.

If you do, you are courting trouble.

But, someone will always say, should a Christian not be strong enough so that, whatever he does, it will not bother him?

Let me ask you a question. WHERE DO YOU GET THAT IDEA IN THE SCRIPTURES? You cannot find it there. It is not in there. Instead, Paul, in his most mature years, in the last epistle he wrote which belonged to the Word of God he told Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). He did not encourage Timothy by saying, "Be careful now, but the day will come when you do not have to be concerned about sin." NO, YOU WILL NEVER FIND ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN THE BIBLE.

Ill. The snake charmer who did all kinds of tricks with a poisonous snake, climaxing with a kiss on his tongue. One day when he came to this final act, the snake suddenly pulled back and buried his deadly fangs in his master's tongue.

Sin is like that. It is deadly, and we can act like the master for a long time, and then suddenly we learn what the Word of God teaches--that sin is the master, and I am the servant.

Oh, how we all, young and old, need to beware of the tranquilizing effect of sin, and the tragedy that sin always brings.

Concl: What better place to emphasize this message than at the Lord's table! Whenever I am tempted to minimize sin and its effects, let me go back to my Bible and read what it says about my Saviour and His death on the Cross. And I am very sure that the Lord had us remember Him in this way that we might never get away from the deadly character of sin. It took His coming and His death to set us free; how can we ever treat sin lightly?

LAW SUITS AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD
1 Cor. 6:1-8

Intro: This morning we come to problem #3 in the Corinthian Church.

The first (and the parent of all of the other problems) was the divisions (chs. 1-4). The second was the immorality described in ch. 5.

The third is the problem of the people of God going to law against each other.

As in ch. 5, so here in ch. 6 Paul seems to be talking about a particular incident of wrongdoing in the Corinthian Church. In trying to put the details together, we can come up with something like this:

- (1) The problem involved money, or, at least, something which had some monetary value.
- (2) Two believers in the Corinthian Church had had some dealing with each other, and one had cheated the other out of something which was rightfully his.
- (3) The believer who had suffered the loss had taken his fellow-Christian to a Roman court, and there the whole ugly thing was being aired before people who were not Christians, but who knew that these two parties were!
- (4) From the conclusion of this passage it would seem that the person who had been wronged felt justified in seeking compensation beyond what he had lost--and that very probably he had been awarded the additional amount of money he was after.

It sounds very much like something that would go on today, does it not?

Before we seek to learn what we can from this passage about the principles which Paul is seeking to establish (or re-establish) with the Corinthians, let us make a few observations:

- (1) Paul is not saying that a Christian should not go to law. Paul appealed to Caesar to protect his rights (Acts 25:11). He is saying that one Christian should not go to law against another Christian.
- (2) There are some things which must be settled by law which would not fall into this category, such as, divorce. Paul makes it very clear in other passages (Rom. 13) that a Christian is responsible to abide by the laws of the government under which he lives. But where he has rights, he also has the privilege to choose NOT to exercise those rights.
- (3) Paul is not speaking in a disparaging way when he uses such words as, "the unjust" (v. 1), and "unbelievers" (v. 6). He is not saying that you would not get a fair

trial in a Roman court (although such a thing would surely be possible). When he uses the term "unjust" he simply means that a judge who is not a Christian would not necessarily be guided by the laws of God, by the Word of God, and that it was the Word that should be used to settle disputes between believers. When he speaks of "unbelievers" he simply means that he is talking about going to men for a judgement who have not believed in Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

So he is not running down the courts. He is not encouraging believers to be lawless. But he is saying that a dispute of this kind should have been settled by the Christians themselves and not by the world.

In considering this very obvious fact, what are the outstanding principles in this passage which has guided Paul in this matter?

I. THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH.

You cannot read the first five chapters of 1 Corinthians without realizing that the Church of Jesus Christ is something very special to God, and to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit.

We will realize this more and more as we go through the epistle.

Here he calls them "saints"!

I never will forget the man who first acquainted me with this term saints. I was in high school at the time and was attending a conference where he was teaching Romans. He had gotten down to Rom. 1:7, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints"! As he read this he stopped and asked, "How many of you have ever seen a saint?" Saints in Rome! The Roman Church has taught for hundreds of years that you have to be dead before you can be a saint, but in reading Romans 1 I was sure that Paul had in mind living people! And sure enough, this Bible teacher then answered his own question, by saying, "If you have never seen a saint before, then look right at me. I am a saint!"

And then he went on to explain. A saint is not a special kind of a Christian. Every Christian is a saint. This is just a Bible term which is a synonym for a child of God. It has a special meaning. It is one who, because he is a Christian, who is "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his" (Thayer, p. 7). And, because you are a

saint, God expects you to be different from what you were before you became a saint.

Paul says, "Dare any of you," i.e., Are you not afraid to bring yourself to such a point that you would take a fellow-believer, a fellow-saint, to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?"

And then he comes back to his "Know ye not" in vv. 2, 3, and 9. Cf. also 5:6b. They knew better; they had just forgotten.

If the saints will judge angels and the world, should they not be qualified to settle many of their own affairs so that it does not get before the world.

Have you ever noticed in the Word of God how slow God is to expose the wrongdoing of His children? He wants us to be the same about each other. Cf. John 13:34, 35.

Basic to this whole problem is a fact which we must not miss. If we were wise about the way we get involved with each other, not taking foolish risks just because we are both Christians, we would avoid situations like this which can easily arise.

But there is another point here which may have contributed to this disgraceful situation.

II. A CHURCH WHICH NEEDED TO EXERCISE DISCIPLINE WAS DESTITUTE OF THE RIGHT KIND OF LEADERSHIP.

Cf. v. 5. Here are two very heart-searching questions which Paul asks after saying, "I speak to your shame."

What happens when a church gets divided and carnal like the Corinthian church had become? Men get into places of leadership who are not spiritually minded, men who are not satisfied to go by the Word of God, men who handle problems just like they would before they came to know the Lord Jesus as Saviour.

The church bore her share of the responsibility because she could not produce one wise man who had the spiritual insight to know from the Word of God what should be done.

Oh, how we need men today who will give themselves to the Word of God so that the Spirit of God may make them wise in the ways of the Lord.

You can be legally right in doing something, and yet absolutely wrong according to the Word of God. Why? Because

the testimony to the world is affected, and because we would rather do something ourselves rather than leave it in the Lord's hands.

Cf. Rom. 12:17-21.

This anticipates my final point this morning.

III. UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN SOME OTHER BELIEVER NEVER JUSTIFIES UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN ME.

The world states it this way: Two wrongs never make a right!

I believe in vv. 7, 8 Paul is telling us what the outcome of this case had been.

V. 8 means that the offended brother who had gone to court had won his case.

When Paul says, "Ye do wrong, and defraud," he evidently is indicating that the offended one had sued for more than he had lost and he had gotten what he had asked for.

Therefore, he now is put in the same position spiritually that the other one had been in before legally and spiritually. And so Paul says, "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you" (v. 7a). What is "a fault"? It means, a loss. YOU HAVE WON THE CASE, BUT YOU HAVE ACTUALLY LOST! For the glory of God it would have been far better to have suffered the loss and to have left the outcome in the hands of God.

Concl: Let me close with an illustration from the Word of God.

Do you remember the story of Joseph--how his brothers took advantage of him and sold him as a slave into Egypt? Then do you remember how Potiphar's wife lied about him, and he was thrown into prison? Then do you remember how the butler forgot him and he had to spend an extra two years in prison?

Injustice characterized his life.

How did Joseph respond? The most wonderful story is given in Gen. 50. See vv. 15, 19-21--and notice that he spoke with tears!!

What should we learn? We need to be very careful in all of our dealings--especially with other Christians. But, if trouble does arise, we need to seek from the church an understanding of the will of God, and then do it. Then it is in the hands of God.

HEIRS OF GOD'S KINGDOM
1 Cor. 6:9-11

Intro: I have taken my subject this morning from an expression which is found twice in the three verses I would like to consider with you. The verses are 9, 10. It appears again in 1 Cor. 15:50.

A very similar passage is found in Gal. 5:19-21.

What does it mean to inherit the kingdom of God?

To inherit means to come into the possession of something. In the Bible inheriting the kingdom of God is used to speak of the future, full experience of our salvation. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again . . ."

Our Lord, in speaking to Nicodemus, said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

So, there is no doubt but that it refers to salvation, and to the future completion of salvation.

Now, this raises a question.

Does this mean that we can never be assured of our salvation, that as long we live it will always be in doubt?

I want to be very clear and very emphatic in answering this question.

WE CAN BE POSITIVELY SURE OF OUR SALVATION AND WE NEED HAVE NO DOUBTS ABOUT OUR ETERNAL DESTINY. Our Lord indicated to Nicodemus that, if he were born again, he would see the kingdom of God. The moment you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour your eternal salvation is guaranteed! *It is true that it will not be complete until we are with the Lord, but its ultimate attainment is certain!*

The problem, however, is this: It is possible for a person to claim to be a Christian without having really trusted Christ as Saviour. This is what Paul is concerned about in the verses before us this morning. It takes more than profession; there must be possession.

And so--

I. HE RE-STATES A TRUTH (1 Cor. 6:9a).

Approximately 10 times in 1 Corinthians Paul says, "Know ye not . . . ?" This always points to something

which he had taught them before and which they should have remembered, but which apparently they had forgotten.

Whenever a Church has the troubles that the Corinthian Church had, then this usually happens. The Gospel gets watered down, and the Church rolls begin to include those who do not know the Saviour.

This had evidently happened in Corinth. And so Paul tells them again that "the unrighteous," those who disregard the divine standards of holy living which God has placed in His Word, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Does he mean by this that a Christian cannot sin? No, not that. BUT HE DOES MEAN THAT A TRUE CHILD OF GOD WILL NOT LIVE IN SIN.

Cf. and explain 1 John 3:9, 10; 5:18.

This is a truth that needs to be re-stated today in the 20th century. We are really afraid of it, and yet you cannot read 1 Corinthians without facing it. A PERSON WHO IS LIVING A LIFE IN VIOLATION OF THE MORAL STANDARDS OF THE WORD OF GOD CANNOT BE ON HIS WAY TO HEAVEN!

Whether we like it or not, let us have the honesty to recognize that this is true.

A good test for any of us this morning is: How does sin affect me? Does it bother me to lie? To cheat? Am I living in immorality? Do I have a vile tongue? Am I a victim of drink? We will get to the list in a moment, but right now Paul is stating a basic principle of the Word of God, and we need to pay attention to it.

II. HE ISSUES A WARNING (1 Cor. 6:9b, 10).

"Be not deceived" means, Do not keep on deceiving yourselves. They evidently were doing this, and Paul wants them to know that God has not changed His standards of right and wrong.

We live in a world that has practically no concern for what God has to say concerning good and evil. A lot of evil things are becoming acceptable, and are even being looked upon as good. E. g., pre-marital sex.

Look at this list of sins. It is interesting to understand how some are related to each other.

There are four sins which we would call immoral--sins of the flesh: Fornication, adultery, those who are effeminate, and abusers of themselves with mankind. Two are illicit normal relationships; two are illicit abnormal relationships. And mentioned right along with them is the sin of idolatry, which was often responsible for starting people on the road to moral ruin! cf. Heb. 13:4.

There are two sins which have to do with stealing: thievery (which is secret); extortion (which is done openly and brazenly). Between them comes covetous, a thief in the making. Such a person may use drink as an escape, and this in turn often leads to abusive language: a reviler.

Do you want to understand sin and its tragic effects. Then read very carefully what your Bible has to say. This is where you will see sin exposed for what it is. The world makes it look attractive. It does not tell you the heartache and tragedy which will follow.

Paul was confronted with this problem from the beginning of chapter 5 on. He wanted every person living in such sins to realize that their lives condemned any profession that they might make of being a child of God, an heir of the kingdom of God!

Finally,

III. A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT (1 Cor. 6:11).

"And such were some of you."

There are two points Paul is making in this statement:

- (1) Some of them had been saved from the sins mentioned in vv. 9, 10. It is possible for the Lord to transform any kind of a sinner.
- (2) Some of them had not been guilty of these sins even before they became Christians--but they still needed to be saved! (This is often the hardest kind to reach.)

How had the change come about?

Through two persons: (1) "In the name of the Lord Jesus," the name meaning the Person. So, it simply means that these changes had come about through the Lord Jesus, the God-Man, the One who died to deliver us from sins past, present, and future; sin's penalty, power, and presence.

NO ONE CAN BE DELIVERED FROM SIN IN ALL ITS ASPECTS EXCEPT THROUGH CHRIST.

But also (2) "by the Spirit of our God." Notice how all of the Trinity enters into the work of salvation. On the work of the Spirit, cf. John 16:7-11; John 3:5, 6; Gal. 3:13, 14.

So, salvation is a work of God. Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

Now, let us ask, WHAT IS THE CHANGE?

It is threefold:

- (1) "Washed." Cf. Heb. 9:22. Being cleansed from the defilement of sin, we are forgiven. There is a removal of sins themselves. They are taken away for ever.
- (2) "Sanctified." In its most basic meaning this speaks of being set apart for God. It is no longer our privilege to do what we want to do with ourselves. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.
- (3) "Justified." We are declared righteous in the sight of God. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21. Now they were all that God demanded that they should be.

These three things are true of every heir of the kingdom of God. It is impossible for any person to turn to Christ without all of this happening. This completely changes your attitude toward sin, and your bondage to sin. If you have not experienced this change, you are not an heir.

Concl: Can you think of anything more tragic than for someone to think that he is a Christian, when he is not!

Do you not wonder who Paul was talking about in the Corinth? SOME OF THE PEOPLE THERE WERE DECEIVING THEMSELVES.

I do not want to disturb anyone needlessly, but for the moment can I speak to each one individually. Are you a Christian? Are you an heir of the kingdom of God? If you say, yes, then how do you know? What evidence is there in your life? Do you really love the Lord? Do you want to please Him? What is your attitude toward sin? What about the sins mentioned here?

If there are any young people here this morning who have heard the Gospel all their lives--are you sure that you know the Lord as your Saviour? You cannot save yourself, or make yourself an heir of the kingdom of God, but God can and will this morning IF you will but trust His Son as your Saviour.

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Cor. 6:12-20

Intro: It has been ⁷ weeks since my last message on 1 Corinthians! Some of you have very graciously asked if I planned to finish it. The answer to that question is, Yes, and I would like to get back to it this morning.

The Corinthian Church was a spiritually sick Church!

In the first four chapters Paul had written in a very direct way about the divisions in the Church. Then from ch. 5 on he speaks of the many other problems which were the products of that original problem.

He speaks of the gross immorality that existed in the Church. He speaks of the lack of discipline that the Church had shown toward that sin. He shows how, instead of settling the problem (and other problems) among themselves, they had gone to the courts of the day.

One thing led to another.

Then, in chapter 6, verse 9, Paul returns to the subject of sin, in general, and to fornication, in particular.

Evidently Paul had preached in Corinth, as he had in other places, concerning the liberty that is ours in Christ!

The Lord Jesus had spoken of this in John 8:32, 36, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

To the Galatian churches Paul had written, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

We all like to read statements like this; we like to be free. BUT IT IS EASY FOR US TO READ INTO STATEMENTS LIKE THIS IDEAS WHICH ARE NOT THERE. The carnal believers of Corinth were living as though this meant that they were free to do anything that they wanted to do!

They had changed the truth of liberty into license!

And they pretended, at any rate, to have Paul on their side because he apparently had taught them, "All things are lawful for me." (This statement appears four times in the epistle, in two verses: 1 Cor. 6:12 and 10:23.)

It is amazing how they seemed to have the capacity to forget what they wanted to forget, and to remember what they wanted to remember! ("Know ye not," or its equivalent, is found 10 times in this Epistle--five times in this one chapter.)

Therefore, we have first

I. A CLARIFICATION OF THE TRUTH (1 Cor. 6:12¹³).

Often to correct error we will back down on certain truths, or neglect them altogether. Sometimes we will even turn against the truth.

TO SOME
PEOPLE ANY
PROHIBITION
IS LEGALISM,
A DENIAL OF
OUR LIBERTY
IN CHRIST.

But Paul refuses to back down. He even states it again and then repeats it: "All things are lawful unto me" (or, "for me"--the same statement twice in the Greek).

Ill. When I was in Seminary studying the Greek language along with every other student in the Seminary, our professor told us to be on the lookout for this one word which is translated into English with two words: "All things." He said that this simple word is responsible for some of the greatest problems in the exposition of Scripture.

Why is this true?

Because "all things" can mean "all things" universally or it can mean "all things" within a limited sphere.

Two examples: Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." Does this really mean "all things"? Does this mean that I can get A's without studying? Does this mean I can do things for which I have no training, such as, surgery, or bridge-building, etc.? No, it is "all things" within the limit of what Paul is discussing in Phil. 4.

Or, take Rom. 14:20, "All things indeed are pure." If this were meant universally, it would be a contradiction of the whole Biblical doctrine of sin.

In both of these Corinthian passages you will note that Paul is talking about eating, and specifically in ch. 10 about eating things which have been offered in sacrifice to idols. Paul is no longer under certain Mosaic regulations. He is free to eat anything he wants to eat.

BUT, even this statement of liberty is not intended to bring us to the place where we exercise no moral restraint. It is accompanied by two others:

- (1) "All things are not expedient," or profitable.
- (2) "But I will not be brought under the power of any" thing.

You see, the situation was like this: Eating was connected with idolatry, and idolatry was related to fornication. Therefore, Paul says, If I am not aware of the dangers, I can lose my liberty in the process of exercising it.

NEVER IN THE BIBLE DO WE FIND THE TEACHING THAT WE ARE FREE TO SIN; INSTEAD, WE ARE FREE FROM SIN, FREE NOT TO BE ENSLAVED BY THAT WHICH OUR LORD DIED TO SAVE US FROM.

Secondly, we have

II. A CORRECTION OF THEIR FAULTY LOGIC (1 Cor. 6:13¹⁴).

They evidently felt that since eating satisfied one physical desire, that, therefore, it was right to satisfy any physical desire. On this basis, the Corinthians justified even fornication--just like some people are doing today.

However, the end proves that their reasoning is in error. God did not make the body so that every lust that man has can be satisfied; this is the way that sin has perverted our thinking. GOD MADE US FOR HIMSELF! "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body."

This means that fornication is just as wrong today as it ever was, and that it will always be wrong in the sight of God. Let us always consider what is legal in the light of that which is Biblical.

III. A CONDEMNATION OF THEIR RIGHTS, OF THEIR WAY OF LIVING (1 Cor. 6:15-18).

Fornication was a perversion of the marriage relationship. When they received Christ, their bodies became the property of Jesus Christ. This is a fact to be realized. We belong to Christ whether we want to admit the fact or not.

Therefore, for a child of God to engage in fornication is to take that which belongs to God and to join it to a harlot--an inconceivable thought!

"Flee fornication." This is the unalterable will of God concerning this sin. A child of God can have no part with it.

Finally, we have

IV. A COMFORTING TRUTH (1 Cor. 6:19, 20a).

If there is a passage in the NT which proves the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, this is it! If the Holy Spirit would have departed from any group of believers, he would have left the Corinthians. BUT PAUL WRITES TO THEM OF THE PRESENT REALITY OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF GOD!

He does not tell them that they do not have the Holy Spirit, and that this is the reason that they have gotten into all of these difficulties. Nor does he tell them that they had the Holy Spirit, but that He is no longer in them. NO. He tells them that the basic truth that will lead them to holy living is the consciousness, the realization, that the Holy Spirit indwells them, AND THAT HE WILL NEVER LEAVE.

To remember this can have a transforming effect on our lives, especially when we remember that the Holy Spirit not only know what we do, but He even knows what we are thinking!

Concl: We have no other alternative from the conclusion which the Apostle Paul himself makes: "Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (Some MSS omit, "And in your spirit, which are God's.")

What does it mean to "glorify God"?

Basically, it means to honor Him, "To cause the dignity and worth of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged" (Thayer, p. 157).

This is where man has gone astray. Cf. Rom. 3:23. This is the reason that Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:31, Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

So it is not a question of what will please or satisfy ME, but WHAT WILL PLEASE AND SATISFY HIM.

THE QUESTION OF MARRIAGE
1 Cor. 7:1-9

Intro: When we come to chapter 7 we come to a turning point in the epistle. Previously Paul had said two things about the source of his information about the condition in the Corinthian Church:

- (1) In 1:11, "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you." Notice how forthright and honest Paul is as to the source of his information.
- (2) In 5:1, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you . . ."

Now he says, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me" (7:1a).

So he had abundant ^{evidence} ~~authority~~ for knowing that there was trouble in Corinth.

From this point on, therefore, in the epistle, it seems that Paul is answering questions which were put to him in a letter which he had received from the Church leaders. What he writes in chapter 7 follows logically from chapter 6, but he starts now to answer questions. There is no doubt but that the question of marriage was one of the major problems among the Christians in Corinth. It was a crucial problem in the Church because it was a problem outside of the Church.

Two things should be kept in mind:

- (1) Paul is answering questions, not dealing with the whole subject of marriage. It would be very interesting to know just how the question was asked, but that is not recorded here.
- (2) We are reading the words of a man whose pre-eminent desire in life was to glorify God. Nothing else mattered to him. This becomes very apparent in 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." For this reason, the glory of God is going to be the primary objective in every problem which he discusses.

Now, just what are the problems?

I. Is marriage really necessary? He answers this in 7:1.

Paul had already answered this question in chapter 6, but it needs to be re-stated and emphasized because of the questions that had come to him in a letter. Fornication was practiced commonly among the Corinthians. It was a part of their way of life. Why was this not

alright for those who were Christians.

We are beginning to hear this again. I read the statement of a very prominent man who said that he felt that marriage would be a thing of the past in a very few years.

People are saying today that love is the main thing--that if two people are in love, the ceremony, or submitting to some legal requirements is not really necessary. What a lot of nonsense this is! It will lead only to mental and moral ruin! Marriage then and now is regulated by government, and if you have not submitted to the regulations of the government, you are not married! "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:1b, 2a).

Two people who are living together as husband and wife but have not been married according to the laws of the land in which they live are living in fornication. This is what Paul means when he says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." He is not condemning marriage; he is condemning fornication.

This principle applies to all men, but it is especially serious when a Christian is guilty.

- II. Question #2: Is it not true that marriage is a hindrance to one who really wants to devote his life to God?

Paul answers this question in 7:2-5.

We have evidence here of asceticism. Many of the early Christians who had lived licentious lives before they became Christians felt that a life of extreme self-denial was the only way to make up for the past, and the only way to protect the future--and so some of them were actually dissolving their marriages, or they were neglecting their wives (or husbands) on the grounds that the marriage relationship was inconsistent with the life of a Christian.

Paul is not saying that a person should get married to avoid fornication, but he is saying that the husband and wife relationship is not fornication, and that no husband has the right to keep himself from his wife, and no wife has the right to keep herself from her husband.

He does say that there might be times when, by mutual

"DEFAUD NOT"
MEANS NOT
TO KEEP SOME
THING BACK
FROM A PERSON
WHICH RIGHT-
FULLY BELONGS
TO HIM (OR HER).

"INCONTINENCY"
- LACK OF
SELF-CONTROL.

consent, for reasons of giving ourselves to prayer, but then only temporarily, a husband and wife might keep themselves from each other, but even here they need to be careful that Satan does not take advantage of the opportunity.

There is nothing inconsistent between marriage and being a strong, spiritually-minded child of God. If you are married, and you think that you must dissolve your marriage before you can go on with the Lord, you are not letting your thinking be guided by the Word of God.

You might have problems in your marriage, but the fact that you are married is no hindrance to your relationship with God. After all, He made us male and female, and He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

Now we come to the third question.

III. Should a Christian get married, or not? This is answered in 7:6-9.

Can you say, if you are old enough to be married, and are not married, that you have missed the will of God? Or, on the basis of Paul's experience, can you say that you missed the greatest blessing of God because you did get married?

The same thing applies to the widows. Is it the will of God for me to remarry, or should I remain single?

Paul's answer to this is simple: "Every man hath his proper gift of God." By this he means that we are all different. He does not have any specific commandment. This is where we are left to decide on the basis of our own needs. "Permission" is granted. There is no hard and fast "commandment" that is given to every child of God. Paul felt that every one should be like he was, but he realized that every one could not be like he was--that this was not the will of God for them. Note how very practical he is, and how he brings together the physical and the spiritual in us.

Again, let me remind you that he is not talking about all of the problems related to marriage, that is, who you should marry. He is simply talking about whether or not Christians should marry at all.

What is his conclusion? There is no rule that applies to everybody. Every child of God must seek the will of God for himself.

Concl: How refreshing it is to read these words and to see that marriage is something which must be considered in the light of the will of God!

As I close this morning, let me address all of you according to the two groups that Paul has spoken of in this passage this morning.

First, those who are unmarried.

I hope that you have noticed that Paul does not say that it is the will of God for every Christian to get married, nor does he say that it is the will of God for every Christian not to get married, but he does say that it is the will of God for every Christian to avoid fornication.

We are living in days of great moral looseness. It is not only the thing to do today to be immoral, but it is even becoming popular to brag about it. And you may feel that you have to go along with the crowd in order to stay in with them. Will you take your Bible and read through it and see that God's people have always been those who have had to stand against the temptations of the day?

You leave this in the Lord's hands. Many of the Lord's children have led tragic lives because they have ignored the Word of God and the leading of the Lord where this matter of marriage is concerned. NO DECISION THAT YOU WILL EVER MAKE WILL HAVE A MORE FAR-REACHING EFFECT ON YOUR LIFE.

Secondly, those who are married.

Paul does not deal here with all of the possible problems in marriage, but he is addressing himself to those who feel that they could really go on with the Lord IF they could only get rid of their life partner.

Do you feel this way? If you do, you are wrong. Instead will you notice that the problem may be more on the physical side than the spiritual? God intends that marriage should mean love, love in every area of our lives. If love is missing, there is not much left regardless of how spiritual you might try to be!

Oh, that God would give all of us such a heart for Himself that we would want to please Him and to live according to His Word more than anything else. That would clear up the majority of our marital problems and our lives would become a means of reaching others with the Word which has transformed us.

THINGS THE GOSPEL DOES NOT CHANGE

1 Cor. 7:10-24

Intro: Because we have been born into a way of life which has been greatly influenced by the Word of God, it is hard for us to understand how apparent the transforming power of Christ is in societies that are thoroughly pagan. This is what led to some of the major difficulties in Corinth--the city which seems to have felt the shock of the Gospel even more than most cities did in Paul's day.

Their lives had been so thoroughly godless before, that after they came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour they were inclined to feel that everything that they had done before was wrong. Therefore, everything should be changed, even their marriages.

To find out just what they should do, they had written to the Apostle Paul (cf. 7:1).

He begins by making it very clear that they do need to change their ideas about fornication! Although that has been a part of Corinthian culture, it is wrong, and it always has been wrong in God's sight.

But, there are other THINGS THE GOSPEL DOES NOT CHANGE!

There are three areas in which there seem to have been problems:

- (1) In connection with marriage. This was, if the space devoted to it is any indication, was the major problem. Cf. 1 Cor. 7:10-16.
- (2) In connection with religion, ^{national origin, involving} and religious ceremonies. Cf. 1 Cor. 7:18, 19.
- (3) In connection with one's social standing, whether slave or free. Cf. 1 Cor. 7:21, 22.

Let us consider these three areas in which there were problems, and then let us note also the principles which Paul seeks to establish with the Corinthians for their guidance in the days to come.

I. THE THREE PROBLEM AREAS.

A. Concerning marriage.

1. In families where both the husband and the wife have been saved (vv. 10, 11).

Remember that we are reading in 1 Corinthians about a first generation Church. Most, if not

all of the believers in Corinth, had come right out of heathenism. On many of their hearts there was the memory of grievous sin--sin they wished that they had never committed. Some of these sins were connected with marriage. Therefore, the feeling seems to have developed that marriage itself was sinful, and that any one who received Christ as his or her Saviour should get rid of his wife or husband.

Paul says in effect, "I do not have to answer that question; the Lord gave the answer while he was here on earth." Cf. Mark 10:2-12; Matt. 5:32; 19:3-9; Luke 16:18.

The Lord had originated marriage. It was not heathen, nor was it sinful in its beginnings. It is the one relationship that is even closer than that of the parent and child relationship. Only death can sever it UNLESS one or the other is guilty of adultery. In such a case the innocent one is free before God to dissolve the relationship, but even then is not obligated to do so.

But if a husband or wife puts away his marriage partner for any other reason, and then marries someone else, such a marriage is adulterous.

Paul's word is that believers are to remain married if they were married when they came to the Lord (even if they had been married before). If, as seems to have been the case with some of the Corinthians, they had been divorced since they were saved, then they had only two alternatives within the will of God:

- (1) They must remain unmarried.
- (2) Preferably, they should be reconciled to each other. But Lev. 24 makes it very clear that when there is a second marriage there can be no reconciliation with the original husband or wife.

2. In families where only one, either the husband or the wife, has been saved (vv. 12-16).

The Lord had not spoken on this subject, and so Paul, speaking as an Apostle under the direction of the Spirit of God, tells the Corinthians what the will of God is in such matters.

There are two parts to the answer.

- a. Every attempt should be made to save the marriage (vv. 12, 13). If the one who is not a Christian is willing to live with his wife or husband who is a Christian, then the Christian must not break up the marriage.

And this means that the Christian must seek to do everything possible to hold the marriage together.

No Christian should ever marry a person who is not a Christian, but Paul is not dealing with that problem. He is talking about what should be done when one is saved after marriage.

But, a Christian wife will say (and this is the thought behind v. 14), If I am a Christian and my husband is not, does this not mean that our relationship is unholy and that, therefore, our children will be unclean, unholy, possibly illegitimate?

That which is clean speaks of that which is acceptable to God within this limited sense, or that which can be used by God.

THIS VERSE DOES NOT SAY THAT, IF ONE MEMBER OF A FAMILY IS SAVED, THAT THEY WILL ALL BE SAVED--THAT THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN WIFE WILL BRING ABOUT THE SALVATION OF HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN. But he is saying that in such cases God is not displeased with the marriage, and that it is not one which He cannot bless!

The hope, of course, is expressed in vv. 15b, 16. If you become a Christian and your husband is not a Christian, the best opportunity for him to be saved will come about if you stay with him. 1 Pet. 3:1-4 tells us how.

- b. In case the one who is not a Christian will not stay, then "let him depart" (v. 15).

In such cases "a brother or a sister is not under bondage," i.e., to remain married, nor is he forbidden to remarry. This is definitely not what God wants, but it is

what God will permit in such instances. But those who are in such cases need to look long and hard at vv. 12, 13, 14, and 16 before looking at v. 15. And you need to be sure that it is really because you are a Christian and not for other faults that you might have that your husband or wife wants to get away from you.

As I mentioned last week, there is nothing more closely related to our fellowship with God than the marriage relationship. Therefore, it falls upon us to be sure that we are in the will of God.

But let us look now at the second problem area.

- B. Concerning our religious, or national background.
Cf. 1 Cor. 7:18, 19.

It is difficult to know if Paul is speaking religiously, or nationally. Of course a person who receives Christ will break with any religion he has followed before. But it seems that in Corinth there were Jews who wished after they had been saved that they were not Jews and they sought to sever all connections with the Jews, while there were Gentiles who felt that since "salvation is of the Jews" that they should submit to certain ceremonies that were followed by the Jews.

Some Jews, of course, who trusted the Lord had great difficulty in giving up circumcision, etc.

Paul says, If you were born a Jew and then come to Christ, don't try to become a Gentile. And if you were a Gentile when you were saved, don't try to become a Jew. These things do not amount to anything. THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU ARE LIVING IN OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD (cf. v. 19).

One of the hardest thing a young Christian has to do is to separate tradition from the Word of God. The latter is all that is important if we are concerned about pleasing God.

Now for the third problem.

- C. Concerning one's social standing (1 Cor. 7:21, 22).

Society in Corinth had two main divisions like it did throughout most of the Roman Empire. There were

who were slaves (servants); there were those who who were free. You can see this in Eph. 6, in Col. 3, 4, and you get special insight into it in that delightful little epistle of Paul to Philemon, when he wrote about the runaway slave, Onesimus.

Will you note that Paul did not feel called to change the social order of the day? He did not like it, but it would have had dire consequences for the ministry of the Gospel if he had sought to meddle in this area of life. What he says does not have to do with whether slavery was right or wrong; it does have to do with the attitude of those servants who had come to know the Lord. If freedom came, there was to be no hesitation in taking it. But whatever happened, the Lord had set them free from sin in their own hearts. This was what was of the utmost importance.

Now let us look at

II. THE PRINCIPLES WHICH PAUL SEEKS TO ESTABLISH.

- A. Every believer to continue on in the calling he had when he came to Christ. This applies to marriage, to national and to social matters. It is repeated over and over in vv. 17-24.
- B. "God hath called us to peace." Cf. v. 15b. The Gospel is to change us while our circumstances may remain the same. That is where God expects to use us.
- C. "Ye are bought with a price" (v. 23a). Because of this, our chief objective should be to do the will of God. Cf. 6:20.
- D. "Abide with God" (v. 24b). Here he is thinking about our nearness to God, our fellowship with Him. There is no other way to have the peace of God, no other way to experience the joy of the Lord, no other way to see the blessing of God in our own experience.

Concl: What an answer to some very difficult questions-- all answered on the basis of what would please the Lord, and what would bring His blessing into the lives of all concerned.

You can see how this whole passage throbs with discontent. The people then were like we are now; they traced their

unhappiness to their circumstances. If they could only make some changes, was what they were saying, then we would be happy, then we could have peace. Paul says that if we "abide with God," than any place can be a happy place as we see the Lord undertaking to meet our needs.

It is not where you are, but what you are. It is not where you are, but Who is there with you. This is what matters most and indicates why there are some THINGS THE GOSPEL DOES NOT CHANGE.

PAUL SPEAKS OUT CONCERNING MARRIAGE

1 Cor. 7:25-40

Intro: I want to consider the last part of chapter 7 this morning, from v. 25 to v. 40. It is here that the Apostle Paul concludes what he has to say in answering questions about marriage.

We must remember that these were first generation Christians. What they knew about marriage, they had learned from heathendom. Paul is teaching them the will of God about marriage. Some of the questions they have asked him were answered by the Lord Jesus Christ when He was here on earth; others were not answered by the Lord, and so Paul as an Apostle speaks out given them the answers they wanted. Cf. vv. 10 and 12 to see this contrast.

The important verse in the last section is v. 35. (Read.)

In v. 25 he has told them that the Lord had not expressed Himself on the questions that they were answering. It was a question where the answer was not the same for every person, i.e., whether a Christian should marry or not.

Paul gives his "judgment" (v. 25), and he uses an expression which means that he had carefully weighed all of the issues involved in the light of what had been revealed, and what was his understanding concerning the life a child of God should live.

Now, if v. 35 he tells them that he is not trying to "cast a snare"—a military expression meaning to throw a noose around a person so that you could force them to do what you wanted you wanted them to do.

Instead, he is concerned about what is profitable for them (going back to the cognate expression, "profitable," in 6:12). (The KJV has "expedient.")

In facing any question related to the life of a Christian you must consider what is "comely," or becoming, or expected of a Christian. OF ALL THE THINGS THAT YOU EXPECT OF A CHRISTIAN IT IS THAT HE WOULD "attend upon the Lord without distraction."

To explain what Paul meant the best illustration in the Bible is found in Luke 10:40 where Luke tells us, "But Martha was cumbered about much serving." Martha was a distracted child of God. She was so overly occupied with what she was doing that at least for the time being should could not see the even greater value of what Mary was doing.

One of the greatest dangers in every Christian's life is that

good things, necessary things, can keep us from the best thing.

To "attend upon the Lord without distraction" is lit. to sit beside Him, to be completely devoted to HIM!

It is very probable that just plain BUSY-NESS has kept many of us from the fellowship with the Lord that we should have had this past week. Nothing is more important in the life of any Christian than his fellowship with the Lord. Therefore, anything that threatens our fellowship is to be avoided—even if it be marriage.

Evidently the Corinthians had grown up with the idea that the most important thing for any man or woman is that they get married.

Paul says, 'No, the most important thing is not that you get married; it is that you live in fellowship with the Lord. And, therefore, marriage and everything else must be considered in this light.'

THIS IS THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF THE WHOLE PASSAGE.

With this well in mind, let us note

I. THE GUIDELINES HE GIVES.

- A. If a person is already married, he should not seek to get rid of his wife because of what Paul is writing. Cf. 7:27a.
- B. If a person is not married, he should not seek to get married. That is, he should not let this be the consuming desire of his heart. Cf. 7:27b.
- C. If a man or a woman does get married, they have not sinned, but they must recognize that "such shall have trouble in the flesh" (7:28). By trouble, Paul does not mean marital trouble. He means that his cares, his responsibilities, will increase so that he will not have the time for himself that he had before.

He explains all of this in vv. 32-34.

It is important to note that he is not talking about unmarried people generally, but he is talking about people who remain unmarried because they feel, as Paul did, that one can give himself to the things of the Lord more in an unmarried state.

I believe we all can see that this is true. Many a wife

has felt frustrated because her family has kept her from serving the Lord that way she once did. And what husband or wife has not known how family responsibilities have cut into time we have tried to give to the Lord.

This does not mean that a single person will be more spiritual than a married person, but Paul is talking about the way marriage brings about an adjustment in the use of our time.

But let me say this, if you as a Christian even marry another Christian, but one who does not share your desire for fellowship with the Lord, in time, if the other one does not change you will. There has been many a Christian young person who has started down spiritually, and who has put an end to his usefulness in the work of God because he (or she) was so intent on getting married that they did not consider all of the issues!

Notice secondly,

II. THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES which seem to have been present.

Note in v. 26, "The present distress."

Then note in v. 29, "the time is short."

The first could mean that the Church in Corinth was facing some kind of trouble, some calamity, possibly persecution in some form.

But it could also mean impending distress, and, when placed along side of the second, this may be the meaning. Because it becomes very, very apparent that back of all that Paul was saying was a deep conviction that Jesus Christ was coming back—and he probably believed that the Lord would come in his lifetime.

Even most of us who are Christians live like this world is going to continue forever. But the expression, "The time is short," means that the limits of this present age are carefully set off with a beginning and an ending.

In view of this he gives the instructions contained in vv. 29-31. (Explain them briefly.) We are so tied in with the world that we cannot see that this world as we see it is departing, is disappearing. It is doomed and ruined and on the way out! Men in the world may spend all of their time trying to repair it, but the world has had it--to use their own term!

Cf. 1 John 2:15-17.

We hear a lot about relevancy today. Personally I get very tired of the word. Most of the people who use it do not know really what they need. THE MOST RELEVANT MESSAGE IN THE WORLD IS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!

The world is sick today. Shall we as the children of God pattern our ideas about marriage after the world. I read just this last week the statement of a man who feels that we ought to do away with marriage—that it ought not to be anything legal, just a mutual agreement between a man and a woman which can be dissolved whenever they get ready to dissolve it.

The only hope is in the coming of the Lord. The very fact that there are men in the world who still believe that He is coming is tremendous evidence that it is a true hope. Paul says, whether it is marriage, or whatever it might be always remember two things:

- (1) Nothing must keep you from fellowship with the Lord.
- (2) "The time is short."

Finally we have

III. TWO CONCLUDING PROBLEMS.

- A. A word for parents, especially fathers. Cf. vv. 36-38.

Do not push your daughters into marriage, says Paul. If this is what they desire, let them go when they read the age. But do not feel that this is the one thing you must have for your daughter. Have the same standard for her that you do for yourself!

The best way to get our children set on the right paths is to get them to follow us.

- B. What about a wife who loses her husband? Cf. vv. 39, 40.

She is free to remarry, but "only in the Lord." This means:

- (1) Another Christian. But it also means,
- (2) Within the will of God, recognizing all of the principles established in this chapter.

Concl: You do not have to agree with Paul about staying single but you have to agree with him on the principles he establishes. And it is interesting to note his somewhat ironical conclusion for the benefit of those who claimed more insight than he, "And I think also that I have the Spirit of God."

Oh, that God would give us such a desire for Himself that every thing would be considered in this light!

AN ANCIENT PROBLEM AND AN UNCHANGING PRINCIPLE
1 Cor. 8:1-13

Intro: The second problem the Corinthians had written about.
(Ch. 7 gives us the first.) This covers chs. 8-10.
Specifically they had asked whether a Christian should eat meat that was offered in sacrifice to idols.

Idolatry was so much a part of Greek and Roman life that it was practically impossible to escape from it. It was in government, in business, in amusements, and in all forms of social life. Family connections had to be maintained with members of families who were not Christians, but this often presented some very serious temptations.

What exactly was done with the meat of animals sacrifices to idols?

- (1) One-third was burned on the altar to the idol.
- (2) One-third was given to the priest. If he did not need it, it was taken to the market place and sold—the money going into the coffers of the idolatrous religion.
- (3) One-third was given to the worshiper. He would take it home to eat. If you were a guest in the home of a heathen, this is the meat that would be set before you.

This was a great problem wherever the Gospel went in the first century. Cf. Acts 15:29; 21:25.

What were the issues involved?

I. They could look at it just from their own point of view.

A. They had "knowledge." Cf. v. 1a.

1. They knew that the idols were not really gods.
Cf. v. 4. See also 10:19, 20.

THE GOSPEL
IS VERY
SPECIFIC.

2. They knew the truth about God, the Father, and about the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. v. 6 (explain).

B. They knew also that eating or not eating had no real effect upon their relationship to the Lord (v. 8).

C. They were aware that they were at liberty to eat if they chose to do so. Cf. "liberty" in v. 9.

All of this evidence seemed to point in favor of eating the meat. However, this is only one side of the picture. Paul very frankly tells them that "knowledge puffeth up," fills us with pride, and therefore gives us the wrong attitude toward things in our lives which may affect the lives of others.

It is well to keep in mind that Paul is not saying that every problem must be settled in this way. There are some things that are wrong in themselves. Cf. 6:9-11.

This, however, is not a case where things are right or wrong in themselves, but a case where the effect can be wrong.

So, in the second place, Paul points out that

- II. They needed to exercise their knowledge with love. Cf. vv. 1b-3.

Here is a crucial question for us: How does our knowledge of the Lord and of His Word affect our relationship with others? Does it make us feel that we are better than they are? Does it make us pity them? Does it make us feel that they ought to know better, that they could know just as easily as we can—therefore, we are not going to ~~take~~ them into consideration when it comes to deciding how we are to live?

Cf. vv. 2, 3; Eph. 4:15.

Who does Paul have in mind when he speaks of "the weak brother"? It surely cannot be another Christian because of v. 11. Paul is using this term as it is used in Acts 2:29, 37; 3:17; Rom. 9:3. Note also that in ch. 9 Paul is concerned about those who do not know the Saviour.

There is a world to be reached with the Gospel. Unless the knowledge that I have is exercised in love,
 —love for God first, and then
 —love for those who need to know Him,
 my knowledge can keep others from ever seeing their need of Christ, and, if so, then I "sin against Christ" (v. 12).

This leads to the issues.

- A. If I do not use my knowledge in love, then I do not know as much as I think I know (v. 2).
- B. Although I have this knowledge about God and Christ, not everyone has this knowledge (v. 7). It is amazing to see the ignorance of the average person today with regard to the Word of God.
- C. I need to be concerned about "their weak conscience" (v. 12). This describes one whose knowledge of the Word is inadequate, and, therefore, whose understanding of the truth of the Word of God is not what it should be.

III. The solution to the problem (v. 13).

Concl: So there is a greater principle than that which
revolves around the thing which I have a right to do.
God has left us in the world for a witness to the world.
Men are held in ignorance of their need of God, and how they
can find Him. They need to realize that there are not many
ways—as the heathen believed. There is only one way!
Therefore, we must never allow them to misinterpret what we
do because of the eternal issues which are involved.

GOD'S PROVISION FOR THOSE WHO PREACH
1 Cor. 9:1-14

Intro: As we come to chapter 9 we find Paul discussing a matter he had to face very, very often: the defence of his apostleship. It seems that there were always those who sought to belittle him and his ministry because he was not one of the original twelve. After his approach to the question of eating meat to idols in ch. 8, he knew that this would sought very un-apostolic to many of them because being an apostle meant the full exercise of authority.

The word, authority, is used several times in these two chapters. It is translated "liberty" in 8:9. It is translated "power" in 9:4. It is used 2x in 9:12.

SO—is his unwillingness to eat meat a proof that he is not an apostle?

To answer the charge Paul sets about to show another area in which he has not used his rights—and he tells them why. This was much closer to them because it concerned the use of money—their money!

But first, let us notice INSTRUCTIVE FOR ANY WHO WANT TO
KNOW THE FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES
OF THE LORD'S WORK.

I. THE PROOF OF HIS APOSTLESHIP (9:1, 2).

The first two questions are reversed in most of the Gk MSS. He was "free" as a believer first, and then had the added distinction of being "an apostle."

But, on his apostleship, he follows two lines of proof:

- A. "Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord?" Cf. 1 Cor. 15:8-10. He is, of course, referring to his experience with the Lord on the road to Damascus, recorded in Acts 9, repeating in Acts 22 and 26. Cf. Acts 22:14, 15.
- B. "The seal of of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." Of all churches, they especially were the proof, the authentication, the confirmation, the evidence of Paul's apostleship.

Cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-3; 12:11, 12.

Having established this, he goes on to point out something which they, apparently, were overlooking:

II. HIS RIGHTS AS AN APOSTLE (9:3-14).

V. 3 makes it very clear that the Apostle Paul was on trial. "Answer" is defence. We get our word apologetics from this word. "Examine" means to question, ~~to examine~~, to scrutinize, to investigate.

There is nothing to indicate that the whole church felt antagonistic toward him, but some were putting him on trial in the hopes of turning others away from him.

So Paul is answering their charges. He does it along five lines.

- A. By pointing out what others who have ministered to them are doing (9:4-6).

Is there any reason why they (possibly speaking of himself and Barnabas) did not have the right, the authority to eat and drink, i.e., to provide for their physical needs? Cf. v. 4.

Some of the men, including Peter, had wives, and thus their needs were greater. Why could he not do the same, i.e., "lead about a sister as a wife"?

The others were not working to support themselves as he was. Was it possible that everyone could expect support except Paul and Barnabas?

So, by looking at what the others were doing, some who were not even apostles, could there be any justification at all for making special cases out of Paul and his companions?

The answer is, "NO!"

- B. By considering three occupations which in themselves represent the work of the ministry (9:7).

THESE THREE
ALSO PICTURE
THREE ASPECTS
OF THE MINISTRY.
2 TIM. 2:2; 1 COR.
3:6-8;
1 PET. 5:2, 4.

They are the soldier, the husbandman, and the shepherd. There is no question in any of these cases but that the man should be supported by the occupation which takes his time.

But then Paul can sense that some of them are saying, "But Paul is just talking like a man of the world. What he is trying to prove does not apply in the Lord's work." And so his next line of evidence is

- C. By considering the Word of God (9:8-10). He quotes from Deut. 25:4. Paul raises the question in using

verse, "Was God saying this for the oxen?" Luther has answered this perhaps facetiously and yet wisely when he says, "Oxen can't read!"

Therefore, it is "altogether" for us, i.e., undoubtedly, assuredly, by all means, for us! God was speaking for the benefit of the oxen, but He intended that we would learn something from it.

So the Word of God supports it.

Next

- D. By considering what they are doing for others (9:11, 12a).

Others were being supported by the Church of Corinth. Should not the Apostle Paul have priority over everyone else in this case because no one had had the part he had had in starting and in establishing the Corinthian Church?

Their inconsistency was glaring. It was personal, not based on principle.

The final reason is seen

- E. By considering the priesthood of the Old Testament (9:13). Cf. Num. 18:8-24.

This would have been a tremendous blow to the men who were opposing Paul—especially the Judaizers.

All of this evidence points indisputably to one great fact, and Paul states it in v. 14:

"Even so hath the Lord ordained (planned, ordered, commanded) that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Concl: From this chapter there are certain important truths which we need to know concerning the support of the Lord's work.

In the first place we learn that the work of God is to be supported financially by the people of God. But Paul's whole attitude here is not one of forcing the Lord's people to do something (he mentions no amounts); they are to be trained to give--just as Paul is teaching the Corinthian believers in this chapter.

Secondly, this means by implication that the church is not to

to look to the world for support.

What a tragedy that there has been such a terrific breakdown at this point! Many Christian organizations unblushingly appeal to the world for help. This can only confuse the most important issues in the world in the minds of people who do not know the Lord.

Let me say to any of you who do not know the Lord—please do not feel when the offering plate is passed that you are under any obligation whatsoever. The offering is only for those who know the Lord. We are delighted to have you come, but we want you to realize that the Lord wants you—not your money. Ill. Dr. Lewis Johnson and the Braniff pilot.

Thirdly, Paul teaches us that spiritual blessing will produce the needed support for the work of God.

Today many churches have quit teaching the Word of God. The people are not being blessed. The crowds begin to fall away, and then we have to resort to all kinds of financial plans to get the money that is needed to keep the doors of the church open.

IF WE WOULD ONLY PREACH THE WORD OF GOD AND SEEK GOD'S BLESSING IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE, WE WOULD BE AMAZED TO SEE HOW GOD WOULD MEET THE NEEDS.

Cf. Exodus 36:5-7, where the people were bringing because their hearts stirred them to give.

Fourthly, Paul lets us know that a wrong attitude toward money will hinder the preaching of the Gospel. Cf. 9:12b. We are going to see more about this next Sunday, but let us notice it in closing this morning.

One thing which can ruin a man's ministry is a wrong, a greedy attitude toward money. It is easy for people to get the impression that we are more concerned about what they have to give us than we are about what we have to give them!

Paul accepted gifts from other churches. (Read Phil. 4.) But the situation here was such that he refused to exercise his right, his authority, because he did not want anything to hinder the ministry of the Word of God to those who needed to know Christ as Saviour.

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN
1 Cor. 9:15-23

Intro: From the beginning of ch. 7 and on Paul is answering questions. In ch. 8 we have Question #2—concerned with a very great problem for the people of God who live in a pagan society: the eating of meat offered to idols.

Paul tells them that he does not eat meat, and he tells them why (i.e., meat offered to idols).

This leads him on to another related matter: the question of his support by the Corinthians. Again, he did not accept support from them although he had the right, the authority, to do so.

His reason for not eating meat offered to idols was because he did not want it to be misinterpreted by someone who needed to know the Saviour.

His reason for not accepting support was exactly the same: "lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ" (9:12b).

From the very first of this epistle we have seen that the great burden on the heart of the Apostle Paul was to reach people with the Gospel so they could be saved.

To reach men he was immovable on the essentials. (Note his resistance to philosophy, to oratory, to baptism, etc. in the early chapters of this epistle.)

To reach men he refused to do certain things which he had a perfect right to do, i.e., eating meat offered to idols, and accepting support from the Corinthian church.

Now he is about to take us a step further.

If we are to win others to Christ, there are certain things which we must do, things which no one will force us to do. These things cannot always be specified, but they are to be recognized when the time comes.

But, as Paul leads up to these, let us note carefully his approach.

I. THE COMPELLING FORCE IN HIS LIFE (1 Cor. 9:15-17).

Paul does not want to be misunderstood. He had not exercised his rights as a servant of the Lord, but he did not want them to think that he was mentioning it to get them to do something.

He was not hinting.

Neither was he complaining. (How easy it is to do both of these things!) He had found such joy ("glorying") in the path he had taken that he would rather die than to have the joy taken away from him.

What a tremendous epistle this is for those of us who preach! How much we can learn from the Apostle Paul!

But now we are coming to one of the most significant statements in the whole epistle regarding Paul's understanding of the ministry. It is this: "Necessity is laid upon me."

What does he mean?

Perhaps we can understand it better if we can see how Luke uses the verb, "laid upon," in Acts 27:20—"No small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away."

Paul's call to the ministry had the effect upon him that the storm had on the ship which was carrying Paul and his companions toward Rome. The power of it, the urgency of it, the compulsion of it, was such that Paul could do nothing but preach the Gospel.

Did you ever hear men talk about choosing the ministry? Paul does not talk that way. The ministry is not a profession; it is a divine vocation.

Listen to 1 Tim. 1:12 where Paul is the writer: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."

Did you get that?

When Peter in Acts 11 was trying to explain to his Jewish brethren why he had gone to the Gentiles, he ends his report by saying, "What was I, that I could withstand God?"

Spurgeon used to tell his students in London, "Don't preach if you can do anything else!" That is, if you can be happy doing anything else, then do not go into the ministry.

V. 17 makes Paul's thought a little clearer.

"Willingly" means to have a choice in the matter. If he had had a choice, and had decided to go with the Lord, then he should "have a reward." But, if without leaving the option to him, a stewardship was thrust on him, then his

first concern should not be the reward, the pay he would receive, but faithfulness to the task that the Lord had committed to him as a bondservant.

Cf. 1 Cor. 4:1, 2.

And because he was a steward, Paul had to say, "Woe is ^{unto} me, if I preach not the gospel!" A day of judgment is coming and then men will realize as never before what a serious thing it is to tamper with the gospel of the grace of God. Oh, that this conception of the ministry could be established in all of our hearts!

But let us go on to see what was

II. PAUL'S REWARD (1 Cor. 9:18, 19).

If Paul was not after the money of the Corinthians, what was the reward that he got out of the ministry which kept in the ministry. After all, we will just not keep doing something which does not give us some satisfaction.

Paul's reward was in bringing people to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour—and to do it "without charge." He charged no fees for the preaching of the Gospel.

You see it was not only what he preached, but the conditions under which he preached, that gave him his reward.

Do you see how Paul is getting around to tell us again that the work of God is NOT to be supported by people before they come to know the Lord? What a tragedy that we have given the people of the world cause to think that we are more interested in what they can do for us financially than we are in what we can do for them spiritually.

So Paul, though he independent of all men, and under no obligation to adapt himself to them, yet he had made himself, lit., a bondservant "unto all, that he might gain the more."

And from this point on through v. 22 he talks about "gain." He was out to "gain" men, not money. He wanted to win them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let us look at

III. THE FIELD OF LABOR (1 Cor. 9:20-23).

Look at vv. 20-22 carefully. There are two major groups of people in the world: (1) "Jews," and (2) Gentiles--those who are "without law."

Each of these two groups can likewise be divided into two groups:

- (1) There are Jews who are not religious, and there are Jews who are religious.
- (2) There are Gentiles who are not religious, and there are Gentiles who are religious.

This is the distinction that he draws in these verses.

- A. The people of Israel—found as they are throughout the world. Are you concerned about reaching them?

If so you will find that they fall into two classes.

1. "The Jews"—the title which depicts the national distinction of this people, many of whom have little or no concern for religion.

Then there are those Jews who are

2. "Under the law"—trying by their own religious observances to establish enough merit with God so that they will finally be accepted by Him.

Cf. Paul's great burden in Rom. 10:1-4.

Let me say it this morning: No New Testament evangelistic emphasis can ignore the spiritual needs of the people of Israel.

More than the land of Israel today, the Jews need Christ! Their greatest day of suffering is still ahead. What are you doing to reach the Jew for Christ? Do you know enough about them to know how to approach them unoffensively?

But let us look also at

- B. The Gentiles. Here, too, there are two groups. All of them are, in a sense,

1. "Without law." The Gentiles were never placed under the law. But, beyond that, they have for the most part chosen to ignore "the work of the law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:15). Rejecting the light that they do have, they have chosen for the most part to live lives defying the moral standards of God.

They are not a very lovely group, but they must be reached. They need Christ. Are you concerned about them?

Then there are those Gentiles who are

2. "The weak."

Cf. 1 Cor. 8:9, 10. This is a designation of the religious Gentiles.

Why are they called "weak"? Because they, like some Jews, are trying to please God, trying to worship God, trying to find God, trying to live for God, BUT THEY DO NOT HAVE THE POWER TO DO WHAT THEY ARE TRYING TO DO—AND THEY NEVER WILL FIND IT IN THEMSELVES!

Do you ever look at religious Gentiles sympathetically for what they are?

How well do we get along with non-Christian Gentiles? Are we willing to become their servants, to keep from offending them, in order that somehow, possibly over a long period of time we might be able to win them to Christ?

Paul concludes with v. 23. The Gospel is the burden upon his heart. Is it our burden?

Concl: What lessons there are here for the child of God who wants to bring others to Christ!

Do you see that this is going to take time? Do you see that you cannot approach every person the same way? Do you see how you and I need to love people, how we need to avoid offending them, how we must exercise patience, how we must expect and accept rebuffs—all for the sake of the Gospel!

And sometimes our opportunities may come to us in the most unexpected ways. Cf. Paul's imprisonment, and his testimony in Phil. 1:12 ff.

THE RACE AND THE CROWN
1 Cor. 9:24-27

Intro: For anyone who wants to know what it means to serve the Lord, the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians is full of instruction!

We have seen again and again the priority which he places on his message: the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He refused to change it. He refused to embellish it with philosophy or with oratory. His commission from God was to preach the Gospel throughout the world, and he was not about to do anything else.

But we have seen also that the message is inseparably linked with the man (or woman) bears witness to others.

Therefore, he has touched on such things as their lack of unity, their failure to grow spiritually, their tendency to glory in men, their pride, their carelessness about certain sins, and, most recently in our messages, their intense desire to exercise their liberty as believers!

And so this is where we are now in the epistle.

Two questions from the Corinthians have brought him to this point: one had to do with various problems related to marriage; the other had to do with money—his right to receive support from the Corinthian Church.

He has been trying to show them that everything which touches our lives must be brought into the light of God's purpose in leaving us here on earth, and that there are some things which are legitimate in themselves which we must forego, if we are serious about wanting to live for the Lord.

Now we come to an illustration. It is the first of two. We will consider the second one next week. The first has to do with a race; the second (10:1-11) is taken from the history of Israel.

I. THE GRECIAN GAMES—AN EXAMPLE.

About once every three years the Grecian games were held on the outskirts of Corinth. Every citizen of Corinth knew what they were, and eagerly looked forward to their coming. Doubtless, some of the Corinthian believers had even participated in them even though they were generally not participated in by Christians because of their close ties with idolatry and immorality.

Men would train diligently for 10 months, and the race for

which they trained would often take less than 10 minutes. Nevertheless, in spite of this, the athletes did nothing else for the 10 months but train for the race. Trained judges supervised everything they did: how much and what they ate, how much they slept, their exercises, their leisure time, etc. The race came first. Nothing else was allowed to interfere.

Every runner hoped that he would be the winner—that he would get the prize. When Paul uses the word, "striveth," in v. 25, he is describing the whole training period as well as the race. We get our word, agonizing, from it. Everything was geared to agonizing self-discipline! This was the key to it all.

Every athlete today knows something of this. His ability to win is linked to his willingness to train. Usually this takes years.

Ill. I heard last night on the news about a baseball player who had his rookie year last year. His father got him started when he was 5 years old!

Or, think of the training that our high school basketball players have gone through in preparation for the State tournament this last week. Hours upon hours of training . . .

And "one receiveth the prize." And every runner in those Grecian games trained and ran, hoping, expecting that he would be the one who would have the glory of winning.

"All right," Paul says, "so run, that ye may obtain."

To obtain means to make it your own, refuse to think in terms of defeat regardless of the opposition, you get the coveted prize in spite of everything else!

The sad thing about athletic contests is that everyone cannot win.

But this is not the case with the race Christians are involved in—EVERYONE CAN WIN, but not everyone will win! The point that Paul is making is that every child of God is to look at what it takes to produce a winning athlete and make the application to his own life.

This is a life, this is a ministry, this is a fellowship which calls for the same kind of devotion, the same kind of intense discipline. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with our race as Christians, and we must not be concerned about anything but WINNING!

Now, let us take another look at the Grecian games to see another point the Apostle Paul is making.

II. THE GRECIAN GAMES--A RIDICULOUS SPECTACLE.

This is it: "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown" (v. 25b).

The crown was a twisted pine-wreath which would not last more than a week--and then it was gone forever.

Paul, I am sure, would not minimize the glory attached with winning, but that glory is so soon forgotten. It seems that, as was the case with the Corinthians, if this is the main emphasis in life, life would be very empty indeed!

Paul says in 1 Tim. 4:8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little (i.e., for a little while), but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Paul is not minimizing the importance of sports. From the references in his epistles to various sports activities, it would seem that he was very interested in athletic competition.

But he is saying this . . . CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY MEN WILL SHOW SUCH DEDICATION AND SELF-DISCIPLINE FOR A "CORRUPTIBLE CROWN" WHEN THE PEOPLE OF GOD WILL GIVE PRACTICALLY NO THOUGHT TO THE "INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN" WHICH CAN BE THEIRS?

Paul wrote to Timothy about "a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:8).

James wrote about "the crown of life" (Jas. 1:12).

Peter spoke of "a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:4).

This is not SALVATION; there is no doubt here. But Paul is talking about those eternal rewards which will be given to every child of God who faithfully fulfils his stewardship to obey the Word and to witness for the Lord whenever it is possible to do so.

The Corinthians stood rebuked before such writing. What about us? Have we been turned aside by the pursuits that the world is so concerned about that we have lost sight of the race we are to run? Is it true that we are not willing to show the same diligence and self-discipline for an incorruptible crown?

Now we are ready for

III. THE APPLICATION (1 Cor. 9:26, 27).

Will you note how Paul turns the attention back on himself? And he introduces another sport: boxing.

Some Christians are running, but they run "uncertainly," i.e., they do not know what the goal is. They are just running to be running.

Some Christians are boxing, but they are shadow-boxing. They act like they are putting on a performance, not like there are opponents to be faced in our lives as Christians.

The great, intense purpose of Paul's life is expressed in v. 27.

He was lit. going to make his body and its desires, right and wrong, a slave to him; he was not going to be his body's slave.

Robertson feels that Paul may be playing on words when he uses the word translated "preached." It is the familiar Gk word . A "at the games announced the rules of the game and called out the competitors" (IV, 150). PAUL KNEW THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR ONE WHO HAS PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO OTHERS TO BECOME NOT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD HIMSELF.

This does not mean the loss of salvation. But it does mean the loss of reward. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:15).

Concl: The same thing applies to soldiers. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4).

Young man, interested in sports, are you as anxious to grow spiritually as you are to develop your skill in that sport?

Students, are you as diligent in your spiritual life as you are in your studies?

Businessman, are you as anxious to get ahead spiritually as you are financially?

These are the tests. May God give us such a desire for Himself that there will be nothing that we will do which will show a greater desire to "obtain" than in our walk with God!

ANCIENT WARNINGS OF PRESENT DANGERS

1 Cor. 10:1-15

Intro: In answering some of the questions that the Corinthian Church had sent to him, Paul has been seeking to show the Corinthians that there is a very definite need in the life of a child of God for self-control, self-restraint--that, while we are FREE, it will lead to disaster for us to feel that we can carelessly do anything that we want to.

The farther we go in the epistle the more comprehensive this principle becomes.

In 9:24-27 Paul has illustrated what he means by referring to the sports events which were so popular in Corinth--reminding them of the discipline that an athlete must voluntarily subject himself to if he is to be a winner!

Now we come to the second illustration--from the history of Israel--but, what is more important, from the divine record of the history of Israel as recorded in the OT!

Notice first

- I. HIS AUTHORITY TO USE THE EXPERIENCES OF ISRAEL. Cf. vv. 6, 11.

Here we see one of the reasons why we should never stop reading the OT. One of the main reasons for the stories of the OT is that we might be spared from the sins which the people of God have been guilty of in the past. They became types for us, that is, they are to serve as warnings to us so that we will not be guilty of the same sins.

It is even more important for us because we are those "upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come." The term ages is used to describe the history of the world as divided into period of time during which there have been certain degenerating influences present. It means that moral conditions will not improve; it means that they will degenerate more and more. So that, if anything, our struggle with evil will be much greater than past generations have experienced.

The main point, therefore, is this: If we know the Word of God we will know all that we need to know to be kept from the things which will displease the Lord and bring tragedy into our lives. Let us pray that our hearts may be open to what the Lord has to say to us this morning.

II. THE BLESSING OF GOD UPON ISRAEL (vv. 1-5).

Paul is writing to a Church that is predominantly Gentile. So he begins by saying that he not only wants them to know about the history of Israel, but he wants them to know what that history means!

Note these details:

- (1) In vv. 1-4 Paul uses the word "all" five times.
- (2) In v. 5 we have the word "many" (the Gk is better translated, most).
- (3) In vv. 7-10 he uses the word "some" four times.

So let us see now what happened to "all" of the Israelites who came out of Egypt.

A. ALL EXPERIENCED THE SAME DELIVERANCE, GUIDANCE, AND PRESENCE OF GOD (v. 1b).

B. ALL WERE BAPTIZED (lit. into) UNTO MOSES (v. 2).

Baptism in the Bible speaks of death, burial, and resurrection. Cf. Rom. 6:1 ff. This statement here means that God's presence in the cloud and His deliverance of the people through the Red Sea confirmed the fact that Moses was their divinely appointed leader. All of them had the opportunity to see this. They should have died to their own desires, and been alive to the work that God was doing through Moses.

C. ALL EXPERIENCED THE SAME DAILY PROVISION FROM GOD (vv. 3, 4).

"Spiritual" here means supernatural.

Note how we have an emphasis on baptism, and then eating and drinking which in this chapter will be used to refer to the Lord's Supper.

But even then, Christ was making the provision as He does for us now.

With all of these provisions, and the fact that "all" were aware of what God was doing, how anything go wrong?

But next we read of

III. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD--AND THE REASONS FOR THAT JUDGMENT (vv. 5, 7-10).

A. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD (v. 5).

When Paul speaks of "many," or most, he actually means all but two! Caleb and Joshua were the only two men out of possibly 2,000,000 people who were permitted to see the promised land.

They were "overthrown," as though hit by a hurricane.

Why? Paul cites four examples from the OT: Ex. 32; Num. 24; 21; 16.

B. THE REASONS FOR THAT JUDGMENT (vv. 7-10). Paul mentions four reasons, and now uses the word, "some."

1. Idolatry (v. 7). God is jealous of the worship of His people. Here worship was not only given to a golden calf (a carry-over from Egypt), but worship ended in playing--dancing, hilarity, frivolity.

The fact that Paul cites this is evidence that idolatry is still sin.

2. Fornication (v. 8; cf. Num. 24). This is always the companion of idolatry in the Word of God.

We are seeing a relaxing of moral standards in our day which is unbelievable, but let us realize that, though man's standards of morality may change, GOD HAS NEVER ALTERED HIS STANDARDS! And the person who violates the righteousness of God will pay a dreadful price.

It is bad enough when you see this in the world, but it is bad beyond description when you see the people of God caught in fornication.

3. Tempting the Lord (v. 9; cf. Num. 21).

We are so prone to categorize sins. Notice that this sin and the one mentioned in v. 10 are mentioned right along with idolatry and fornication.

What does it mean to tempt the Lord?

It meant that they were out to see if He really meant what He said, if He had the power to back up His Word, or if, in spite of everything, He might not just continue to be gracious!

God's answer to their tempting is very clear in Num. 21.

4. Murmuring (v. 10; cf. Num. 16).

Here the people were forgetting what God had told them when they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

Possibly this is also a rebuke of the Corinthian Church because of their rejection of Paul's apostolic authority.

They were free from Egypt, but they were not free to choose their own way, nor to despise the leader whom God had placed over them.

Judgment, judgment, judgment, judgment!

IV. THE APPLICATION (vv. 12, 13).

A. BEWARE (v. 12).

Every child of God today has been blessed with "all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3), but we must never let past experience, or length of time that we have known the Lord, or even our knowledge of the truth, make us careless about sin. About the time we get to the place where we feel that we cannot sin, then our guard is down, and disaster strikes.

B. BELIEVE (v. 13). What a promise the Apostle has given us here.

We need to believe three things.

1. We need to believe that it is human to be tempted. It is "common to man." As long as we are in the flesh, we will be capable to sin. cf. 1 Jn 1:8
2. We need to believe in the faithfulness of God. He is One who can be trusted. You can rely implicitly on Him. You will fail, but He cannot fail. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:9.
3. We need to believe what He says about temptation.

He will make an exit, an egress, a way out. Any Christian can sin; no Christian has to sin!

Concl: Do you see how important it is for you to know the whole Bible? Will you be simple enough, and honest enough to recognize that Paul has been speaking about you in this passage of Scripture?

"The end of the ages" has fallen upon us. How near the return of the Lord must be, we cannot tell. But surely it cannot be far away.

While we wait, we who have been "baptized into Jesus Christ" must remember that this means that we now have the capacity to "walk in newness of life"--that it is just as possible for us to walk with God in our day as it was for Noah in his day when, as far as the Scriptures are concerned, he had practically no encouragement even from his family!

Let us take this to heart, and pray that, by the grace of God, we may live by the Word of God regardless of the way the world may go, or regardless of the way other Christians may go!

A CLOSE LOOK AT FELLOWSHIP
1 Cor. 10:14-22

Intro: All of you who have followed these messages from 1 Corinthians will agree that we have been dealing with some very solemn themes! There were many things which threatened the Corinthian Church, and I am sure that you agree with me that we have seen many parallels with our own day.

PAUL NEVER
HESITATES
TO SAY THAT
THERE ARE
SOME THINGS
A CHRISTIAN
CANNOT DO.

In chapters 5-7 he is dealing with fornication, adultery.

In chapters 8-10 he is dealing with idolatry.

Concerning both of these problems, Paul basically has one answer:

(1) Cf. 1 Cor. 6:18.

(2) Cf. 1 Cor. 10:14.

In other words, if we do not want to get snared by these sins, the only thing to do is to keep just as far away from them as we possibly can.

But, to turn to our Scripture for this morning, do we not have a contradiction? Let us call it

I. A SEEMING PARADOX (1 Cor. 10:14).

If v. 13 is true, then why is v. 14 necessary. If the Lord "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able," why do we have to be concerned about idolatry, or any other sin?

Obviously the answer to this is that the promise does not apply regardless of what we do. If we place ourselves in tempting circumstances, we will find that it is too great for us.

So, the child of God must understand at the very outset that we cannot afford to become careless about idolatry, or about any other sin! If we know the power of sin, and the sinful tendencies of our own hearts, then it is a part of the will of God that we stay as far from it as we possibly can.

II. AN UNUSUAL APPROACH (1 Cor. 10:15).

We have seen in 1 Cor. 9:1, for example, that there are times when Paul speaks with the authority of an Apostle.

There are other times when he, as in the first part of chapter 10, summons the authority of the Old Testament.

But notice clearly what he says here! It is as though he

is appealing to the Corinthians to use their powers of reason. THERE IS MUCH WHICH THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES THAT WE CAN SEE ILLUSTRATED IN EXPERIENCE, BUT WE SEEM TO BE SO BLIND AT TIMES TO WHAT WE ARE SEEING ABOUT US ALL OF THE TIME!

He gives them the privilege of taking all that he is going to say to them, examining the evidence in detail, and then coming to the right decision which in turn will lead them to the right course of action.

"My dearly beloved" in v. 14 shows how his heart is in what he has to tell them. So often when people try to keep us from doing things we feel that they are just trying to interfere with our freedoms.

Then Paul goes right to the heart of the matter.

III. THE MEANING OF FELLOWSHIP (1 Cor. 10:16-20).

"Fellowship" (v. 20), "communion" (v. 16), and "partakers" (v. 18) are all basically the same word.

Note the three parts to this:

- (1) First he speaks about the Church, like we are this morning, at the Communion Table (vv. 16, 17).
- (2) Then he talks about the worship which unsaved Jews will go through (v. 18).
- (3) Thirdly, he makes the application to what the Gentiles do (vv. 19, 20).

A. Worship in the Church (vv. 16, 17).

In all three of these categories he is talking about our part in that which we are doing with others.

CALVIN SAYS
TO BLESS IS MORE
THAN TO GIVE
THANKS; IT IS
"TO SET IT APART
FOR THIS PURPOSE,
THAT IT MAY BE
TO US AN EMBLEM
OF THE BLOOD
OF CHRIST"
(I, 334)

From what Paul says here there seems little doubt but that nothing which we do together as believers can be any more holy in character, or designed to bring greater blessing than when we meet at the Lord's table.

"The cup of blessing" was the name given to the third cup which was passed around at the Passover, and from which it seems that our Lord instituted this Supper. "We bless" it because we pray that we may be able to enter into the blessings that "the blood" and "the body of Christ" have provided for us.

But more than that, as the word fellowship indicates, we are identifying ourselves with the Lord. We are

participating symbolically in Christ just as we came into fellowship with Him, into living union with Him, when we trusted Him as Saviour. We are acknowledging that apart from His body and His blood we would have no place with God—that even our worship would be unacceptable.

We are declaring our allegiance to Jesus Christ.

If we are not doing this, then we should not be partaking of the elements.

V. 17 should read, "Since (there is) one bread, we, the many (or, the many of us) are one body." Our unity is displayed as we take the bread and the cup. I am becoming a part of what you are doing; you are becoming a part of what I am doing. We are together in our devotion to the Lord.

B. "Israel after the flesh" (v. 18).

He is talking about Jews who do not claim to be Christians, who still worship at "the altar." (It seems to be significant that Paul does not talk about God—just "the altar.")

No one would try to make any distinction between them. They are all trying to show together their devotion to the altar, their dependence upon the altar, their desire to serve at the altar.

Why has he mentioned these things? Because he wants them to see that the same thing applies to the idolatrous principles of the Gentiles.

C. The Gentiles (vv. 19, 20).

Some would remind him of 8:4. Has he changed his mind now?

No! But he does want them to see that Satan and his demons are using the idols to turn the hearts of men away from the true God, and Paul says, very strongly in the Greek, "And I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons."

Evidently believers then were inclined to say, "What difference does it make if I attend an idol-feast?" Paul says, "It makes a lot of difference." It did not make any difference as to what they intended for it to mean; what mattered was what it did mean! They were

identifying themselves with those who were expressing their faith in idols, and what any Christian who went along with them did must be interpreted in the same way.

It was playing into the hands of the Enemy. AND THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL WAS PROOF THAT YOU CANNOT FOLLOW THIS PATH AND STILL MAINTAIN YOUR DEVOTION TO THE LORD.

We can be so smug about sin and not realize that we are courting disaster!

From this point the Apostle states

IV. AN UNCHANGING PRINCIPLE. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:21.

In a day when we have been taught that truth is relative, it is well for us to recognize that here is a God-given ABSOLUTE.

And experience will bear out the truth of this verse!

Paul does not mean that it is impossible for you to come to the Lord's table this morning, and to be sharing your love for Him with some sin. No, you can do that! BUT WHAT HE IS SAYING IS THAT YOU WILL NOT CONTINUE TO WORSHIP GOD IF YOU DO! It is impossible for both to continue.

Our Lord said, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24).

In our text and in Matt. 6:24 God is mentioned first.

Many people come to the Communion Table hoping that this will bring them back from all of the difficulties that they are facing spiritually WHEN THE REAL TROUBLE IS THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO DIVIDE THEIR AFFECTIONS, AND IT CANNOT BE DONE. And those who try to follow this path soon find that they come less and less to the Lord's Table!

Regardless of how you might try, you cannot change this absolute truth!

But, lest we think that this is just an optional choice that we can make, note finally

V. THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCE (v. 22).

Do you need to read again the last part of vv. 8, 9, & 10?

But, you say, "I know a lot of Christians who are living the way they want to, and they are getting away with it."

Do you? Are you sure they are? Can you vouch for what is going on in their hearts? Are you sure that God is not going to do something drastic?

Are you willing to run the risks of provoking God to anger? This is lit. the idea in v. 22. Do you feel that you are stronger than God is so that you can overrule anything that He might do to stop you in your tracks?

Cf. Psa. 78:58-64 and Deut. 32:21-43. Read the Word and see what has happened when the people of God have turned from Him.

Concl: May I speak to you as "my dearly beloved" in closing my message this morning—and especially as we come to the Lord's Table?

If you have been flirting with sin in any form, can you not see where it is leading? Can you not see how it will ruin your fellowship with the Lord, and ruin your life?

Let us not be fooled by the spirit of the age, by the casting aside of those God-given principles which God intends for those of us who are His people to live by. Let us thank God for anyone, parent, Sunday School teacher, friend, or whoever it may be who cares enough to warn you against the tragic effects of sin.

There is only one way to joy, to peace of mind, and to the blessing of God. That is to "flee" from those things that displease God, and seek to walk in the closest harmony with His Word. May God grant us the wisdom and strength to do this even though the world goes more and more in its own way—the way of death.

LIVING WITHOUT OFFENSE
1 Cor. 10:23-33

Intro: We are coming to the close of the section in this epistle where the Apostle Paul has been dealing with the problem of eating meat offered to idols. The importance of this problem is seen by the space which Paul devotes to the subject (chs. 8-10).

As far as idolatry is concerned, they were to "flee" from it. They as the people of God had no choice.

As far as eating meat offered to idols was concerned, there was some place for each believer to exercise his own judgment. However, Paul does give them some basic principles to consider in making their decisions.

The repetition of 6:12 in 10:23 indicates that behind much of the questioning that was going on in the Corinthian Church was this problem: Just what are the rights of a believer?

In answering this Paul makes it very clear that there are some things which are always wrong. The child of God is to have nothing to do with these.

But there are other things which it might be best NOT to do because of the effects that it could have:

- (1) On ourselves (this is the emphasis in 6:12).
- (2) On others—whether Christian, or heathen (this is the emphasis in 10:23 and our entire Scripture passage this morning).

Note the one difference between 6:12 and 10:23. (It is seen in the last statement of each verse.)

And so we have two basic principles here:

- (1) There are some things which might be all right in themselves, but they should be avoided because there is the possibility that they can lead to other things which are NOT all right.
- (2) There are also things which I might have a perfect right to do, things which do not harm me at all, and yet things which can have a harmful effect upon others.

In particular, eating meat offered to idols falls into this latter category.

Why?

Our answer will be seen by following the Apostle Paul's development of the problem in this latter part of ch. 10.

I. THERE IS ONE THING WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT WE
THE RIGHT TO DO (1 Cor. 10:23, 24).

Paul is not only thinking about the effect that our actions have on others, but he, first of all, points out that we as the children of God should be concerned that our actions always produce effects that will result in positive blessing!

Later on in the chapter (v. 32) it becomes clear that he is talking about those who are Christians as well as those who are not, and that may be indicated here at the beginning.

"Edify" is a term which applies to the people of God. together they constitute a building (3:9), or, to take another figure, a body (10:17)—and both of these need edifying, building up.

Or, if we are talking about the people of the world who do not know the Lord, we as the children of God should be concerned about their best interests, about bringing them to know the Lord. Cf. 10:24.

So instead of being concerned about what WE have the right to do, WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT WE CAN DO TO BRING OTHERS CLOSER TO THE LORD.

The Corinthian Church was not thinking this way, and it is not always the case that we think this way today. But this must be our emphasis!

Paul follows this with

II. TWO ILLUSTRATIONS (or applications) (1 Cor. 10:25-30).

The first has to do with

- A. What a believer purchases at the market to eat in his own home (1 Cor. 10:25, 26).

Although it is possible that meat offered to idols is being sold in the market place, yet as a Christian he is not obligated to ask where the meat came from.

Psa. 24:1 is offered to prove what Paul is teaching.

The second has to do with

- B. What a believer is to do if he is invited to eat in the home of one who is not a child of God (1 Cor. 10:27-30).

Here there can be two different kinds of a situation.

1. The Christian does not have to ask his host, and should not ask, where the meat came from (1 Cor. 10:27).

The child of God is not to live in fearful bondage that unconsciously he will do something that will bring him under the judgment of God.

BUT—

2. If someone tells him that the meat has been offered to idols, THEN HE IS NOT TO EAT IT (1 Cor. 10:28-30).

This really takes us back to what Paul had written in 8:4-7.

So it is not for the believer's conscience that he would refuse, but because of the effect that it might have upon others, Christian or non-Christian, who might be at the dinner!

In v. 29 Paul asks, "What good will it do for me to exercise my liberty if what I am doing is condemned by others as being idolatrous?"

And then he adds in v. 30 the question, "Even though I give thanks, what good does it do if I appear to be a hypocrite because I thank God for something that has been given to idols?"

You can be sure that when the Apostle Paul wrote along this line he was heading right into controversy. There would be those who would quickly say, "It is nobody's business what you do, and it is nobody's business what I do!"

But the point that Paul is making in the Word of God is just the opposite. IT IS THEIR BUSINESS IF IN ANY WAY IT CONSTITUTES A HINDRANCE, OR A STUMBLINGBLOCK IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

If you or I am doing anything that might encourage someone else to sin, or that might keep them from coming to the Lord, then I had better not do it regardless of how much of a right I have to do it!

Of course, if we do not share the Apostle's burden for people, then what he has written will sound like

strange language. He was so completely devoted to people that he never considered his rights first; he was always thinking about what he might do to help others in connection with the Lord. Remember what he wrote in 9:16, 17.

I will not take time to point out illustrations this morning, but you think of things that are not forbidden in the Word of God, and yet, if you did them, could harm your testimony, and be misconstrued by anyone who saw you doing it (or them).

Paul has now reached his final words on this subject, and so he now states

III. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE---STATED POSITIVELY, THEN NEGATIVELY (1 Cor. 10:31-33).

A. Positively (10:31).

What does it mean to "do all to the glory of God"?

It means two things: CF. Col. 3:17.

- (1) To do whatever is going to please Him.
- (2) To do whatever is going to help people to understand the Lord and know Him.

SO IT IS NOT WHAT PLEASES ME, BUT WHAT PLEASES HIM,
THAT SHOULD BE THE GREAT AIM AND PURPOSE OF MY LIFE.

But note: This has a definite application to the way I behave myself before people.

Now Paul states the guiding principle

B. Negatively (10:32, 33).

If I am going to please God, then I must not do anything that would in any way encourage anyone else to sin.

The way some Corinthian would eat meat offered to idols might mean nothing to him, but it might through some other person, Christian or not, right into the main stream of idolatry and the sin that goes with it.

Note how widespread the application is, including those who are not believers, and those who are: "Neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles (Lit., Greeks), nor to the church of God."

(If time allows, say a word about each group. Consult

A CHRISTIAN
WHO MEANS
BUSINESS WITH
THE LORD WILL
SEE TO AVOID
ANYTHING
QUESTION-
ABLE.

the grammatical notes for the details.)

And to reassure them, note what Paul states in v. 33. He is not telling them to do one thing, while he does another. No! If they want to know what he means, all they have to do is to become followers of him. Ch. 11, v. 1 belongs to ch. 10.

What force this brings to Paul's teaching! Too often our teaching is right, but it is not backed up by the life of the teacher.

But for a final word.

IV. THE SOURCE OF THE PRINCIPLE (1 Cor. 11:1).

Where did Paul learn this? Was he the kind of a person who was just naturally thoughtful of others? If you think so then read Acts 7:58.

No, this was not a part of Paul's character by nature. When he writes, "Even as I also am of Christ," he is telling us that the Lord taught him to live this way!

This is the way the Lord lived, and this is the way He taught the Apostle Paul to live.

Concl: Much of what Paul was taught was by direct revelation from God, but think of how you and I can profit from the study of the Gospels, from the life of the Lord Jesus on earth, from the way He treated people. What was there that caused the multitudes to follow Him from place to place? What made the children love Him?

Our Lord was unshakeable on the great principles of the Gospel, and never hesitated to expose whatever was evil. But he was always careful to make sure that in His actions He attracted men to the Father—never repelled them.

This is why He prayed as He did in John 17, v. 4: "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

May I ask this morning, WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU—HAVING YOUR OWN WAY, OR DOING WHAT IS PLEASING TO THE LORD? EXERCISING YOUR RIGHTS, OR LIVING SO THAT OTHERS WILL COME TO THE LORD?

Only God Himself knows what would happen if this morning each one of us would fall in behind the Apostle Paul, living as he lived, just as he was following the Lord.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP
1 Cor. 11:2-16

Intro: This morning we come to a new division in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

Up to this point Paul has been talking about certain moral issues which applied to the personal lives of the Corinthian believers. I am thinking especially of chapters 5 through 10 in this connection. Paul has spoken against (1) immorality, against ²⁾ idolatry. He has also pointed out the fact that they should not go to law with each other, or against each other.

But now, as we shall see, he turns to public worship.

In this section he deals with three things related to public worship:

- (1) The proper place of men and women in public worship, with special emphasis upon women.
- (2) The manner in which the Lord's Supper should be observed.
- (3) The right use of spiritual gifts.

This will take us through chapter 14.

Then Paul brings the epistle to a close by dealing with the one doctrinal issue which was being spread in the Church: the denial of the truth of resurrection. This leads Paul up to what he wants to say about the coming of the Lord.

Then his concluding remarks come in chapter 16.

Before I speak about the foundation for public worship, will you notice the significance of the order in these events, or subjects, as Paul deals with them?

Will you notice that he talks about personal matters before he gets to those subjects which concern the whole Church? The point in this is easy to see. IT IS ONLY AS WE WALK WITH THE LORD PERSONALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY THAT WE ARE READY TO TALK ABOUT FELLOWSHIP WITH EACH OTHER!

The degree to which we enjoy fellowship with each other will always depend upon our personal fellowship with the Lord. How important, then, that we know how to walk with HIM—and that we are doing so.

Then will you notice that the worship of God is conditioned upon personal obedience?

And so to sum up what the order in 1 Corinthians teaches us, we have this: our fellowship with each other and our worship of

God must be built upon a life of personal obedience to the Lord—a life where the will of God becomes our greatest concern.

In many ways we might say that THIS IS THE FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP—and it is!

But, having seen this, we need to go on to a very simple, and yet tremendously important subject, which has to do with our worship of God publicly in the Church.

IT HAS TO DO WITH THE RECOGNITION AND OBSERVANCE OF THE DIVINELY ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN.

Before moving into this, the Apostle gives a word of

I. COMENDATION (1 Cor. 11:2).

After telling them to become "followers" of him, he wants them to know that in many respects he realizes that they have been following him.

"Ordinances" refer to both doctrinal and practical teaching, whether given orally or in written form.

Paul was always quick to encourage any evidence of true spiritual life that he saw, and so not everything was wrong as far as the Corinthians were concerned.

However, there seems to have been one thing going on in the Church which would have shocked any non-Christian Corinthian who might attend a public worship service of the Church. This had to do with the place that women were assuming in the Church.

So this called for some

II. INDOCTRINATION (1 Cor. 11:3-12).

He comes immediately to the very important, but seldom-mentioned Bible teaching concerning headship.

This has reference to authority, responsibility. The one who is "the head" is the one who is to provide strong, active direction as far as the one under him is concerned; the one under "the head" is to be dependent, receptive, open to being directed.

Paul speaks of

A. THE THREE HEADSHIPS OF GOD'S PEOPLE (1 Cor. 11:3).

Note carefully what these are.

And, the fact that there is no argument about these is evident as Paul mentions

B. THREE PROOFS OF THE HEADSHIPS.

1. By looking at creation (vv. 7-9).

God created man. God created man first. God created the woman for the man.

2. By looking at the incarnation of Christ (v. 3b):
"the head of Christ is God."

In John 5:30b we find the words of our Lord, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Or, John 8:29b, "I do always those things that please him." Consider also His prayer in Gethsemane.

3. By looking at the customs of men throughout the world (vv. 5, 6).

Is Paul teaching us here that every woman in this Church this morning should have a hat on, or should have a veil on?

I do not believe that he is.

However he is saying this: IT IS A DISGRACE FOR A WOMAN TO COME TO WORSHIP GOD DRESSED LIKE A MAN, APPEARING IN THE POSITION OF A MAN, AND IT IS EQUALLY DISGRACEFUL AND DISPLEASING TO GOD FOR A MAN TO APPEAR LIKE A WOMAN, OR IN THE ROLE OF A WOMAN.

Though some people in the world may try to do this, so that you have women taking on the role of men and men appearing as women, THIS MUST NEVER BE PERMITTED AS FAR AS THE WORSHIP OF GOD IS CONCERNED.

In every culture a distinction is made between the place of men and the place of women. It is to be seen in the most primitive cultures, as well as in what we would call the most "civilized."

A ROMAN would pray with his head covered. So would A JEW. However, A GREEK prayed with his head UNCOVERED. WHATEVER THE MANNER WAS FOR DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, THIS MUST BE

OBSERVED IN RECOGNITION OF THE PLACE THAT MAN HAS
BEEN GIVEN BY GOD OVER WOMEN.

Then Paul turns to

C. THREE REASONS FOR MAN'S HEADSHIP OVER THE WOMAN.

This is stated twice in a positive way, and once in a negative way.

1. This recognition of headship is designed to bring glory to God (v. 7).

We are living in a society where we seem intent on doing away with the distinctions between men and women, and we seem intent also on doing away with any authority.

Both are a violation of the will of God.

How are we as Christians going to show this recognition of authority is the will of God?

By obeying the laws of our country, to be sure.
BUT EVEN MORE—BY THE WAY WE AS HUSBANDS AND WIVES
DEMONSTRATE THIS IN OUR HOMES AND IN THE CHURCH,
AND BY THE WAY THE MEN SHOW THEIR WILLINGNESS TO
BE DIRECTED BY GOD AND THEIR DEPENDENCE UPON HIM!

The world may forsake these principles, but the people of God must not!

2. It is necessary because of the angels (v. 10).

Charles Hodge says, "There is scarcely a passage in the New Testament which has so much taxed the learning and ingenuity of commentators as this. After all that has been written, it remains just as obscure as ever" (p. 211).

What would you say that it means?

It does not seem to be too difficult, does it?

Paul is telling us, to put it very simply, that angels come to church. Oh, you and I do not see them, but they see us!

He must be speaking of good angels, the elect.

What does God want them to learn from our worship

this morning? God wants them to learn that we are responsive to the authorities which God has established—an authority which angels know was violated in the first angelic sin which was committed and in the first human sin!

3. Negatively, it does not mean that men are better than women (vv. 11, 12).

While it is true that the first woman came from a man, yet it is equally true that every other man has come from a woman, that is, by birth.

No, God is not saying that one is better than the other. He is seeking to get men to realize the greatest headship of all—that "all things" are "of God" (v. 12b).

III. TWO CONCLUDING REMARKS (1 Cor. 11:13-16).

- A. Paul appeals to their judgment (vv. 13-15).

He wants them to weigh carefully what he has said and then decide if he has not been telling them what they know to be the truth.

- B. He rejects any opposition (v. 16).

A "contentious" person is one who wants to dispute with the teaching of the Apostle, and thus to dispute with the Word of God.

Is Paul saying that if we disagree with him, we are wrong? Yes, when he is speaking as an Apostle. It is like disputing with the Word of God. When the Bible says one thing, and you say another, YOU ARE WRONG! Paul says that he does not tolerate any contradiction of the Word, and neither should the Churches.

Concl: (Read again v. 3 and emphasize that, if our worship is to be pleasing to God, if it is to communicate to men and to angels the message which God wants it to convey, then there must be this evidence that we know and live according to the divinely established headships which are spoken of in the Word of God.)

THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH'S MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM

1 Cor. 11:17-26

Intro: One of the interesting things about studying any book of the Bible is to note the development as you go through the book from start to finish. I want you to be sure to see this in 1 Corinthians.

After a brief introduction, Paul gets right down to the burden that is upon his heart: divisions in the Corinthian Church.

He then shows how this had retarded their spiritual growth, and how it had led them to other departures concerning their message and concerning their walk.

He spends the first four chapters dealing with these subjects.

Then, with chapter 5 he begins to write about the moral breakdown which was so very apparent--and touches first upon a moral problems which would even shock unsaved Gentiles!

The old paths of idolatry had begun to appear in a less offensive way, and so their witness had suffered as a result.

He reasons with them. He brings into focus the teaching of the Old Testament. He does everything possible to wake them up.

He reaches one of the peaks of the book in 11:1 where we read, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

Then he turns to the subject of public worship. This, too, had felt the effect of the way they had been living.

In 11:2-16 he establishes for them again (because practically everything in the book has been told them before) the proper place of men and women in public worship.

AND THEN QUITE SUDDENLY WE FIND HIM REFERRING TO THE SAME SUBJECT WITH WHICH HE HAD STARTED: DIVISIONS. Cf. 11:18.

This word, divisions, is taken from the verb which is used in Luke 23:45 to describe the rending of the veil in the temple. The main difference was this: The veil in the temple had just been rent once; the Corinthian Church had been rent at least four ways, and possible more!

Today we are so used to divisions in the Church that we take it as being normal. And yet if we really get the message of the book of 1 Corinthians we will see that THIS IS POSSIBLY THE MOST TRAGIC, THE MOST FAR-REACHING TROUBLE, THAT CAN HIT THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST. DIVISIONS!

Let us see why this is true.

- I. It had removed the blessing of God from their worship (1 Cor. 11:17).

After praising them in v. 2, Paul takes exactly the opposite course now. He cannot be honest with them and commend them when he knows what is going on.

This verb for worship, "come together," is used in vv. 18, 20, 33, 34. So this is the major idea in the passage—what happened when they came together to worship God.

It was "not for the better but for the worse." Instead of being a blessing, instead of drawing them closer to the Lord, instead of glorifying the Lord, there was friction, strife, and such perversion of true worship that the hand of God had fallen upon some of them in judgment.

IF THERE IS ONE VERSE IN THE BIBLE WHICH TELLS US THAT THERE IS NO BLESSING JUST IN GOING TO CHURCH, THIS IS IT!

And, if Paul were grieved about this, how do you think that the Lord felt?

But let us look on.

- II. It had brought in doctrinal heresy (1 Cor. 11:18, 19).

We saw in the beginning of the epistle that there had been an attempt to mix human philosophy with the Gospel of Christ

We are going to see in chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15 other heresies—culminating in a most unbelievable question which he asks in 15:12, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING MORE DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT RIGHT WITHIN IN CHURCH IN NOT MORE THAN 25 OR 30 YEARS AFTER THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST THERE SHOULD BE THE DENIAL OF THIS MOST BASIC DOCTRINE?

That which had started as a division over their leaders had resulted in the rise of doctrines that were contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And yet this is not all.

- ~~III. It had brought people into the Church of Corinth who did not know Jesus Christ as their Savior (1 Cor. 11:19).~~

- III. It had brought confusion into the Church regarding what it meant to live for the Lord and to serve Him (1 Cor. 11:19).

Look with me for a moment at the word "approved." It is a word that was used in NT times to indicate the recognition of real coins as compared with counterfeit. Here Paul seems to be concerned, not so much about counterfeit Christians, as about counterfeit service, counterfeit activity.

He had referred to this before (1) concerning himself (1 Cor. 9:27) and (2) concerning the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

When we get away from the Word of God, then everything related to our lives as the children of God becomes obscure. We lose our way. We are inclined to follow our own inclinations regarding service, and we can be satisfied with activity alone.

This is the reason that the Lord allows the "heresies." It is the way He has of bringing us back to the truth.

There is little wonder that Paul says twice (vv. 17, 22), "I praise you not." Regardless of how sincere our service might be, or how sincere our lives might be, the only activity which can be commended, "approved," praised, is that which is according to the Word of God.

Anything else is counterfeit. It does not bring the blessing of God, nor does it glorify Him.

Look with me for a moment at the word "approved."

In New Testament times there were men who produced counterfeit coins, just as there are today. Every once in a while we hear that counterfeit bills are being circulated through the Portland area, and our officials tell us not only to be on the lookout for bogus bills, but they tell us how to detect a counterfeit so as to distinguish it from a real piece of money which has been issued by our government.

When you look at a look at a dollar bill and find the distinguishing marks a dollar bill must have, then that bill is "approved"!

But, you say, what does this have to do with the Corinthian Church?

It has plenty to do with it. V. 19 means that with the divisions, and then with the false doctrine, there had come into the Church of Corinth people who were counterfeit Christians because they did not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

And Paul says, "There must be also heresies among you." Why? Why did God allow this in the Corinthian Church. BECAUSE THE BEST WAY TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT A PERSON IS A GENUINE CHRISTIAN, not a counterfeit, IS TO SEE WHAT PLACE HE GIVES TO THE WORD OF GOD IN HIS LIFE.

People will say, "Can a person be a Christian who denies the Deity of Christ?"

Let the Apostle John answer that for us. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" (1 John 2:22).

The term Christian has been expanded to include so many today that whenever you use it you are forced to explain what you mean.

Do you see the chain? Divisions . . . heresies . . . counterfeits. What a masterstroke of the enemy! And is it not interesting that this got started in the first century church, and that it is still with us today!

But there is one other result which I want to mention before I close.

- IV. It had contaminated what is probably the most sacred thing which the children of God do together—the observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-22).

Look at those wonderful words in vv. 23-26. I want to — come back to them again in my next message, but note that, although the Apostle Paul had not been present on that "night in which he was betrayed," yet, to preserve the significance of the Lord's supper, this had been given to Paul as a direct revelation from God—and he had "delivered" the message to the Corinthian Church!

They were not ignorant of what this meant, and what they were supposed to do!

So—note his charge in v. 20.

They were focusing all of their attention on the "love feast" which was not even a part of the revelation.

What was the love feast?

It was a feast which preceded the Lord's supper. It apparently developed out of an attempt to duplicate the first Lord's supper. It was to show their love for each other—possibly to demonstrate John 13:34, 35.

Everybody who could was supposed to bring enough food for themselves, and those who could bring extra did so for those who could bring nothing. THEN THIS WAS TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The idea was good. But what had happened.

The love feast had become an occasion for them to show their scorn, their hatred, for each other!

Some ate before the others had a chance, and ate more than they needed or wanted to keep others from getting anything. It is possible that as they came to the time of the Lord's supper that some were in a drunken stupor!

Notice the stinging rebukes (3 of them) that Paul gives by his questions in v. 22.

Concl: What lessons are we to learn from this passage?

There are many, but let me just point out three in closing:

- (1) The very sacred nature of the Lord's Supper.
- (2) The great concern the Lord has for His Church.
We will see more of these in coming messages.
- (3) How careful we need to be about those first beginnings of disobedience to God which can reap such a massive and tragic harvest of major sin.

THE ORIGINAL LORD'S SUPPER
1 Cor. 11:23-26

Intro: No problem which the Corinthian Church had surpassed the difficulty they were having in connection with the Lord's Table. They had made a mockery of their remembrance of the Lord by their divisions at the Lord's Table, and by their revelry! Their manner was unworthy of such a sacred time. As a result Paul writes, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:28).

It is important to keep in mind that Paul is not referring to the unworthiness of the believers in Corinth (because all would have to consider themselves unworthy), but he is talking about the shameful way they had desecrated the remembrance of the Lord.

Paul admonishes the Corinthians to "examine" themselves, and then to eat (not, to refrain from eating), so that the judgment of God would not fall upon others.

We as believers have no hour that is more sacred than the one before us this morning. But with this privilege comes the greatest of responsibilities to make sure that we are observing the Lord's Supper the way the Lord wants us to.

BUT, someone will say, HOW CAN YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE DOING THE RIGHT THING?

There is only one way, and this is the main point in the passage before us this morning: WE MUST GO BACK TO THE ORIGINAL REVELATION CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER AND SEE WHAT THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES US CONCERNING HOW IT IS TO BE OBSERVED.

This is the solution for every difficulty we as Christians face. WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US IN HIS WORD!

To help the Corinthians Paul could have gone back to what had been handed down traditionally from the Apostles who were with the Lord on that sad night.

But there is always the possibility that tradition can undergo a change—even over a short period of time.

No, the Lord did not want the Corinthians to rely upon what had been handed down by word of mouth. INSTEAD, HE GAVE PAUL A PERSONAL, SPECIAL REVELATION OF WHAT HAPPENED ON THAT SACRED NIGHT SO THAT PAUL WOULD KNOW JUST AS MUCH ABOUT IT AS THE MEN WHO WERE ACTUALLY THERE!

So, we see, first of all,

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUPPER (1 Cor. 11:23a).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself had revealed to Paul exactly what had happened, and how the Supper was to be observed.

The importance is also emphasized by Paul's use of the two verbs, "received" and "delivered." This was not merely for transmission to the Church, but it was, first of all, for Paul himself. Then it was delivered to the Corinthians as a sacred trust, to be preserved in its purity for all future generations.

They had no right to change the supper, and neither do we! We are under just as solemn an obligation to abide by the Word of God, and we get into trouble when we do not!

Secondly, note

II. THE SOLEMNITY OF THE SUPPER (1 Cor. 11:23b): "That the Lord Jesus (combining Deity and humanity) the same night in which he was betrayed . . ."

This was no time for frivolity, for levity. IT WAS THE MOST SOLEMN HOUR IN HUMAN HISTORY. Our Lord was not betrayed by one who was a declared enemy, but by one who had posed as His friend--and nothing could more vividly portray the depths of human wickedness!

Thirdly we see

III. THE SIMPLICITY OF THE SUPPER (1 Cor. 11:23b-25).

Man has such a tendency to be ornate, to be complicated. The Lord does not say one thing about where this Supper is to be observed; He is concerned about how and why!

It even stands in marked contrast with the ceremonies of Israel under the Law. Just the "bread" and "the cup."

But then in the fourth place let us learn what we can about

IV. THE MESSAGE OF THE SUPPER (1 Cor. 11:23b-26).

Here there are at least five things to be said.

- A. It is a memorial service. Twice Paul tells us that the Lord said that they were to observe this supper "in remembrance of Me." We are thinking about what happened to His "body" and to His "blood." We are thinking about Him, how He died, and why!

This is no time for levity!

- B. It is a supper which portrays the sovereignty of God in salvation.

Every statement is significant.

"The Lord Jesus" is serving. He "took bread." "He brake it." He was the One who said, "Take, eat."

And the disciples were the one who took it and ate it. Cf. John 6:53.

This is only the picture, the symbol, but it pictures what everyone must do before coming to the Supper; that is, by faith to have eaten His flesh and to have drunk His blood by trusting Him as Savior.

What a marvelous picture of the Gospel. If you understand the symbolism, you will never be confused about the Gospel.

For this reason, in the third place,

- C. It is a preaching supper. Cf. v. 26b, "ye do shew the Lord's death."

This means to announce, to declare, to make known, to promulgate.

People can be saved through seeing the people of God observe this Supper.

And, you will always find that where people understand the Gospel, they will usually understand the meaning of the Lord's Supper. But, on the other hand, where the Gospel has been perverted, the Lord's Supper will be changed too.

Then we need to know that

- D. It is a supper which announces a tremendous change.

"This cup is the new testament in my blood" (v. 25).

What was the old one, or the first one? It was the Law. Cf. Ex. 24:8.

How is the Gospel different? It is just as different as law is different from grace. The law tells us what man must do; the Gospel tells us what God has done. The law tells us what man must do; the Gospel tells us what man must believe.

And just as though the Lord wanted to emphasize the gracious character of the Gospel, He does not specify any particular time when the Lord's Supper is to be observed. He simply said, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup . . ."

Contrast this with Lev. 23:5, "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover."

Finally

E. It is a supper which anticipates another event: the coming of our Lord (1 Cor. 11:26b): "Ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

The Lord has not given us a picture to remember Him with; He has given us a supper.

BUT THE WONDERFUL TRUTH HERE IS THAT WHEN WE HAVE HIM THEN WE WILL HAVE NO MORE NEED FOR THE SUPPER.

The Lord Jesus came the first time to die for our sins; He is coming again to take us to be with Him in heaven.

The first coming is not complete without the second. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:19.

Concl: Let us make sure that in coming to the Lord's Table this morning that this is what we have in our minds. We are to remember Him. We are worshipping Him because His body was broken in death, and His blood was shed for our sins. And while we observe the supper, we do so in the hope that He is coming again, and He may come today!